



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Bonita Unified Alumna Helps Students Prepare for Healthcare Careers Through MedReach

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – When Bonita High School Class of 2022 graduate Alexa Garcia arrived at UCLA for her freshman year, she was hoping to find community among the nearly 46,000 students inhabiting the university's vast campus. Now a senior at UCLA, Garcia eventually found her way to MedReach, a UCLA outreach organization whose students serve as mentors for L.A.-area high school students interested in pursuing a career in the healthcare industry.

MedReach offers six "Ready for Healthcare" seminars during the year, both online and in-person, where high school students learn about short-term and long-term careers in the medical field, learn medical terminology through puzzles and games, and examine case studies to observe doctor-patient interaction.

"There is so much information out there about healthcare. It can be overwhelming," Garcia said. "Our main goal is to make it digestible and fun. It is fun to learn about these things, and for high school students, it's important to let them know they have many options in college and career. It's a good feeling to talk to the students and provide guidance that will really impact their lives."

Now president of MedReach, Garcia is majoring in molecular biology with a minor in developmental psychology, and is planning a career as a pediatrician. In her junior year, as external vice-president, Garcia began reaching out to high school counselors to give them information about the healthcare seminars, including Bonita Unified Career Technical Education (CTE) Coordinator Vanessa Tilford, who was Garcia's counselor at Bonita High.

Through Tilford, Garcia arranged for Bonita and San Dimas high school students to come to UCLA for a "Ready for Healthcare" seminar during the 2024-25 school year. Garcia and her MedReach cohort talked to the students about potential careers in healthcare, what they can expect when they arrive on campus, and the steps they will need to take to transition smoothly from high school to college.

MORE



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"One question I get asked a lot is 'I'm not 18 yet, what can I do now in my community?'" Garcia said. "We help them to find extracurricular activities, like gaining lab experience. One way is to encourage them to email college professors and ask to come in and perform voluntary research, which is becoming a lot more common for high school students."

Bonita High School rising senior Megan Leung attended a MedReach seminar as a junior, along with nearly two dozen of her classmates. Leung is looking toward a career in the medical field, and already knew about MedReach from an acquaintance of hers who attends UCLA. The one-day seminar was an eye-opener for Leung, who was eager to meet UCLA medical students and ask them questions.

"MedReach is a great program. I highly recommend it," Leung said. "They really want you to enter the medical field and succeed. The games are really fun, you learn about short-term and long-term careers in the medical industry, and you learn how to navigate college. I was very impressed. And it's so inspiring to see a Bonita High alum there, welcoming us and making us feel like we were already in college."

For the upcoming 2025-26 school year, Leung will be paired with a UCLA medical student for a yearlong mentorship.

During the 2024-25 school year, MedReach served about 150 students, mainly from low-income and underrepresented areas of Los Angeles. Several students who have participated in MedReach seminars over the years have been accepted into UCLA, including one student who is currently a MedReach mentor.

PHOTO:

BUSD_UCLAMEDREACH: Bonita High School Class of 2022 graduate and current UCLA senior Alexa Garcia is president of the university's MedReach club, an outreach organization whose students serve as mentors for L.A.-area high school students interested in pursuing a career in the healthcare industry. Garcia is looking toward a career as a pediatrician.

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