



## Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Whittier High School Welcomes Back Beloved Cross Country Student Mason Tellez**

**WHITTIER, CA** – Whittier High School student Mason Tellez got a resounding Cardinal welcome from his peers, teachers and friends when he returned to the campus for the first time since recovering from a devastating health event that at one point left him unable to walk or talk.

With the help of his parents, chants and cheers from the audience, and a standing ovation from the more than 2,400 students and staff members at Whittier High, on Friday, Aug. 29, Mason walked across the stage of the Vic Lopez Auditorium on his own and gave a heartfelt “thank you” to his Cardinal family.

“Mason is known for his positive spirit and work ethic and is a true Cardinal With CLASS,” said Whittier High School Principal Lori Eshilian. “He has expressed hope of regaining his speech, walking on his own and graduating with his class, and I have no doubt that Mason can accomplish anything he sets his mind to.”

Mason has been undergoing months of extensive therapy and daily rehabilitation since collapsing in March due to an undetected heart condition while he was training with the school’s cross country/long distance track team. Mason returned to school as a senior this week.

As a prelude, Whittier High held a welcome back assembly that brought Mason and his parents together with the people who saved his life: Dan Whittington, Whittier High’s track coach at the practice, who administered CPR until the police and paramedics arrived, and Whittier Police Chief Jeff Piper and Officer Tim Roberts.

While Mason continues to make progress, including walking on his own, carrying on conversation, he is still working on regaining his vision.

“Mason is an extraordinary example of someone who has defied all odds, valiantly and courageously fighting for his own recovery and becoming an inspiration to everyone within the Whittier Union High School District and Whittier communities,” said Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson. “Mason’s return to school demonstrates his exceptional spirit and continued commitment to live and thrive.”

Whittier Union and Tellez’s peers have rallied behind Mason since the tragedy, visiting him in the hospital, writing him notes, wearing T-shirts with the supportive message, “Live Everyday Like A Mason

Day,” and organizing a track team run from Whittier, Pioneer, La Serna, Santa Fe and California high schools to PIH Health, where he received his medical care.

Mason’s parents, Ellen and Chuck, said they would like to thank everyone in the Whittier community, Whittier High School’s students and staff, for the ongoing love and support their son and family have received throughout Mason’s recovery.

“The outpouring of support and affection from Mason’s friends has gone a long way to help us find strength, and this welcome celebration meant the world to us,” Ellen Tellez said. “It’s my hope that Mason’s story will touch a student who ever considered giving up. Maybe Mason, in some way, will motivate them to keep going, stay positive and keep their spirits up.”

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

**MASON:** Whittier Union High School District Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson embraces Whittier High School student Mason Tellez, who is also joined by Whittier High School track coach Dan Whittington, whose heroic actions saved Mason's life.

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*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.*

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