WHITTIER UNION
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence... NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov. 18, 2026 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

La Serna High Student Receives Award of Merit for Resilience, Leadership

WHITTIER – When La Serna High School senior Ashley Vivas came to the United States from Colombia in 2022, she was a 12-year-old English learner who had difficulty adapting to her new life in Whittier. Learning a new language, meeting new people, and entering a new school were challenges that Vivas was not sure she could overcome.

Vivas said her difficulties in learning English often left her feeling sad and frustrated. Determined to turn her life around, Vivas began practicing her adopted language, pushing herself to improve every day. Through her dedication to succeed, Vivas has emerged as a student leader and role model at La Serna, an academic mentor who inspires her classmates to push past their limits.

The Whittier Union Board of Trustees recognized Vivas' resilience and leadership skills by presenting her with an Award of Merit during its Nov. 10 Board meeting.

"La Serna High has become more than just an educational institution, it has been my second home for the past four years," Vivas said. "La Serna has provided me with numerous opportunities to demonstrate my leadership and academic abilities. I have shared many happy moments here, which have created unforgettable memories that I will always cherish."

Vivas, who has a 4.06 GPA and is a member of the La Serna Honor Roll, has a rigorous courseload filled with Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors classes, including AP Psychology, AP Spanish Literature, Honors Math Analysis, and Honors Chemistry.

Vivas serves as President of La Serna's Expanded Horizons club, which helps promote cultural awareness on campus. Vivas is also an academic mentor, Link Crew leader, Associated Student Body officer, and member of the National Honor Society.

Now, Vivas said her days at La Serna are filled with joy, connecting with and assisting her classmates while embracing all that La Serna has to offer, and absorbing the knowledge and wisdom she has received from her teachers.

"Being so involved has allowed me to meet and connect with new people. It has also given me the privilege of hearing from students who view me a role model and express gratitude for the support and patience I have offered them," Vivas said. "Hearing such wonderful things about myself motivates me to keep striving and to never lose the essence that defines who I am."

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La Serna faculty and staff praise Vivas for her work ethic, creativity, kindness, and positive attitude, especially La Serna Interim Principal Dr. Sam Sanford, who said Vivas embodies the spirit of community leadership, and that her personal experiences have instilled in her a deep empathy and drive to lift up others.

"Through grit, curiosity, and determination, Ashley turned an obstacle into a triumph," Sanford said. "Ashley's perseverance set the stage for an academic and personal journey defined by continuous growth. Whether she is organizing rallies or mentoring a classmate, Ashley leads with heart and dedication. She exemplifies the best of La Serna High and Whittier Union High School District."

PHOTO CAPTION

WUHSD_MERIT1: La Serna High School senior Ashley Vivas proudly displays her Award of Merit, presented by the Whittier Union Board of Trustees during its Nov. 10 meeting in recognition of her resilience and leadership.

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OUR MISSION

The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement. Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.

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