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Río Hondo College Commemorates 60th Anniversary with Full-Day Celebration

Whittier, California – The Río Hondo College campus bustled with activity as live music, international cuisine and laughter filled the air on Sept. 15, as the community celebrated the College’s 60th anniversary and its history of service and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism.

A giant inflatable archway in bright Río Hondo gold welcomed the entire community – from College students, staff, the Board of Trustees and REX the Roadrunner to local dignitaries and the general public – to share in the milestone event. Many in the crowd wore commemorative 60th anniversary t-shirts with “see my color, see my identity, see all of me” on the back.

Among the esteemed dignitaries who attended the 60th anniversary celebration were Pico Rivera Mayor Erik Lutz, South El Monte Mayor Gloria Olmos, South El Monte City Councilmembers Rudy Bojorquez and Manuel Acosta, Whittier Mayor Pro Tem Fernando Dutra, Whittier City Councilmember Octavio Cesar Martinez, representatives from the offices of California State Sen. Bob Archuleta, State Assemblymember Blanca Pacheco and Los Angeles County Supervisors Janice Hahn and Hilda Solis, along with a host of officials from Río Hondo College’s K-12 partner school districts.

Guests were treated to a diverse display of live cultural performances, including mariachi, Native American dancers, Japanese drummers, African musicians, ballet folklórico and an *El Grito* contest. A wide array of complimentary global fare was offered with food vendors from Camila’s Tacos, Golden Sun Mediterranean, RJ’s Southern Home Cooking, Cortina’s Italian and Gelato Go on hand.

“This is a tremendous way to celebrate 60 years of being a staple in our community and being an educational beacon for so many,” said Vicky Santana, who attended both the day and evening festivities, and who has served on Río Hondo College’s Board of Trustees for 12 years.

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“I truly believe college changes people’s lives and transforms them, not just the students but their whole families. That’s what we’ve done and we have generations of proof of that.”

Associated Students of Río Hondo College (ASRHC) President Kal El was one of many students on hand for the celebration and shared how Río Hondo College has impacted his life.

“Honestly, Río Hondo means everything to me. It helped me find housing when I was living on the streets, I have received clothing donations, I haven’t had to pay for my books and they have helped me with meals,” said El, who is currently pursuing a degree in political science at Río Hondo College and plans to transfer to the University of California, Davis or California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt at the end of the year and study political and environmental science. “It is awesome to be able to finally hit the goals I have wanted to in life thanks to Río Hondo College.”

Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores started the evening festivities by sharing a brief history of Río Hondo, announcing the College’s new logo and affirming the institution’s unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism.

“This was an invaluable time to gather as a community and celebrate the great history of service, justice, equity and opportunity here at Río Hondo College,” Dr. Flores said. “I am honored to play a part in moving the College forward in its mission to provide students with a comprehensive education, while also advancing our core values throughout the institution and into our surrounding community.”

Río Hondo College honored Yoshio “Yosh” Nakamura with a Lifetime Achievement in Service and Philanthropy award. Nakamura was one of the original three faculty members hired and served as the first Department Chair of Fine Arts when the College first opened its doors in 1963.

Before the night ended, a long list of contestants, ranging from alumni and community members to staff, participated in an *El Grito* Contest. Dr. Flores made it to a final tiebreaking round that featured three contestants. Judges from the Foundation and the Board of Trustees voted for the winner, Adrian Diaz, who was presented with the first Río Hondo College brick.

The Río Hondo College Foundation presented Diaz with a brick inscribed with his name and “60th Anniversary Inaugural *El Grito* Winner” to kickstart the Foundation’s fundraising campaign. Individuals can purchase bricks inscribed with their name that will be used as part of an upcoming I LOVE RÍO Installation on the upper quad of the College campus. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go toward student programs and scholarships.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS:

ANNIVERSARY1: Río Hondo College kicked off its 60th anniversary celebration with a group photo of students, staff, alumni, board of trustees, elected officials, and community members forming the number “60” on the campus soccer field on Sept. 15. The event went from morning to the evening and celebrated the College’s history and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism.

ANNIVERSARY2: Río Hondo College hosted a celebration of its 60th anniversary on Sept. 15. The event went from morning to evening and featured a diverse range of live cultural performances to reflect the College’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism.

ANNIVERSARY3: Adrian Diaz won the *El Grito* contest during Río Hondo College’s 60th anniversary celebration on Sept. 15. He was honored with the inaugural Río Hondo College Brick, which will be inscribed with his name and be part of an upcoming I LOVE RÍO installation on the upper quad of the College campus.

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