

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Pomona Unified Conference Empowers Female Students to Gain Confidence, Achieve Success

**POMONA** – Nearly 300 female students took part in Pomona Unified’s third annual Young Women’s Empowerment Conference last month, learning from professional women who challenged themselves to beat the odds, including Paralympian Sarah Reinertsen, the first female leg amputee to finish the Ironman World Championship.

“I want to impress upon you the potential within yourselves to achieve your goals,” Reinersten said during her Jan. 23 morning keynote in which she described how a childhood soccer coach discouraged her from participating in team activities.

“I look at every day as a new door of opportunity,” Reinersten, whose leg was amputated at age 7, told students. “If you want a different result, change the plan. I had times when I was sensitive about people seeing my body, but I learned to be confident when I discovered how powerful I was and what I could accomplish.”

Hosted at the Village at Indian Hill Conference Center, the event featured 10 healthy mind, body and soul workshops that encouraged eighth-, ninth- and 10th-grade girls to live positive lives, work toward career goals and be themselves.

“I am so proud of all of the young women who attended the conference and who are learning to develop the confidence to meet their academic and personal challenges head-on,” Board of Education President Adrienne Konigar-Macklin said. “Empowerment is a powerful tool that will enable our female students to achieve excellence and pursue college and careers without fear.”

Workshops focused on topics on how to achieve confidence, self-care, avoiding unrealistic body ideals and finding ways to de-stress through writing poetry and practicing yoga.

“I think this is a great experience for girls my age,” said Village Academy sophomore Alma Aguilar Cruz, 15. “It shows us that girls can do a lot of amazing things and that we should try our best to be someone we’re proud of.”

Pomona Peer Resources (PPR), which put on the program, is part of Pomona Unified’s comprehensive approach to peer intervention. PPR works with the District’s middle and high schools to provide more

than 20 individual peer intervention programs, which include community-based activities that address the academic, social, emotional and personal needs of PUSD’s adolescents.

“Some of our girls are dealing with broken spirits and minds brought on by traumatic events,” said Karen Rogel, Peer Resources Coordinator from Garey High School. “Through these programs, we give them and other girls resources like yoga, meditation and career planning to help them look toward a bright future instead of the past. Events like these truly help set them up for success.”

Afternoon keynote speaker Judge Geanene Yriarte, who graduated from Cal Poly Pomona and was appointed to the bench by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2009, also encouraged students to stay on the path to success. She currently serves as a Pomona Juvenile Court judge.

“These influential speakers demonstrate the power all of our female students have within themselves to overcome any personal or academic barriers they may face, whether it’s getting a better test score, finding their first job after they graduate or finding the courage to believe in themselves,” Superintendent Richard Martinez said.

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**EMPOWERMENT1:** Students from Fremont Academy pose with their chaperone in front of a flower-decorated wall created for the Young Women’s Empowerment Conference, a Pomona Unified event held Jan. 29 that encourages girls to live positive lives, work toward career goals and be themselves.

**EMPOWERMENT2:** Pomona Unified students pay close attention as they learn about the different workshops offered during the event. More than 300 eighth-, ninth- and 10<sup>th</sup> graders attended the annual event.

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