# Walnut Valley Unified School District Kids First... Every Student, Every Day



# Safer Together, Greater Together **Classroom Instruction Begins** in Walnut Valley USD

Schools come to life with the sights and sounds of children laughing, playing, and learning.

fter 402 days of school closures, classroom doors have finally opened to students and staff.

The long-awaited spring return to in-person daily instruction launched with kindergarten through fifth grade students on April 19.

Teachers and staff members greeted children with an immediate introduction to the "new normal" rules of mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing.

During first day campus tours, Maple Hill Elementary teachers directed children to hold their arms out like airplane wings to mark the 3-feet physical distancing protocol.

"If someone is in your airplane then say get out of my airplane!" said first-grade teacher Ashley League.

Kindergarten teachers turned desks into little Jeeps with construction paper tires, headlights, and personalized license plates to help make redesigned classrooms more kid friendly.

Youngsters couldn't wait to take their cars on test drives while gripping pretend steering wheels!

"I'm so excited to be in school,"

shared third grader Leah Johnson in Samantha

Trejo's class, where desk shields were decorated with motivational sayings like 'Aim for the Stars' and 'Focus on the Good.' Educators led simultaneous instruction for in-person "Roomers" and distance learning "Zoomers" for the last six weeks of school.

Sixth grade cohorts became acquainted with their new middle school campuses before being joined by seventh and eighth grade cohorts on April 26.

At Suzanne Middle School, Language Arts teacher Lauri Ujita passed out packs of "We Are O-Fish-Ally Back" goldfish crackers to mark the occasion.

"I wondered how tall the kids were going to be in person!" commented Chaparral Middle School Language Arts teacher Enoch Choi.

"They've really grown!"

The "A" and "B" middle school cohorts returned two days a week on alternating days with remote learning the remainder of the week.

> "This is a brand-new experience teaching with my mask on!" remarked Language Arts teacher Jennifer Flannigan about the "unconventional year."

"I'm not sure how loud I'm supposed to be!"

High school students returned for all-day academic support with enrichment and socialization opportunities offered during tutorial periods.

Exclusive events were offered each week for the Class of 2021 including movie nights and yearbook signing.

Diamond Bar High "Senior Centers" on April 30 featured canvas painting, succulent garden, karaoke, paper flower crafting, escape room, and more.

"It was especially nice to be able to see my friends and teachers, some of them for the first time since quarantine started!" shared senior Breanna Yang.

"The activities were super fun as well!"

# Message from the Superintendent



Educational Community, I hope that our Walnut

Valley students, staff, and families are enjoying a welldeserved summer break. After what has undoubtedly been the most unprecedented year and a half in public education, I am extremely

excited and thankful to welcome back all of our students to a more traditional form of schooling. As of today, our students will be able to return to inperson, full-time instruction beginning on August 9 as we kick-off the 2021/2022 school year. As we have maintained since the beginning of the pandemic, we will follow the safety protocols and procedures as outlined by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (we will update our families on the most current and relative guidelines as we approach the start of the new school year).

While this has certainly been a challenging time for all students, staff, and families, I do hope that we, as parents and educators, take time this summer to acknowledge and celebrate the many accomplishments of our kids over the past 18 months. In addition to traditional academic achievement, I have enjoyed hearing stories about students who learned to play an instrument, cook a meal, plant a garden, drive a car, etc. I am tremendously proud of the perseverance of our students, staff, and families in Walnut Valley.

This year's motto and approach for our District is, "Reconnect, Restore, Reimagine." As we return to school, our staff will prioritize building relationships as the foundation to learning. I am confident that our educators will be well prepared, as they have continually demonstrated in the past, to assist our students and families in reconnecting back into a traditional school system, which continues to serve as one of the very best school districts in America.

Welcome Back!

Sincerely, Robert P. Taylor, Ed.D. Superintendent

# **Cap and Gown Day!** Grads End High School Career on a High Note



n-person graduation ceremonies held May 27 ignited emotions of hopeful reflection and acknowledgement of a promising future after 14-months of uncertainty.

Walnut High School celebrated 569 seniors wearing caps and gowns (and face masks) during the 51st Commencement held in the Ken Gunn Stadium.

