

# Daily Pilot

SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 2020 /// Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent /// dailypilot.com

## Fred Navarro to retire as Newport-Mesa superintendent

He was appointed to the school district position in 2012. His last day is July 15.

BY ANDREW TURNER

The Newport-Mesa Unified School District has received and accepted a letter of retirement from Dr. Fred Navarro, the district superintendent.

District spokeswoman Annette Franco confirmed that the NMUSD board of education accepted Navarro's letter of retirement on Friday.

"It has been the highlight of my nearly 40-year career in education

to serve the Board of Newport-Mesa Unified School District," Navarro said in a statement released by the district. "The Board's focus on students, its commitment to the community and its unwavering support of parents makes NMUSD a beacon of excellence among all districts in Orange County and the state."

Navarro was appointed to serve as district superintendent in 2012. His last day serving in the position

will be July 15.

Deputy Supt. Russell Lee-Sung will serve as acting superintendent beginning July 16. Board President Martha Fluor said that Lee-Sung has been with the district for three years and currently works as its Chief Academic Officer.

Formerly the superintendent of the Lennox School District in Los Angeles County, Navarro began his

See *Navarro*, page A6



**DR. FRED NAVARRO** speaks during an event at the Newport-Mesa Unified School District offices in 2017.

Scott Smeltzer  
Staff  
Photographer

### CLASS OF 2020 SERIES

## Costa Mesa grad mastered English in a few short years



Photos by Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**COSTA MESA HIGH** senior Jennifer Henriquez Ayala poses in front of her school. Henriquez came to the United States as a seventh-grader knowing no other English words than "Hi, my name is Jennifer" and "I don't speak English." Five years later, she is the first student in the school's history to go from taking English Language Development (ELD) classes to AP English.

BY SARA CARDINE

When Jennifer Henriquez Ayala came with her family from El Salvador to California in 2014, the summer before her seventh-grade year, the only English she knew was "Hi, my name is Jennifer" and "I don't speak English."

She enrolled in English language development (ELD) courses at Costa Mesa Middle School, where she and her classmates found the challenge of learning a new tongue on top of a full schedule of classes a bit daunting.

"The first week of school we were all crying in the bathroom," Henriquez recalled. "It was really hard not being able to express how you felt or to have a conversation with an adult."

What a difference a few years makes. By the time the multitalented



**HENRIQUEZ SHARES**

her medals for English Learning Development, Physical Education, World Languages and the Seal of Excellence.

teen started her senior year last fall, she'd gone from taking ELD classes to enrolling in AP English.

Henriquez is one of 278 seniors graduating with Costa Mesa High School's class of 2020, having earned top grades despite a heavy course

load that included AP psychology, physics, advanced sports medicine and economics.

"I'm finishing the year with [all] A's — I've made that a priority — so I'm

See *Henriquez*, page A7



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**ASHER GREEN**, 18, a senior at Corona del Mar High School, is headed to Princeton University in the fall. Green currently holds a student pilot license.

## Corona del Mar High grad Asher Green flying high

BY HILLARY DAVIS

Asher Green was about 13 years old when he started making radio handoffs from his pilot dad's single-engine Mooney Ovation to air traffic controllers in the busy airspace over John Wayne Airport.

"I just thought that was pretty cool," Green said. "I definitely remember when I was first making radio calls, I'd always try to lower my voice."

Now 18 and about to graduate from Corona del Mar High School as a co-valedictorian, Green is qualified to fly solo. Soon, he hopes, he'll upgrade his student pilot license to private pilot license, which will allow him to have passengers. Along the way, he'll attend Princeton University.

By land, air and sea, Green has been an accomplished student — he was a member of the CDM varsity sailing team, which he gave up during his junior year to focus on

his flight training. He was also president of the speech and debate team.

Green is halfway to his private pilot license, which started last summer with ground school at Orange Coast College.

