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CONTACT: Lauren Creiman, (909) 833-9853

Bonita Unified Students Earn Certification in Cosmetology, Barbering Through ROP Partnership

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Bonita Unified students are getting a head start on their careers in barbering and cosmetology – and preparing to enter the workforce after graduation – through a partnership with the San Antonio Regional Occupational Program (ROP), which provides after-school courses in the two subjects at no cost to students.

Bonita High School seniors Alexis Miranda, Bianca Estrella and Selina Heng became the first Bonita Unified students to complete the cosmetology class at San Antonio ROP in more than 20 years, each putting in 1,000 hours to learn skills in hair cutting, styling, and coloring, manicuring/pedicuring, and skin care services.

“My mom is a hairstylist so I wanted to follow in her footsteps, and when I heard about this program, I figured it could benefit my future and went for it,” said Miranda, who was the first Bonita Unified student to complete the program in fall 2023. “I learned so many skills and techniques. After I graduate I plan on working with my mom as a hairstylist, and I want to come back and do the barbering course once I have my cosmetology license.”

Upon completing their 1,000 hours – achieved by attending class for four hours each weekday over the course of nearly two years – each student received a certificate of mastery, indicating they have demonstrated the skills to pass the State Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, which would enable them to become licensed cosmetologists.

Estrella grew up with a love for doing hair and makeup, a skill she often practiced on her brothers. Her cosmetology teacher at Bonita High mentioned the San Antonio ROP course as a way to expand her skills, and with assistance from Career Technical Education (CTE) Coordinator Vanessa Tilford – who worked with San Antonio ROP to reintroduce the program to BUSD students – Estrella found herself working toward her certification.

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“I always knew college wasn’t the path I wanted to take, so when I found out about this program and that it could help me complete these requirements and prepare to start my career right at 18, I knew I had to do it,” Estrella said. “It’s a huge commitment, and I had to sacrifice some social activities along the way, but it was worth it.”

Estrella said she plans to take the state exam as soon as she turns 18 and has lined up a job to work as a hair stylist assistant once she graduates in June.

Heng echoed Estrella’s sentiment, noting that the program required hard work and intense hours, but the skills she learned, and the friendships forged with Estrella and Miranda, made it all worth it.

“I didn’t know anything about cosmetology before joining this program, and hairstyling and cutting wasn’t my main goal in this program, but once I realized I was good at it, I saw a future in it for me,” Heng said. “The hours were long, but I’ve really enjoyed the process of learning all these new things and I’ve made really good friends in this program who helped support me along the way.”

After news spread of Miranda, Estrella and Heng completing the program, more Bonita Unified students requested to join. Currently, there are seven students from Chaparral-Vista High, Bonita High and San Dimas High enrolled and working toward their certification in barbering or cosmetology.

Bonita Unified School District has focused on expanding its career technical education program during the 2023-24 school year by building partnerships with more industry professionals and introducing additional work-based learning opportunities. These experiences, including the renewed partnership with San Antonio ROP, aim to both connect to the District’s 14 CTE programs and extend beyond them, providing students with greater exposure to industry programs.

“While Bonita Unified has a high college attendance rate, we know that higher education is not the only option available to our students and want to ensure that every one of them sees a path to success,” Tilford said. “It has been inspiring to see these three young women commit themselves to this program and inspiring others to pursue it as well. It’s been a success on every level and we’re thrilled to see what the future of this partnership holds for BUSD students.”

PHOTO:

BUSD_COSMETOLOGY: Bonita High School seniors Selina Heng, Bianca Estrella and Alexis Miranda are the first Bonita Unified students in more than 20 years to complete their cosmetology certification through the San Antonio ROP.

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