



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 14, 2023

CONTACT: Maria Hernandez PHONE: (909) 447-2406

El Monte Union Senior Receives VFW Scholarship for Essay Honoring Veterans

EL MONTE – Arroyo High School senior Aurora Che is grateful for the brave men and women who serve in the United States Armed Forces. Che is especially proud of America’s military veterans, writing in an essay that they should be celebrated every day for the sacrifices they have made. Che then recorded her essay and submitted it to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Voice of Democracy audio-essay contest.

Che’s essay, centered on the theme “Why is the Veteran Important,” earned her a trip to Sacramento in January, after she was named the VFW Post 10218 El Monte and VFW District 11 first-place winner. Although Che did not advance to the national competition, her passionate essay touched the hearts of VFW members across the state and netted her more than \$1,000 in scholarship money.

Che, whose family includes veterans of conflicts in Vietnam and Afghanistan, was honored by Post 10218 on March 23 in a special awards ceremony.

“When we meet a veteran, we should always thank them for their service,” Che wrote in her essay. “They make so many sacrifices. They do this for our freedom. They deserve the ultimate respect for all they have given up just for us to enjoy our freedoms in life. The ones who have been lucky enough to come home continue to do so much for our country. That is why veterans are important.”

Che is active in Arroyo High’s visual and performing arts programs, and loves to act, sing and make art. She has been a member of Arroyo’s Choir for four years and is a cast member in the school’s upcoming musical production of “Camelot.” Additionally, a mural Che created for the El Monte First United Methodist Church was beloved by parishioners for years until the church closed in 2022.

Voice of Democracy is the VFW’s premier scholarship program, with thousands of high school students across the country competing for up to \$2 million of scholarship money. Applicants record a three-to-five-minute essay and submit it to their local VFW post. Che received \$300 from VFW Post 10218, \$500 from VFW District 11 and \$500 from the California VFW.

“I am so honored to receive these scholarships,” Che said. “Everything was so exciting about my experience, from writing the essay to jumping on the plane, to only being in Sacramento for 24 hours, then coming home as soon as possible, and even just sitting in the banquet taking everything in. It was exciting. It was a lot to take but very much worth it. Thank you to the VFW for this amazing opportunity.”

Che plans to attend Pasadena City College and then transfer to the University of La Verne, while working towards her dream job as a Disney animator.

– MORE –

“Aurora is an amazing student, kind and thoughtful and very talented,” Arroyo High principal Gabriel Flores said. “She brings passion and heart to everything she does, so it is not surprising that her essay on honoring our military veterans resonated so well with Voice of Democracy judges. We are so proud of her achievements and are excited to see what lies ahead for her in the future.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD AHS SCHOLARSHIP WINNER 1: Arroyo High School senior Aurora Che (center) receives the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Voice of Democracy Scholarship from the El Monte Post Commander Marc Tavera (left) and District 11 Commander David Loera (right) at the VFW’s Awards and Appreciation Night held on March 23.

EMUHSD AHS SCHOLARSHIP WINNER 2: Arroyo High School senior Aurora Che (center) celebrates with her mother Darleen Valles Castro (left) and AHS Assistant Principal Dr. Steve Ortiz (right) after receiving the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Voice of Democracy Scholarship at the VFW’s Awards and Appreciation Night held on March 23.

EMUHSD AHS SCHOLARSHIP WINNER 3: Arroyo High School senior Aurora Che showcases her artistic skills and creates a mural for the El Monte First United Methodist Church.

###

The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.