He recently passed his written test, wearing a mask in a room where "there was Purell everywhere." A practical exam is next. Once he's fully fledged, he can pursue some ratings that will allow him to fly more advanced aircraft into some more adventurous places. He's already planning to make Catalina Island — with its well-known narrow and sloping, but stunningly scenic, runway — one of his first trips.

Green is the son of Todd and Nancy Green and elder brother to Ella, an incoming senior at CDM. He's lived in Newport Beach his whole life, attending Harbor View Elementary and Corona del Mar Middle schools. He's

See *Green*, page A7

## Xolani Hodel left no stone unturned at Huntington Beach

BY ANDREW TURNER

It may feel like the end of an era for some who have watched Xolani Hodel compete in athletics at Huntington Beach High School over the last four years.

Hodel's freshman year was one for the books. She competed at the varsity level in volleyball, basketball, soccer and track and field.

There simply did not appear to be enough hours in the day for Hodel to do what she did, never mind the way she excelled in doing so.

Hodel played a big part in a pair of deep playoff runs during the winter sports season as a freshman. She played center for the girls' basketball team en route to the CIF Southern Section Division 1A championship game. She also was a forward for the girls' soccer team, which advanced to the CIF State Southern California



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**HUNTINGTON BEACH HIGH** senior Xolani Hodel will be playing beach volleyball for Stanford University.

See *Hodel*, page A7

## Estancia basketball to save a seat on the bench for Marcus Winters

BY SARA CARDINE

For Marcus Winters — an Estancia High School senior who's served for the past three years as manager of the boys' basketball team and will soon graduate — there will always be a seat on the bench inside the school gym.

That's because in addition to his official team credential, Winters has been an avid Eagles supporter and an essential part of the team, according to coach Xavier Castellano, known to players as "Coach Xavi."

Winters, who has Down syndrome, initially became involved with the team after attending games and practices with older brother Jackson. Over time, his presence became a powerful totem for the players, the coach said.

Castellano flashed back to a game against Rancho Alamitos High on Dec. 20, 2017, when Winters put on a uniform and hit the court as part of the starting five and famously executed a



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

**ESTANCIA HIGH** senior Marcus Winters walks with his mother Dora Danesi as his siblings and father walk behind.

successful layup.

"He scored two points for us. He was practicing a lot, and he didn't always make it, but he made it on that day" he said. "We won the game — the whole team was pumped up — it was a beautiful, beautiful feeling."

The coach said he'd like to extend Winters' contract, as it were, by having him return next year as a-

sistent coach.

"As long as I'm here I want him here with us," he said.

Still, for Winters, the prospect of graduation is bittersweet. It's exciting to move on to new pursuits but moving on sometimes means leaving behind beloved people and routines — seeing and talking with

See *Winters*, page A6

CLASS OF 2020 SERIES

# Laguna grad sets eyes on fashion world

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Anthony Ramirez said he's always liked art, but there was something about fashion that spoke to him — clothes, he said, were like watching Vincent van Gogh's paintings brought to life. Fashion was something that gave expression and showed who a person was through art.

"I've always loved the idea of fabrics going down the runway," Anthony said, "how it fits, how it can change a person."

So, maybe it's not much of a surprise that that's what Anthony decided he wanted to pursue after graduating from Laguna Beach High School on Thursday, along with about 254 other seniors in a drive-through ceremony at Guyer Field.

This fall, Anthony is leaving his hometown of Laguna Beach to attend the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles to study fashion design. He said he was up-cycling pairs of jeans at home and designing in-between his online classes, adding that it's been relieving to do fashion during the pandemic.

But, fashion wasn't always what he thought he wanted to do. In fact, Anthony said he had been planning to go into criminology — at least until he got diagnosed with Stage II Hodgkin's lymphoma, a blood cancer that targets the lymphatic system, just before he started his junior year of high school.

