



Press Release

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Schurr High School Community Awards Inaugural Memorial Scholarship at Renaissance Rally

Two Students Receive \$500 Scholarships in the Name of Slain SHS Student Brenda Sierra

MONTEBELLO – Schurr High School juniors and seniors experienced something special June 5 at the year-end Renaissance Rally, a celebration that focuses on student and staff achievements. They were reminded of a fellow Spartan and Renaissance student, Brenda Sierra – whose memory continues to inspire 13 years after her death.

Her sister, Fabiola Saavedra, teamed up with Schurr High School Renaissance Coordinator and teacher Ken Seto to establish the inaugural scholarship in efforts to remind students to focus on the positives, stay motivated and appreciate their future. This year marks the 10-year anniversary of Brenda’s would-be high school graduation date.

“Taking something terrible and shifting it into such a good, lasting and inspirational thing is a very valuable skill to have – and we seek to remind our students of this today and throughout the school year,” Montebello Unified Board President Edgar Cisneros said. “Our hearts and thoughts are with Brenda’s family, and we thank them deeply for returning and giving back to the Schurr student community in this way.”

Brenda participated in the Renaissance program in 2002 and was close with Seto, who remembers her as funny student, always laughing. Seto kept in touch with Saavedra and her family after Brenda’s tragic death that same year. The two were instrumental in developing the Brenda Sierra scholarship.

Saavedra, also a Schurr graduate, spoke to the gym filled with students about the confusion and struggles behind the death of her sister. She explained that despite having to raise two children as a teen mother, she graduated from college, with her teenagers on track to do the same.

The \$500 scholarships, collected from personal funds from Saavedra and funds donated from the Schurr High School community, were given to two students who reminded Seto of Brenda, a good student who committed herself to the benefits of the Renaissance program.

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“We are hoping to grow the scholarships over the years to keep Brenda’s memory alive and to remind our current students of the many opportunities available to them – and the people who believe in them,” Seto said. “Awarding these two scholarships today to these deserving students is, we hope, only the beginning.”

Ivan Barranco will attend Rio Hondo College to play soccer; Holly Tenorio plans to attend Santa Monica City College to study psychology.

“Thank you to Fabiola and her family for supporting Ivan and Holly in a memorable way that will no doubt encourage them and their peers to be successful students and productive members of the community,” Superintendent of Education Susanna Contreras Smith said. “We also applaud Schurr High’s administrators, leaders, teachers and students for another year of stellar achievements.”

The Renaissance Program recognizes student and staff accomplishments in academics, attendance, behavior, citizenship and self-improvement. It is designed to involve as many students and staff as possible, awarding recognition and prizes throughout the year.

Photo Captions:

Sierra Scholarship1: Schurr High School juniors and seniors were reminded of Brenda Sierra, fellow Spartan and Renaissance student, June 5 at the year-end Renaissance Rally – whose sister, Fabiola Saavadra, pictured here with Renaissance Coordinator Ken Seto, keep her memory alive 13 years after her death with the 2015 inaugural scholarship in Sierra’s name.

Sierra Scholarship2: Schurr High School juniors and seniors were reminded of Brenda Sierra, fellow Spartan and Renaissance student, June 5 at the year-end Renaissance Rally – whose sister, Fabiola Saavadra and Renaissance Coordinator Ken Seto, keep her memory alive 13 years after her death with the 2015 inaugural scholarship in Sierra’s name. Recipients Holly Tenorio and Ivan Barranco are pictured here.

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