

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 26, 2023

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Covina High Senior Named National Merit Scholarship Finalist, Earns Acceptance to Top Universities

COVINA, CA – Covina High School senior Heidi Alhannat dreams of breaking down barriers and showing others that they can do anything they set their minds to. This passion has driven Alhannat to outstanding achievement in her academic and personal pursuits, earning her recognition as a National Merit Scholarship finalist.

National Merit Scholarship semifinalists are made up of students that score in the top 1% of the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), which equates to roughly 16,000 students nationwide. That pool of students is then narrowed down to roughly 15,000 finalists based on their transcripts, extracurricular activities, a personal statement essay, and a personal recommendation. About 7,250 National Merit Scholarships are then given out after further evaluating students' abilities, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

"I am extremely grateful and honored to be a National Merit Scholarship finalist," Alhannat said. "It means so much to me because I don't always see people like myself recognized in this way. Me being a finalist shows that it's possible for any student in any area with any background."

Alhannat said her parents, who lived in both Syria and Venezuela before immigrating to the United States, always pushed her and her siblings to pursue a college degree, regardless of the subject matter. But the desire to make her parents proud is only one force that drives Alhannat's academic success. She also wants to make an impact on those around her as a person who is traditionally underrepresented in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) field.

"It can sometimes be tough to be one of the only girls in a math or engineering class," Alhannat said. "After I graduate from college, I want to return to underserved areas and show others that there are people of all types in the STEM industry and that they shouldn't be intimidated by being in the minority."

Alhannat has maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout her high school career and has taken many Advanced Placement classes. Math concepts, in particular, click in Alhannat's mind, and so she decided to help her fellow students by tutoring in a Math II class, breaking down the concepts to make them easier to understand.

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Alhannat said her experience tutoring her classmates has strengthened her determination to help those around her see that they can achieve anything they set their minds to.

Alhannat has been accepted to several prestigious schools, including Harvard University and Stanford University. Both schools boasted incredibly low acceptance rates for the 2022-23 applying class, with Harvard maintaining a 3.4% acceptance rate according to Crimson Education, and Stanford holding a 3.7% acceptance rate according to the Stanford Daily.

In addition to her two top choices of Harvard and Stanford, Alhannat has also been accepted to every University of California campus. She is currently weighing her options and plans to make her final decision about where she will enroll and what she will major in this spring.

“While I am leaning toward exploring engineering as my major, I also have other interests and I hope to earn more than one BA/BS,” Alhannat said. “I am excited for this next step and to explore a wide range of subjects in college.”

In addition to her educational success, Alhannat has devoted much of her free time to various clubs and extracurricular activities on campus. She is currently serving as president of Active Minds, a mental health club that works to destigmatize sensitive topics, as well as acting as a safe space for students and teaching students how to manage stress. Alhannat is also the registrar for the Interact club and has participated in marching band, choir, robotics, and more.

“Heidi has already accomplished so many incredible things in her time at Covina-Valley Unified School District,” Superintendent Dr. Elizabeth Eminhizer said. “I know she will continue to break down barriers and inspire those around her to pursue their dreams, and I can’t wait to see what her future holds.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

CVUSD_HEIDI: Covina High senior Heidi Alhannat has been named a National Merit Scholarship finalist for her educational achievements. Alhannat hopes to break down barriers in the STEM field and demonstrate to underrepresented people in underserved areas that anything is possible.

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