



HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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MEDIA CONTACTS: Andrea Torres
(909) 573-8137

Hacienda La Puente Unified Youth Cinema Project Students Win First-Place at Latino Film Festival

CITY OF INDUSTRY – California Elementary School's Youth Cinema Project (YCP) student filmmakers are celebrating their 2024 Best Film for Elementary Schools award from the Latino Film Institute for their movie "The World is Yours," which premiered at the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival on June 1.

Hacienda La Puente Unified's YCP students returned to the festival for its second year, where they walked the red carpet outside the historic TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. Students were joined by District officials, YCP mentors, staff, and families to watch their films alongside other participating YCP students.

"I have never witnessed such a vibrant bus ride in my life," California Elementary School YCP teacher Kathleen Cook said. "Our students, with their unwavering dedication, produced four remarkable films this year. The journey was challenging, but the sheer joy on their faces as they saw their creations on the big screen made it all worthwhile."

"The World is Yours" tells the compelling story of a student who defies campus rules to sell soda cans to his peers to save enough money for a video game. After running into trouble with his school principal, he soon learns the dangers of greed.

Students from Sparks Middle School and La Puente High School also showcased their films from the 2023-24 school year at the festival. These films shared a common theme of moral challenges and lessons, highlighting the consequences of unethical behavior and the importance of making honest choices.

YCP mentors Miguel Mendoza and Summer Young invited District officials, Cook, principal Yesenia De La Pena, and families to join a Zoom call on June 3 to share the news with the students.

"When I joined the Zoom call with my classmates and my mentors, I had no idea it was to surprise us with news that we won," said Ivan Salguero, incoming sixth-grader, director of photography, and lead actor of "The World is Yours." "Thank you to my teacher Ms. Cook, and mentors Miguel and Summer for teaching me so much. I cannot wait to make more films next year."

MORE

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Throughout the school year, Mendoza and Young educated students on pre-production, production, and post-production, as well as the various roles involved in filmmaking, such as writer, director, producer, gaffer, sound mixer, and editor. Students then wrote summaries to express their desired positions and justify their selection. Once roles were assigned, mentors collaborated with Cook and received support from De La Pena to guide students in creating unique, meaningful final projects.

"YCP is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for students to build communication skills," De La Pena said. "This opportunity opens career paths for students in scriptwriting, filmmaking, acting, and behind-the-scenes roles, which are potential future careers for our students. In YCP, students find a voice and can express themselves creatively. We are grateful for this program and opportunity."

The YCP, founded by award-winning actor, producer, and director Edward James Olmos, aims to close the achievement and opportunity gap for today's learners by empowering students to write, produce, and direct their own films. The program helps nurture their creativity and critical thinking skills and inspires them to explore potential careers in the film industry.

In celebration of student talent, the District will host its first-ever Film Festival at Mt. San Antonio College later this fall. Additionally, YCP students will be recognized at the Board of Education meeting on June 13.

"We are immensely proud of our students at California Elementary School and all our YCP students for their cinematic masterpieces," Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez said. "This program exemplifies the power of arts in education in developing well-rounded, innovative thinkers. It enhances our students' academic experience and gives them the skills and inspiration to pursue their dreams. Congratulations to all the students, teachers, and staff involved."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

HLPUSD_YCP_1: Academy Award-nominated actor and Latino Film Institute founder Edward James Olmos joins students on the red carpet during the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival on June 1.

HLPUSD_YCP_2: California Elementary School Principal Yesenia De La Peña, Youth Cinema Project teacher Kathleen Cook, and students gather outside the TCL Chinese Theater after participating in the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival on June 1.

HLPUSD_YCP_3: California Elementary School Youth Cinema Project's film poster for "The World is Yours" is shared at the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival on June 1.

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