"No one can take away this feeling of pure relief, achievement, and joy radiating through all of us right now," exclaimed Class President Destiny Trujillo. "You earned this, you deserve this, so bask in the bliss!"

The Class of 2021 will forever be remembered for enduring their entire senior year in remote learning due to the pandemic.

At Diamond Bar High School, 614 graduates were recognized in the 7 p.m. commencement ceremony.

'These past four years have been a time of challenge and unprecedented change," said valedictorian speakers Pailey Kao and Breanna Yang. "We have emerged stronger and smarter, more determined, and more confident."

The duo told classmates they could even become "superheroes in a different sense" with the endless opportunities before them.

It could be curing cancer, being the next president, or winning the Nobel prize, they offered.

"All of our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them!"





Superintendent Dr. Robert Taylor presented the Spirit Cup Trophy to Quail Summit Elementary on May 17 for having the most participation in the 50th Anniversary 5K/1K Virtual Fun Run hosted by the Walnut Valley Educational Foundation. Teacher Cindy Giang's class was also recognized for outstanding involvement.



We're proud to spotlight eight of our stellar seniors in this edition of Outlook! As you will see, these students represent the best in Walnut Valley with dedication and commitment to academic excellence and a wide variety of extracurricular activities.

**CONGRATULATIONS!** 

# **Diamond Bar High**



## **Michelle Chang**

California Polytechnic University, Pomona, 3.83 GPA Taken 4 AP Courses, CIF 2017 and 2018 Girls Golf Central Division Team Champions, Girls Golf Team 4 years varsity player, co-captain for 2 years.

"After pushing myself pretty hard during the pandemic, I remembered that we all need breaks to stay healthy. And in fact, taking a couple days off allowed me to work better in the long run!"



#### **Harris Daud** University of Southern California,

Marshall Business School, 3.88 GPA

Taken 10 AP Courses, Duke Moot Court National Champion 2021, AP Scholar with Distinction, LA County Mock Trial Finalist 2018 and 2019, Debate Club president, Finance Club president, Student Board Representative.

"My favorite DBHS memories came from the three years I spent with the Mock Trial Team. The competitive spirit in that room mixed with our animated personalities gave way for many fun times!"



## Vasili Magaziotis

University of California, Los Angeles, 3.5 GPA

Taken 5 AP Courses, Marching Band Drum Major, Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Track and Field, Boy Scouts Senior Patrol Leader.

"I always looked forward to Symphony Orchestra rehearsals because of how much fun we would have regardless of the occasion. We had to work hard at times but at least we could do that together!"



## Chelsea Wu

## University of Chicago, 4.0 GPA

Taken 11 AP Courses, National Merit Scholarship Winner, Bach Festival Winner - Piano, National AP Scholar, Varsity Basketball captain, Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, Wind Ensemble, Marching Band, CSF president, Sunshine Club secretary.

"This past year taught me the importance of community. While the Class of 2021 has always been tightknit, surviving the pandemic together reminded me of the strength, drive, and compassion each of my peers have."

# Walnut High



## Joanne Chang

United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, 3.92 GPA

Taken 5 AP Courses, All-Hacienda League First Team Academic Award, Varsity Girls Basketball, Junior Varsity Softball, Amnesty Club president, Operation Smile vice president, Fellowship of Christian Athletes secretary.

"Going through the pandemic, I learned the importance of having the confidence to stand alone, courage to make difficult decisions, and compassion to advocate for yourself and others."



## **Prabhleen Kaur**

University of California, Berkeley, 4.0 GPA

Taken 6 AP Courses, IB Diploma Candidate, National Merit Scholarship Recipient, PLTW Computer Science pathway, FBLA co-president, French Honors Society, AP Scholar with Honor, 1st Place State HOSA Health Informatics.

"This past year has made it abundantly clear that I have an endless number of things to be thankful for. I hope to take this lesson forward forever, never forgetting to see the countless positives in my day-today life."



## **Jonathan Steele**

University of Texas at Austin, 3.98 GPA

Taken 8 AP Courses, National Merit Scholarship Finalist, John Philip Sousa Award, Most Outstanding and Inspirational Musician Awards, Marching Band, Track and Field, Jazz Band, National Honor Society president.

