



Press Release

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Inspirational Cal High Student Leader Celebrated for Beating the Odds

WHITTIER, CA – California High School student leader Sophia Aldecoa is a homecoming princess who dreams of one day becoming a brain surgeon. But fulfilling these lifelong goals has not come easy for the 18-year-old, who once grappled with a low self-esteem that stemmed from growing up in a difficult home.

When she was in fourth grade, Aldecoa's parents separated, causing the young girl to look after her younger siblings, get them ready for school and help them with their homework. She also faced bullying and teasing during her elementary and middle school years.

Still, the shy youngster never wavered from the high expectations she set for herself, persevering personally and academically while at Cal High, where she has been named a Top 100 Student for four consecutive years. Now a social butterfly, she carries a 4.125 GPA and has successfully completed 16 Advanced Placement and honors classes.

For her determination, Aldecoa was recently recognized with an Award of Merit by the Whittier Union High School District Board of Trustees.

"We can do everything right in life, but not everything goes right," Aldecoa said. "But I know that I want to go to college and have a career in medicine. Ever since I was a little girl, I've been pushing myself as hard as I can in school to get there. My life was hard for a while and my family and friends helped me a lot, and now I'm here with my Condor family and friends celebrating what more there is to come."

With the encouragement of her parents and grandmother, Aldecoa continually pushes herself to excel because she always knew she would overcome the challenges of her younger years, finding a haven from her troubles at Cal High, where her aunt is presently a counselor.

With an ambitious, positive attitude and a smile that can light up a room, Aldecoa has immersed herself in her studies and taken on a diverse and impressive array of extracurricular activities.

In addition to having a full schedule of AP and honors classes, Aldecoa is the current Associated Student Body community liaison, is president of the Scholars Program and Club Eco, and is a member of the Gender Connections Club and California Scholarship Federation, where she will soon become a life member. She previously served three years on the student council, was a Link Crew leader for one year and has competed on the Cal High soccer and track teams.

Aldecoa has played viola for the Whittier Area Youth Orchestra since seventh grade, once performing at Carnegie Hall, and volunteers at Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, helping with job fairs, refugee services and citizenship classes.

Through it all, Aldecoa has remained disciplined and enthusiastic, feeling safe and comfortable in the stable environment provided by Cal High.

“I am inspired and awed by Sophia’s ability to rise above the challenges that life set before her, overcoming tremendous obstacles and persevering to be a huge success,” Principal Bill Schloss said. “We are incredibly proud of Sophia and feel lucky to have shared her journey for four years. She has enriched the life on campus at Cal and we are very pleased that she is a member of the Condor family.”

While Aldecoa has applied to a dozen prestigious universities across the country – with UC Berkeley being her first choice – the aspiring neuroscientist said she would welcome Stanford as her back-up.

PHOTO CAPTION

ALDECOA: Joined by California High School Principal Bill Schloss, senior Sophia Aldecoa on Jan. 12 received an Award of Merit from the Whittier Union School District Board of Trustees for overcoming personal obstacles to become a student leader and academic achiever on campus.

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