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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov. 9, 2026

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Bonita Unified Student Builds Confidence Through Art, Showcases Work at 'Latinx Visions' Exhibit

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE - San Dimas High School senior Adeline Andersen had always enjoyed drawing, but it was an art class that helped her see herself differently as a student. After years of working harder than her classmates to keep up, she found confidence in her creativity and a way to express what she was feeling.

Andersen shared that perspective through a mosaic-style piece displayed during the San Dimas High School art exhibition, "Latinx Visions," which opened at the Bonita Center for the Arts (BCA) on Oct. 28. Featuring 53 original student artworks inspired by Latinx artists, the exhibition gave students an opportunity to connect the artists' work to their own experiences and share those stories with the community.

"Art was the one thing I was good at. I could really apply myself and feel confident in my skills," Andersen said. "It gave me an educational confidence to know that I can do well in things, and that I'm not a 'bad student.' Maybe I'm just a different kind of student."

Andersen's mosaic-like piece features a hidden figure and a butterfly emerging as if freed from its cocoon. The work, titled "Your Body Is a Cocoon," was inspired by artist Linda Vallejo, who Andersen said she admires for advocating for the unseen and using art to offer social critique and challenge stereotypes.

"I felt so limited as a person in many ways, and I wanted to break free, like how butterflies break out of cocoons. In Latin culture, butterflies, or mariposas, represent hope and a future, or metamorphosis," Andersen said. "I wanted to represent that we all have that inside of us. Sometimes you just want that to break free."

Andersen credits San Dimas High art teacher E. Dominic Black with helping her trust her ideas, which led her to continue studying art as a senior. Andersen said art has made her empathetic and expressive, and she plans to pursue vocational ministry to help others become the best version of themselves and learn how to express themselves through their faith.

That connection between an artist's work and a student's own life was central to Black's approach to the art exhibition. He introduced students to Latinx artists whose contributions may receive less attention in traditional art history lessons, including many living artists with ties to Los Angeles and the West Coast.

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"I don't want students to think art history ended a hundred years ago," Black said. "We study the great artists of the past, but I also want students to discover artists who are responding to the world they live in today. Many are still working, some right here in Southern California. When students recognize their communities, experiences, or concerns in that work, the connection becomes much more immediate and personal. They begin to understand that art history is still being written, and that they can be part of it."

Students explored a digital presentation featuring 75 artists, with links to additional artwork and biographical information, before choosing an artist whose work resonated with them. They developed multiple sketches and discussed their ideas with Black before creating original pieces inspired by the artists' techniques or subject matter.

"When students discover something they do well, it can change how they see themselves and what they believe is possible," Superintendent Matt Wien said. "Adeline's experience shows how much an arts education can mean to a student. We are proud of the teachers who help students find that confidence and the opportunities that allow them to share their work with our community."

Latinx Visions will remain on display and open to the community at the BCA through Friday, Dec. 18.

PHOTO CAPTION

BUSD_LATINX1: San Dimas High School senior Adeline Andersen (right) shares her artwork with art teacher E. Dominic Black (middle) and principal Omar Mayen (left) at the Latinx Visions art gallery reception, held Oct. 28 at the Bonita Center for the Arts.

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