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Banners to Fly for College-bound Seniors

The City of Perris will honor graduating high school seniors who attend college with banners placed atop light poles along Perris Boulevard.

City Council members unanimously approved the "Student Banner Recognition Program" at their April 25 meeting, saying the new initiative honors and recognizes graduating seniors and encourages other students to complete their high school education and seek college degrees.

Students who live in Perris and attend City high schools are eligible to have their photos included on banners. So are graduates who live in Perris but attend high schools outside the City limits. The program encompasses 2016-2017 school year graduating seniors enrolled in college this fall. Up to 200 Perris Union High School District and Val Verde Unified School District students will be eligible to earn a banner.

Students and their families should contact their individual schools for more information.



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas stands with Citrus Hill High School seniors who pledged to continue their education by enrolling in colleges and universities.

Elected officials heaped praise on the banner initiative, which mirrors a similar program honoring Perris residents who are serving in the Armed Forces.

"It's important for students to be recognized for their academic achievements," said Perris Mayor Michael Vargas. "We want them to go to college, graduate and hopefully come back to Perris to make their contributions here."

Vargas attended a "signing day" celebration at Citrus Hill High School, where students pen their names to a banner and announce where they are planning to attend colleges or universities. Vargas noted that the class of 2017 at Citrus Hill includes 350 students bound for higher education, and 39 valedictorians, pupils who have maintained a 4.0-grade point average.

"Those are the kinds of student we should be honoring," Vargas said. "They provide inspiration to their younger peers."

City Councilwoman Tonya Burke agreed.

She visited the California Military Institute May 4 when seniors put their names to the post-secondary schools they plan on attending.

"Higher education is near and dear to my heart," Burke said. "Students need to do well in their classes; parents need to stand behind and support their children. Teachers are there to provide guidance. Today solidifies why it is important for us as a City to invest in and celebrate our youngsters."



Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke is all smiles as she poses with California Military Institute Cadet Jackeline Villegas and her mother, Luz, during a "signing day ceremony" at the campus. Jackeline, 17, will attend UC Irvine in September.

"Proud of my achievements"

The signing day mood at CMI took on a festive tone as one after another senior inked their name on a banner and announced to friends, faculty and fellow students where they will attend school in September.

The signees included Christopher Nunez, 18, and Jackeline Villegas, 17, who will be attending UC Irvine. Nunez plans to study philosophy and attend law school; Villegas will study psychology with a goal of becoming a school counselor.

"This is an important day," Nunez said. "It's the culmination of the hard work we've done in high school. I'm excited and ready for the next phase in life."

Jackeline's mom, Luz, was on hand when she signed her letter of intent to attend college. Jackeline Villegas said she knows she will be attending a prestigious university with top-notch students from around the country and the world but feels she's ready to succeed.

"Ever since I was little I knew that I would go to college and that it would be a big deal," she said. "I have a passion for helping people. I am very proud of my accomplishments."



Citrus Hill High School seniors at the campus's signing day ceremony, where 350 students signed pledges to continue their post-secondary education.

Role models

Perris Mayor Pro Tem David Starr Rabb said the banner program "is good for the pride" of the community and its schools. He said the participating school districts should determine whether to add additional requirements to earn a banner, such as grade point averages.

City Councilman Malcolm Corona, a Perris High School math instructor, said honoring college-bound seniors "promotes the value of education" in Perris.

"Our students at all of our high schools are working hard and have the expectation they will go to college," Corona said. "It is important that we as a City acknowledge that milestone. It's a milestone we can all celebrate."

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers says the banner program honors role models who serve to inspire other Perris youths and called college-bound seniors "wonderful examples for our youth to look up to."

Rogers said Perris high schools are graduating more college-bound seniors than ever and those who attend college are worthy of special acclaim.

"I am so glad that our City is participating with our local school districts to honor our college-bound graduates," she said. "They are truly role models to follow."



CMI senior Christopher Nunez puts his signature on a banner during a May 4 "signing day ceremony" at the campus. Christopher, 18, will attend UC Irvine.

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