



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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To: All newspapers
July 5, 2017 —Col. 17/18-01

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Sparks of pride

By Susan Salcido, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

Across Santa Barbara County, thousands of young people have just graduated into a new phase of their lives, completing one portion of their education and preparing to begin another, whether in school or career.

It is with an abundance of pride that we see how much our students have grown and learned, thanks to the remarkable educators, staff members, and community partners who played such crucial roles. We are profoundly grateful for all their efforts and results.

We also think ahead to the class that will begin as kindergartners in the fall, and will graduate in 2030. There is much we need to do to prepare for their futures. Many of these children will one day enter professions that have not yet been created. Their futures depend on our laser-like focus on education.

As educators, we must face our challenges straight on, continuing to ensure equity in public education and hold ourselves accountable for providing the best education and support for all students in every classroom. At the same time, we must remain mindful that it is not a challenge to see excellence in our county's schools — the challenge is to see all of it.

The cycle in our schools, with current students graduating and new students entering the system each year, is not unlike the cycle our country celebrates as we mark our independence every July 4. Every spark of fireworks symbolizes our nation's accomplishments and sources of pride. America was founded on the principles of equality, freedom, and justice for all, ideals that stand as a beacon for nations far and wide. These sparks of pride in our country, and our countrymen and women, shine with special brilliance on the Fourth of July.

For our schools, these sparks of pride are innumerable. Mariana de Leon, the recent valedictorian of the Santa Maria High School class of 2017, is just one example. She came to this country as a toddler and faced much adversity, but has turned her experiences into opportunities

for growth, inspiration, and action. Mariana represents a class of students who are passionate and committed to learning and giving back to their community. After serving as ASB president, vice president of the national champion Future Farmers of America team, and captain of the girls basketball team, Mariana will be attending Harvard in the fall. She is one of three graduates from each comprehensive high school in Santa Maria to attend the prestigious university this fall.

For all our accomplished students countywide, we acknowledge that their successes are a credit to themselves and their community. These students certainly know, as soccer legend Pelé once stated, “Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.”

Santa Barbara County is fortunate to have educators, businesses, and nonprofit and civic leaders working in partnership to provide the range of experiences that have such an enormous impact on young lives. An enriching education enables students to make a difference in the world they will inherit, value liberty, and have the courage to pursue what is right and what is good. The sparks of success are everywhere.

As former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said, “Those who won our independence... valued liberty as an end and as a means. They believed liberty to be the secret of happiness and courage to be the secret of liberty.”

Celebrating our nation’s independence helped renew once again our ideals of liberty and courage, and we will continue to work hard to help students develop the skills to apply those ideals for the common good. We look forward to beginning a new school year with hopefulness, gratitude, and an enthusiastic resolve to do all we can to keep those sparks lit.

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