"I couldn't attend my junior year for my first semester because I had to have treatment, but ... at that time, [I thought] 'life is short,'" Anthony said. "You only have one. Whatever you want to do, just



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**ANTHONY RAMIREZ** is a graduating senior from Laguna Beach High School and is going to the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles to study fashion design.

do it. Do I want to be a criminologist because that's what people want me to do?"

Anthony said that once he completed treatment, he applied to FIDM. He is now in remission.

"This is full circle. Everything I've dreamt of and worked for ... I finally got into my dream college," Anthony said. "After, I ... had this moment of relief and this moment of, 'I finally did it, but you still haven't.' It's still kind of this moment of still keep going. Don't stop. Just keep going. I want to be a role model."

"I don't want to just be a fashion designer," he said.

Anthony said he hopes to enter the denim industry, adding that he felt there was a big industry for it and that he wanted to include culture in what he designed.

"Everyone wears denim," Anthony said. "I love denim because it's a way of showing androgyny. A man and a woman can wear jeans. Anyone can wear jeans. Anyone can wear the jeans — plus sizes, extra small, super tall, super short, super comfortable and being super proud of who they are."

As the coronavirus pandemic upended his senior year and very nearly made his graduation ceremony



Courtesy of Anthony Ramirez

**ANTHONY WAS** diagnosed with Stage II Hodgkin's lymphoma just before he started his junior year.

online, Anthony said that he looked for the silver lining.

"Now that [a typical graduation was] taken away from us, we can't just look back," Anthony said. "The past is the past. What's happening is happening. Just keep going. Don't let this stop you. They think it's a pause, but for me I think it's more of a reflection. What can I do to further myself now that I have this extra time?"

"Focusing on the negative just takes away the passion that all seniors have had, which is going to the real world and finally being able to do whatever we want," he said. "I don't think COVID-19 should take that away from us."

"We can always redo the graduation ceremony a few months later. There's always time to redo grad ceremony. There's no time to redo our passion, life, dreams and goals and we just have to sit on that," Anthony said.

While in high school, Anthony was part of the school's dance program since his freshman year and took a handful of Advanced Placement classes but said most of his classes were "very simple." He said his senior year was different, particularly because he chose to focus his efforts on a regional occupational program for fashion at Capistrano Valley High

See *Fashion*, page A6

# Sage Hill's Kate Miller stays on her path with collegiate running

BY HILLARY DAVIS

Kate Miller will be going on long runs a short drive away from home.

The Sage Hill School cross-country MVP and Newport Beach resident is bound for Chapman University in Orange, where she will run track and cross-country for the Panthers while studying business administration.

She said Sage Hill allowed her to indulge her interests academically and athletically. She played tennis in youth tournaments at Newport Beach Tennis Club and then as a freshman at Sage Hill but wanted more action, so she took up running as a sophomore.

She humbly says she's "not that great of a runner," but by senior year she was the cross-country team's MVP, earned first-team all-league honors and scored a seventh-place finish in the CIF-SS Cross Country Finals for Division 5 that helped her team qualify for the state meet. Her state time was 18:39, a personal best in the 5K and the third-best in school history.

She ran the 3,200-meter (12:57 PR) and 1,600-meter (5:49 PR) events in track and even dabbled in the discus. Her senior track season was cut off by the coronavirus pandemic, but she ran on her own and kept up the team's spirits with online workouts and a newsletter where she compiled fun facts, videos and memes to keep her friends connected to running.

Miller, 18, said she genuinely loves her sport, especially easy long runs.

"I don't always love the speed work and whatnot, but you always love the feeling after," she said.

"This always makes me feel better, it helps me sleep better, my mood is better, the people around me are more happy because I'm more happy."

Sunny and gracious, she said "being a consistent, reliable person that is kind to



Courtesy of Kate Miller

**KATE MILLER** was MVP for Sage Hill's girls' cross-country team her senior year.

others — I think Sage really reinforces that."