"During my time as a drum major, I was honored to be able to help younger musicians. I felt like I was making a difference in their lives by carrying on the legacy of the leaders I looked up to in the past."



## Mia Tran

University of California, San Diego, 3.92 GPA

Taken 4 AP Courses, IB Diploma Candidate. MVP Award JV Girls Basketball, Fellowship of Christian Athletes co-president, L.I.F.T. Club president, Mock Trial Team district attorney, JV Girls Basketball captain.

"My favorite memories from Walnut High were senior year adventures with friends on spontaneous hikes, lunches, and metro trips during quarantine."

# **State Recognition**

# **Garrett Lim Named 2021 Presidential Award Finalist**

alnut High School science teacher Garrett Lim has been honored as a California finalist for the 2021 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). He is among three exceptional science teachers lauded for



# **Diamond Bar High National Moot Court Champs!**

iamond Bar High School seniors Harris Daud and Crystal Tsao were crowned winners of the virtual 2021 National Moot Court competition hosted by Duke University on March 6-7.

Math teachers Letitia Thomas and Margaret Ku coach the school's Mock Trial Team with support from L.A. County Deputy District Attorney Angela Brunson.

After months of preparation, ten Diamond Bar High students vied online from Thomas classroom with over 50 teams from around the nation. The twomember Moot Court teams were given a fictitious court case with a Constitutional argument. Students wrote their own 10-minute arguments both for and against an issue, learned 20 precedent-setting court cases, and were questioned the entire time before giving a rebuttal. After several rounds of competition, Team 47 (Harris and Crystal) advanced through the heavy competition in the quarterfinal and semifinal matches. During the finals, in front of a virtual courtroom of spectators and after being questioned by a panel of six law student "judges" Team 47 was awarded the coveted top honor! The dynamic duo was recognized for their exceptional performance by the WVUSD Board of Trustees on April 21. "It is truly an amazing accomplishment - the law they have to learn, the arguments they have to write, and the amazing grace they showed handling the questions they were asked," Thomas said.



excellence during an unprecedented year of remote learning during the COVID-19 viral pandemic.

"The teachers recognized today are giving students the tools to help them tackle difficulties, find creative solutions, ask questions, and be the problem-solvers

we need for the challenges of tomorrow," said State Superintendent Tony Thurmond.

Lim has been teaching for 14 years and helped develop and currently teaches the school's first-ever International Baccalaureate Higher Level Chemistry course.

"To be honored as a finalist has been a surreal experience and can be attributed to the Walnut High School community," Lim said.

Lim credits support from Instructional Dean Barbie Cole, Principal Dr. Ryan Maine, and fellow chemistry educators around the country for their support and collaboration.

"They helped foster my professional growth to even be in a position to apply for this award." Senior Sabrina Li nominated her chemistry teacher for the recognition.

"Mr. Lim has been the most memorable and kindest STEM teacher I've ever had," said Li who will attend Johns Hopkins University in the fall.

"He inspires me to work hard every day and I would not be where I am without him." National PAEMST winners will be announced next fall.

Each PAEMST applicant was required to display subject mastery, appropriate use of instructional methods and strategies, lifelong learning, and leadership in education outside the classroom, and 30-minute video lesson. National PAEMST winners will be announced next fall.

"I hope for more success on the national level, but I am honestly blessed to even have made it this far!" Lim said.

"Congratulations Harris and Crystal - we are so proud of you!"

# **Construction Update**

# The following projects are made possible by community support of Measure WV. Thank you!

Construction is progressing after delays due to COVID-19 pandemic manufacturing shutdowns.



Architectural rendering of new multipurpose room with kindergarten classrooms at Walnut Elementary School.



# **Collegewood Elementary:** New Two-Story 14 Classroom

Building Construction and site work is set to be completed over summer break and ready for the new school year.

# Diamond Bar High School:

## Modernization of 500 Building

Making an entrance! New air conditioning units were delivered via helicopter on June 11. The campus was shut down so the baseball field could become a staging area. Take a virtual tour of the new science classrooms at: https:// bit.ly/3xZfKYs. Projected completion in Winter 2021.

