BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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# NEWS RELEASE

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## Bonita Unified Students, Staff Honor Legacy of Perseverance, Unity During Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE -** Lone Hill Middle School students walked to campus alongside their families, District office staff and city council personnel on Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, honoring the civil rights icon and reflecting on how courage and compassion show up in their own lives.

About 250 students and their families took part in the morning event on Nov. 14, including seventh-grader Hasani Townsend, who invited his mother to walk with him.

“She taught me everything. Every year, she tries to have us watch a movie and learn about a different Black person in history and how they made the country better. I just wanted us to experience Ruby Bridges Day together,” Townsend said. “That’s my culture, and I feel like I should know more about it. Other students should too, because they get a better understanding of the history, even if they’re not the same color as me.”

Townsend’s mother first introduced him to Bridges’ story through conversations about Black history and, according to Townsend, continues to empower him to learn about Black historical figures. At Lone Hill, classroom lessons added another layer to those conversations. Townsend said that photos of Bridges being escorted to school by U.S. marshals helped him better understand what she had faced.

Bridges was six years old when she became the first Black student to attend William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans on Nov. 14, 1960. Federal marshals escorted her to school as she faced angry crowds opposing desegregation.

The walk was part of Lone Hill’s Brave Like Ruby Week, which used her experience as a starting point for students to reflect on challenges in their own lives. Teachers showed videos, including historical accounts and more recent interviews with Bridges, and led discussions on the history of segregation in the United States. Students considered how courage could apply to everyday situations, such as speaking up in class or standing against bullying.

“It causes the students to empathize with what the struggle has been for others, and then also reflect on their own experiences,” Lone Hill counselor Samar Yassine said. “We’re really trying to encourage students to think about how they can be brave and courageous in their everyday life, because every child has something they’re struggling with.”

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Lone Hill's Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) peer mentorship program and Multicultural Club helped coordinate events throughout the week and led sign-making activities, including a lunchtime poster-making opportunity before the walk. Parents donated breakfast items, and PTA volunteers helped serve students as they gathered for the walk, making this event a community effort.

"Learning about Ruby Bridges gives our students an opportunity to consider what courage and kindness look like in their own lives," Bonita Unified Superintendent Matt Wien said. "I am proud of Lone Hill for bringing families into that conversation and helping students understand the part they play in making their school a place where everyone belongs."

**PHOTO CAPTION**

**BUSD_RUBY_BRIDGES:** Lone Hill Middle School students participate in Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, honoring the civil rights icon's courage while promoting kindness and inclusion across campus.

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