"We had a lot of group work and community work, and you just feel like you're kind of at home at Sage. Obviously I can't speak for how Chapman's gonna feel, but I would hope to have that same kind of comforting [feeling], like you feel you can do anything because no one's judging you."

Miller is the daughter of Keri and Lance Miller and twin sister to Ben, who will be going to Purdue University in Indiana in the fall. She grew up in Newport, attending Newport Coast Elementary and Harbor Day schools.

Miller considered colleges throughout California — University of Redlands, University of the Pacific, Santa Clara University — before deciding she most liked the one that happened to be the closest.

As a member of a smaller Division III sports program, she can emphasize the "student" part of "student-athlete."

She said Sage's head cross-country coach Nate Miller — no relation — emphasizes long-term success and enjoyment in running, which she knows she can keep with her.

"All you need's a pair of shoes and anywhere in the world, really," she said.

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# Back Bay/Monte Vista High became lifeline for Nathan Bautista

BY SARA CARDINE

Nathan Bautista was living in South L.A. in February 2019, hanging around with friends and shirking the usual responsibilities of high school when something happened that would change the course of his life forever.

His childhood friend, Daniel, 15, was shot and killed while walking home from school in what neighborhood residents believe may have been a set-up by local gang members. Bautista, now 18, recalls the fear he felt when hearing the news.

"That really opened my eyes to what I was doing," he recalled. "If that could happen to him, it could happen to me."

After all, his own outlook wasn't much better. Surrounded by bad influences, he barely attended classes and his grades were tanking as a result.

"I felt hopeless because how could I ever get out of this?" he said. "I really wanted to do good. [But] I thought there was no hope for me."

That's when his family decided to act. Mom, Sylvia Perez, sent her son to live with her sister, Jennifer Ureña, and brother-in-law, Rick Ureña, in Newport Beach. There, he could attend Back Bay/Monte Vista High School, a continuation school with an independent study program for students overcoming setbacks that often impede academic success.

"I wanted him to leave here ASAP. I wanted him to leave the friends he was hanging around with," Perez said. "Every day I would pray, 'Lord, please protect him.' I'm just so happy God opened that door."

Bautista came to the Costa Mesa campus late in his junior year. Under the guidance of Back Bay/Monte Vista counselor Loc Tran, he began the grueling work of recovering the units he would need to graduate on track.

"I could tell from our very first conversation he was ready for change," Tran recalled. "We gave him six thick packets of work to do that summer, and he finished them all. Failing was not an option for him."



**BACK BAY HIGH**

senior Nathan Bautista, 18, is seen at the Peter and Mary Muth Interpretive Center at Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve.

Kevin Chang  
Staff  
Photographer

Bautista lived with his aunt and uncle — who have six children of their own but made up a bunk bed for the teen — and worked day and night to bring up his grades.

Whenever he needed to be alone to think, meditate or study, he'd retreat to a reservoir across the street from the school — being in nature was a new experience for him, and he found

it helped him stay calm and think clearly.

