



Whittier Union

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 14, 2024 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

Whittier Union High School District Health Academy Prepares Students for Success in Variety of Health Fields

WHITTIER – California High School Health Academy students are engaging in hands-on learning and gaining real-world experience in a variety of health fields, granting them advanced knowledge and certifications that prepare them for college and careers.

The Health Academy begins in sophomore year, where students are introduced to medical terminology and explore the potential career options open to them. During their junior year, students shift to emergency medicine, where they learn life-saving procedures and how to respond to medical emergencies. By senior year, students choose to specialize in sports medicine, dental assisting, or nurse assisting, allowing them to dive deeper into their chosen field and gain practical skills that set them up for future success.

“I wanted to be part of Health Academy because I’ve always loved helping people,” Cal High senior Fatima Ruvalcaba Garcia said. “I knew being in the academy would provide me with the skills I needed to pursue my goal of becoming a dentist or orthodontist.”

In their senior year, students in the Health Academy's dental and nurse assisting tracks gain hands-on experience by completing hours in real-world medical settings such as dental offices or hospitals. Students can also earn various certifications, including Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Certified Emergency Medical Responder, and First Aid/CPR, all before graduating high school.

Additionally, every Health Academy student is a member of the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), an organization that provides students access to workshops, leadership trainings, and competitions.

At the recent HOSA State Competition held on April 7, three students from Cal High earned medals for showcasing their advanced skills in the medical path. Senior Dario Reyes won first place in Nursing Assisting, senior Gabby Garcia placed third in Veterinary Science, and Fatima Ruvalcaba Garcia earned third place in Dental Terminology. Reyes also won the gold medal for the Barbara James Award for Volunteerism, showcasing his dedication to helping those around him.

“I was so honored and surprised to win these medals at the HOSA competition,” Reyes said. “My favorite thing about the Health Academy has been how tight-knit we all are and the sense of family that we have created. It’s definitely something I will miss as I leave high school.”

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Reyes said he plans to attend Cypress College to complete his prerequisites before transferring to an upper division nursing program. He plans to use his CNA license to work at a nursing home while continuing school, and dreams of becoming a pre-CNA instructor at the high school level to teach and help increase the diversity of students entering the medical field.

"I am so thankful to the Health Academy for helping me get my foot in the door in pursuit of my dream career," Garcia said. "Going through the Academy and being able to participate in the HOSA competition has really helped me to confirm my future plans."

Garcia will be attending California State Polytechnic University, Pomona in the fall, where she plans to major in animal science with hopes of becoming a veterinarian.

"By providing students in the Health Academy with a strong foundation and hands-on experience, we're not only preparing them for successful careers but also nurturing the next generation of healthcare professionals," Principal Bill Schloss said. "The dedication these students show in their studies and in competition is truly inspiring, and we're incredibly proud of their accomplishments."

PHOTO CAPTIONS

WUHSD_HEALTH1: From left to right: California High School Health Academy seniors Gabby Garcia, Fatima Ruvalcaba Garcia, and Dario Reyes earn medals for showcasing their advanced skills in the medical pathway at the Health Occupations Students of America competition on April 7.

WUHSD_HEALTH2: California High School senior Dario Reyes shows off his Certified Nursing Assistant license after passing the written and skills test alongside his teacher Leticia Guevara.

WUHSD_HEALTH3: California High School senior Fatima Ruvalcaba Garcia starts the process of taking X-rays on a patient as part of her clinical hours.

WUHSD_HEALTH4: California High School senior Gabby Garcia works with a patient as part of her veterinary science hands-on experience.

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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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