Upper bridge, steel stairs, and concrete walkway have been installed at entrance near gymnasium. Projected completion in Winter 2021.

# **Upcoming Projects:**

**Diamond Bar High School 400 Library Building Modernization Walnut High School Gymnasium Evergreen Elementary School Playground/Staff Parking Vejar Elementary School Parking Lot Modifications** Walnut Elementary School New MPR and Kindergarten Buildings **South Pointe Middle School Music Building South Pointe Middle School Flooring Suzanne Middle School Music Building** Suzanne Middle School Gymnasium Suzanne Middle School Two Story Classroom Building

By Students, For Students Student-designed "chill out" chair unveiled at Collegewood



ollegewood Elementary fifth graders worked with Forcore representatives this spring to create a special piece of furniture for the school's new two-story classroom building.

The resulting rocking foam "chill out" chair was unveiled during the first in-person assembly of the school year on May 25

# **Teacher Appreciation Week DBHS Educator Granted Random Acts of Helpfulness**



iamond Bar High School Drama teacher Jared of the Opera" concert rehearsal on a recent Monday

Helpfulness.

After a year in COVID-19 lockdown, Kaitz finally had and wigs – ready to practice in front of a huge green

The other half of the ensemble was joining from home via Zoom.

"I'll also be recording their parts and after I edit it all shared as he dashed around helping students with last minute adjustments.

performing the signature song Kaitz was lauded for providing an inclusive theater program that

allows every student to feel accepted

and to be comfortable to be their most authentic self

Instructional Dean Julie Galindo nominated Kaitz

detailing his seamless transition from an in-person to online learning platform.

Students quickly chimed in to sing his praises

"This student designed chair will be in each classroom allowing our students to have a place to nurture their hearts so their minds are ready for learning," said Principal Dr. Mary Wendland.

Innovation Design team members Sydney Liptak, Alina Bovee Carter, Hunter Reed, Sophia Teodsoio, Rocko De Los Reyes, Brandon Zhang, Evan Romero, and Danika Pe brainstormed ideas during weekly after school Zoom meetings.

The new cushioned blue and white ground seat features inspirational graphics like Keep Calm and Smile.

"It looks so cool with all the designs on it!" said 11-year-old Liptak.

"We all collaborated and worked really hard - and it paid off!"

In addition to a school-wide wellness center called The Landing Spot, each classroom is equipped with a calming corner that serves as a safe space for students to take breaks during the learning day and regulate their emotions.

Brandon Zhang, age 11, said that movement was at the top of his concept list and that the chair needed to be a comfortable place to take a break from learning.

He was very happy with the final result.

"When I first saw it, I thought you could relax here and deal with your emotions!"

costumes with safety pins!" he quipped.

"He's been such a lifeline for all of us during this crazy Tamavo.

"He's been such an amazing ray of sunshine especially during COVID-19 his class has been like a

# **Top High Schools** WVUSD High Schools Named U.S. News' Best of 2021

Diamond Bar and Walnut High Schools are once again ranked as top performing high schools in the nation in the 2021 U.S. News and World Report of "Best High Schools." This year, Diamond Bar High ranked #23 in Los Angeles



Metro Schools, #55 in California, and #417 in the nation. Additionally, Diamond Bar placed #161 in STEM high schools. Walnut High scored #30 in Los Angeles Metro Schools, #72 in California, and #512 in the nation. The U.S. News Best High Schools rankings include data on more than 24,000 public high schools in 50 states and the District of Columbia. Nearly 18,000 schools in the country, and 1,675 in California, were reviewed for performance in state assessments, graduation rates, and how well they prepare students for college.

See full report at: https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools.



# GOGE

Walnut Valley USD intended to commemorate its landmark 50th anniversary last fall, but COVID-19 lockdown dashed plans for a big celebration.

Taking a virtual pivot, the District proudly presented a "50 Years of Excellence" documentary featuring treasured stories of Walnut Valley's rich history on May 22. Visit <u>www.wvusd50.org</u> to view the documentary along with decades of signature school photos and WVUSD memories.

A special thanks to beloved historian Ray McMullen, incredible on-camera stars, dedicated production team, and generous sponsors for making this milestone film possible!