"That summer was actually the hardest for me, because I had to do a lot of

See *Bautista*, page A6

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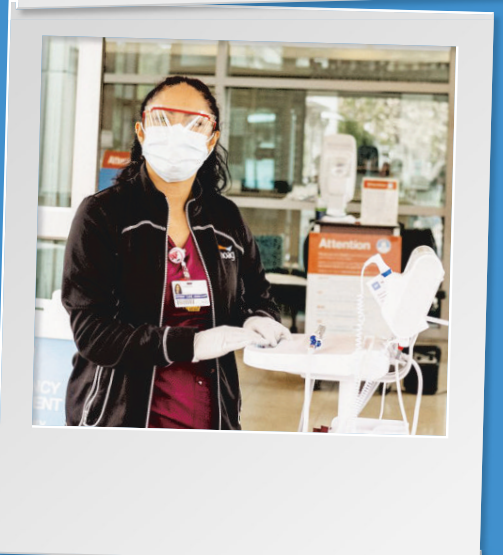
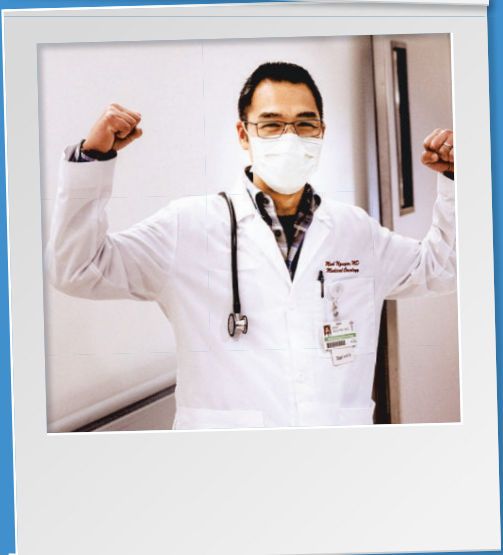
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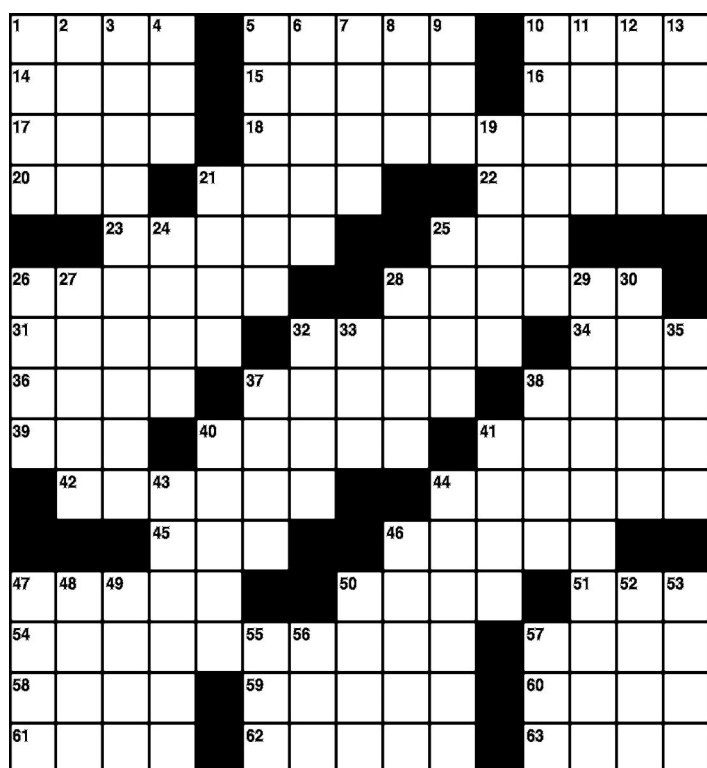
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By Jacqueline E. Mathews

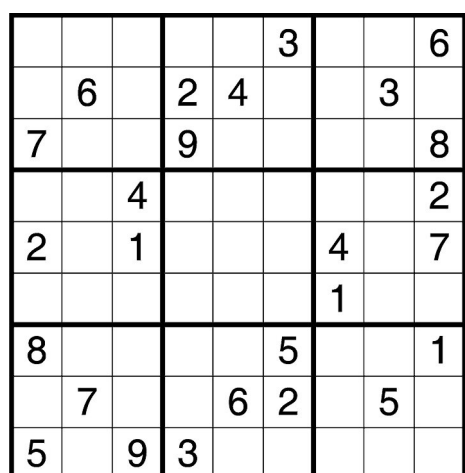
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 60 Common metal  
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 62 Actress Spacek  
 63 Nervous
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**SUDOKU**

By The Mepham Group

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit [sudoku.org.uk](http://sudoku.org.uk).



For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A5.

