



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2016

CONTACT: Valerie Martinez

Juliette Funes

(909) 445-1001

Women's Conference Imparts Courage, Empowerment Upon Whittier Union Students

WHITTIER – More than 300 female students from Whittier Union's seven high schools packed into Rio Hondo College's Wray Theater for the 21st annual Women's Conference, a collaborative effort between the District, Rio Hondo College and Soroptimist International of Whittier in celebration of Women's History Month.

The March 4 event, themed "Courage to Dream," aimed to inspire participants through a series of workshops that provided resources and helped strengthen young women's wellness in mind and body. The program featured three sessions of workshops on topics such as establishing healthy relationships, interviewing tips, financial literacy, college 101 and using art and physical exercise to improve one's outlook on life.

"This is my first time at the conference, and it has already motivated me to participate in more community service activities to enhance my college application," Whittier High School senior Cynthia Martinez said. "I think this event gives girls great ideas on how to start thinking about college and what careers they might want to pursue."

ABC7 Eyewitness News traffic reporter Alysha Del Valle gave the keynote address, sharing her experience as a Latina in the broadcast journalism industry, an elected board member of the East L.A. Weingart YMCA, a mentor for at-risk high school students, and as a volunteer for VotoLatino, Reading to Kids, Adelante Mujer and The Sierra Club.

"When I was growing up, I was always trying to find women on TV who looked like me," Del Valle said. "Our thoughts about ourselves are powerful and help us achieve great things, so don't worry about other peoples' dreams and worries for you. We make our own luck by dreaming and investing in ourselves."

The Women's Conference provided opportunities for women to empower themselves and visualize their potential. Whittier Union students gained courage through workshops such as "Healthy Relationships – Creating Your Own Boundaries," "Staying Ahead of Today's Job Market," "Basic Self Defense – Rape Prevention" and "True Colors: Who am I?"

The Women's Conference was initiated 21 years ago to bring Latina role models to Whittier Union students during a time when there weren't many women of color pursuing careers and college degrees.

The conference addresses issues Latinas face today and helps them navigate the path toward college and career goals.

“I didn’t grow up in the best neighborhood, so my mom put me in all honors classes when she saw I wasn’t being challenged enough in school,” Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson told the students. “My parents bolstered me so I could grow up to make a difference in the lives of others. Many kids don’t have that kind of support system, so we want to show them how to be the architects of their own futures and programs like these are just one of the several steps we take to ensure they succeed in whatever endeavor they want to pursue.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

CONFERENCE1: Whittier High School students gather around Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson and ABC7 Eyewitness News traffic reporter Alysha Del Valle during the 21st annual Women’s Conference at Rio Hondo College’s Wray Theater on March 4. The event focused on the needs and well-being of women with the goal of inspiring participants through a series of workshops.

CONFERENCE2: Rio Hondo College counselor and Associate Professor Dorali Pichardo-Diaz teaches Whittier Union students about college preparedness during her workshop “Surviving the Transition to College” during the Women’s Conference at Rio Hondo College on March 4.

###

The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement. Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.

WUHSD Board of Trustees

Leighton Anderson, *President* ■ Tim Schneider, *Vice President* ■ Dr. Ralph S. Pacheco, *Clerk* ■ Russell Castañeda Calleros, *Member* ■ Jeff Baird, *Member*
Sandra Thorstenson, *Superintendent*

9401 S. Painter Avenue, Whittier, California 90605-2798 ■ (562) 698-8121 ■ www.wuhsd.org