## Jason Wright, WVUSD Alumnus, Washington Football Team President

"My love of sports all started as a seven-year-old on the Evergreen Elementary Track Team. I still remember going to the local track meet at Walnut High (when it was still a dirt track) and hearing '1982 Boys line up on the track'. I remember the smells and the excitement and the nervousness to run a relay with my teammates. For a long time, I had an Evergreen walkathon lime green fanny back because I loved it so much when I ran track. It's probably worth some money now as throwback 80s gear!"

### Jane Dyer-Smith, WVUSD Alumna, Retired Collegewood **Elementary teacher**

"Walnut Valley USD is a lifetime of memories for me and my family spanning over 60 years. I feel so much pride when I think of the love, learning, and exciting adventures with teachers and mentors that guided my journey. This district is a wonderful place to be!

## Ray McMullen, Retired Administrator, 50th Anniversary historian

"The cast iron school bell from the original Lemon School (circa 1893-1920) was moved to the Walnut School in 1920 and when the stucco building was torn down to build new classrooms (now the Ron Hockwalt Academies), the contractor sold the bell to Disneyland. When Superintendent Cy Morris found out, he sued him to get it back! The historic bell has been on display at the new Walnut Elementary School on Glenwick Avenue since it opened in 1977."

## **Rachel Scott, WVUSD Alumna, ABC News Congressional** Correspondent

"Maple Hill Elementary really laid the foundation for what I'm doing now. My fourth-grade teacher Miss (Kelly) Morris, who is now the principal, pushed me out of my comfort zone and gave me the opportunity to have the lead role in the school play. At that time, I was nervous and shy, but she believed in me. I'm so immensely grateful that I had a teacher like her!"

## Dr. Nancy Hogg, Retired Assistant Superintendent

"As Superintendent, Dr. Ron Hockwalt was the model of compassion and inclusiveness and respect. Every year, he visited every classroom. And because he had such a personal connection with people he wrote every teacher a personal letter every year. Ron loved Walnut Valley – it was part of his soul!"

### Helen Papadopoulos, WVUSD Alumna, Suzanne Middle **School Teacher**

"Walnut Valley is a family, a team, and it's home to a lot of us. When I joined the Suzanne Middle School staff, I was teaching with my former teachers and now I'm teaching with my former students. How much better can it get!'

## Dr. Jeff Jordan, WVUSD Alumnus, Former Assistant **Superintendent**

"Walnut High School has always been about relationships and opportunity. Principal Dr. Ken Gunn was a tremendous leader who inspired people, he had vision; he talked people into doing things they didn't know they could do. If you think about WHS today, it's because of what Ken Gunn did in that school community."



Walnut Valley Unified School District 880 S. Lemon Ave. Walnut, CA 91789-2931 **T** (909) 595-1261 • **F** (909) 839-1214 www.wvusd.org Dr. Robert P. Taylor Superintendent

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2021-22 **SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS** AUGUST 9

Let's Talk! - We want to be responsive to your needs and invite you to send questions, comments, and suggestions to www.wvusd.org.

# **Mustang Messages**

ver 1,200 heartfelt notes of hope, loss, friendship, and comfort are on display at Walnut High marking the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 school closure.

The Mustang Messages outreach effort has given teens an opportunity to reflect back on a year of distance learning, isolation, and missed experiences.

Student leaders from Key Club, National Honor Society, Leo Club, Hands 4 Hope, and Care and Connect collected notes from students, staff, parents, and community members.

"Every person's experience is so unique and I feel like this project sheds a light on everyone's experiences," shared Key Club President Annika Le.

Volunteers prepared by printing, cutting, sorting, and tucking notes into clear plastic nametag holders. Some of the notes, meant

for seniors, students, and faculty members, contained questions asking "What do you feel like you missed out on?" or "What did you gain this year?"

On Saturday, March 13, they gathered in two-hour shifts at the tennis court fencing on La Puente Road to secure the notecards with ribbons. The messages were neatly arranged to spell out "WHS" in blue and gold school colors, followed by a huge bright red heart. The final step was outlining the 20-foot-long display in lights.

"All these little notes talk about how people miss their school life and giving us encouraging words," said senior and Key Club vice president Nishabell Rubio.

"It's actually really sweet to see it all come together!"

The Walnut High Community Club supported the project with signage and supplies.

"We hope our students, especially our seniors know we care and are here to support them!" said parent Lily Eibert, the club's president.

"Thank you to our community who wrote all the kind messages to Walnut High School," said social studies teacher and Key Club advisor Justin Panlilio.

"For many, it's been a rough ride through the pandemic and distance learning was a challenge - particularly on our mental health," he shared.

"Here we are making connections and doing what we can to bring us all together."

# Climate Change Researcher Walnut High Sophomore **Gets Top Science & Engineering Fair Award**



High School sophomore Jason Wang scored the top award during the 71st Annual Los Angeles County Science & Engineering Fair this spring and entry into the prestigious 2021 **Regeneron** International Science & Engineering Fair (ISEF).

His winning research project was titled, "Polar Vortex and Long-Duration Events: Climate Change in the Upper Midwest and Canada."

The 15-year-old investigated whether areas most affected by a meandering jet stream have also experienced an increase in "stuck" weather patterns such as longer cold spells or heat waves. Wang concluded global warming affects various regions differently and climate change also leads to colder weather in especially in the upper Midwest.

In addition to being designated an ISEF finalist as one of LA County's top 7 projects, Wang received 1st Place in his Earth/Space Sciences category for the second year in a row.

During the ISEF virtual science fair held May 3-6, Wang received a Special Organizational Award - an Honorable Mention from the American Meteorological Society.

The intense international competition included 1,900 finalists, nearly 1,500 projects, with 128 projects in the Earth and Environmental Sciences category.

'These science fairs are more than just the prizes for me," Wang said.

"My favorite part of doing these projects is meeting and connecting with fellow scientists in the field!"

# An Inspiring Tradition

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### **Howard Alcosser, Retired DBHS Calculus Teacher**

"Opening day at Diamond Bar High School in 1982 set the stage for students, staff, and parents. From hot air balloon rides to the first day rally and Knott's Berry Farm field trip - DBHS was different. It was a place you wanted to be and it was exciting!"

#### Kelly Morris, WVUSD Alumna, Maple Hill Elementary Principal

"I want to give my students the experiences that my sisters and I had in Walnut Valley - that's what I live for. We care about kids, we care about each other, and we care about wellbeing."

#### Steve Acciani, Diamond Bar High School Instrumental Music Director

"There's a depth of character that develops through performing arts and we are fortunate to have a District and community that supports that. What Walnut Valley enables us to do with kids is unprecedented!"

### **Corey Wicks, Walnut High School Instrumental Music** Director

"Our goal is to make every student feel valued and that they can accomplish anything. It doesn't matter if you've never seen a flute – we'll give you one and help you learn how to play it!

# More at www.wvusd50.org!

# **Ron Hockwalt Academies Building Connections**

or the past three years, Ron Hockwalt Academies Leadership students have been building connections with the HARTT Center's SELPA Adult Transition Program (ATP) class. The HARTT (Hockwalt Adult Resource and Transition Training) Center serves 18 to 22-yearold students with disabilities who are receiving a high school certificate of completion along with important life skills as they transition into adulthood.

"Our ATP students look forward to these Tuesday meetings and really love all the students in Leadership!" said adult transition teacher Linda Woods.

"Both sets of students have grown to care for each other deeply."

The groups were able to continue to their weekly sessions throughout school closures on Zoom.

"During a time when so many were confused and lives were stretched, the students from RHA and HARTT found joy in encouraging and supporting each other," said Leadership teacher Marla Rickard

"They laughed together, learned together and each impacted another just by being present and real."

"We have so many funny stories to share and these bonds will never be broken - even as students move on!" Woods added.

On May 27, the ATP students presented a donation of lily pads to the RHA Leadership group for the school's new Wellness Garden koi pond.

"I am in awe of the incredible community that continues to develop within our site," Rickard added.

"Social Emotional Learning (SEL) enriched all our lives during a time when we needed it most and it is because these students shared hope and love to each other."

To learn more about Walnut Valley Schools visit our website at www.wvusd.org