- |                           |                       |
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| 3 Fake; imitation         | 10 Thick oil          |
| 4 Two in Tijuana          | 11 Deserve            |
| 5 Bedcover                | 12 _ a test; got 100% |
| 6 "Guilty" & "Not guilty" | 13 Ruby & burgundy    |
| 7 Carpets                 | 19 Object             |
| 8 "What Kind of Fool _?"  | 21 Exchange for       |

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 25 Helpful clue  
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 28 Family members  
 29 Helicopter  
 30 Yuletide visitor  
 32 Armed conflicts  
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 35 Forest animal  
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 40 Intelligent  
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 53 Opposite of admit  
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 56 Letter after phi  
 57 Even score

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**CLASS OF 2020 SERIES**

**Ki'Ara Rivera evolved into a leader at Valley Vista High**

BY ANDREW TURNER

When Ki'Ara Rivera reflects on her time at Valley Vista High School, it is safe to say that she will view it as a life-changing experience.

Valley Vista is the continuation school of the Huntington Beach Union High School District.

Rivera, 18, arrived there at the start of her junior year. At the time, graduation felt out of reach.

"I just went through a period of time where I was dealing with a lot of personal events in my life," Rivera said. "The first two years of high school, I didn't pass any of my classes because I had so much else going on. Once I transferred, I thought about graduating in a complete other light, and it was something that I wanted for the first time in my life."

Rivera said that she had dealt with anxiety, and some bullying, while attending her home high school, Fountain Valley, but the environment at Valley Vista aided in putting that behind her.

Smaller class sizes allowed the staff to make a personal connection with its students.

"At Valley [Vista], every teacher cares about you," Rivera said. "Every staff member is always asking how you're doing. If you're having a bad day, you can step outside, regroup yourself."

"Everyone there is there for the same reasons, maybe because of different circumstances, but there's no hostility or weirdness between students because we're all in the same boat."

Kerry Clitheroe, the principal at Valley Vista, said in an email that Rivera came into her own in the two years that she spent at the school.

"As time went by, she began a slow transformation into a confident and caring young woman," Clitheroe said. "She began to speak up in class and ask questions, especially in her social studies classes in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and to connect historical events with current situations occurring in the world."

Rivera enrolled in the school's leadership class offering, taught by Meghann O'Connor, who was also her social studies teacher. Take the lead Rivera did, organizing campus activities and fundraisers to support charitable causes.

Among the community service efforts, she helped students raise \$800 for Laura's House, an organization that provides services to domestic violence victims in Orange County.



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

**KI'ARA RIVERA**, a Valley Vista High School grad, plans to attend Orange Coast College.

Rivera also organized a canned food drive to support Orange County Food Bank. She also sorted food in their warehouse.

Clitheroe added that Rivera was awarded a 48th Congressional District Leadership Recognition honor, and she received the Simon Youth Foundation Scholarship.

Rivera plans to attend Orange Coast College, starting down a path that she hopes will lead to becoming a history teacher. She wants to educate at-promise students like herself.

"I just feel like I'll be able to connect with my students more, especially with them knowing that I used to be right there with them," Rivera said of her desire to teach at an alternative high school. "They can graduate, and they can go on to college and extend their education, and it doesn't have to end in continuation school."

"[An at-promise student is] someone with bad circumstances, but you can overcome it, and that's what I did, so I really just want to help other students ... get to this point, because I felt like a lot of teachers of mine helped me get to where I am now, which is graduation."

Rivera was among 188 graduates from Valley Vista, which held a drive-up graduation on Wednesday. Her advice to her classmates is to take chances.

"Take big risks because that's what produces big outcomes," Rivera said. "Just take any big risk that you can."

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**CLASS OF 2020 SERIES**

# Grad Paola Mendoza started on pathway to college at 14

BY SARA CARDINE

For Early College High School graduate Paola Mendoza, college couldn't have come any earlier — the Costa Mesa teen recalls taking her first course, public speaking, at Coastline Community College at the ripe old age of 14.

"It was very interesting," the teen recalled. "They probably thought I was somebody's kid or something."

Whatever momentary awkwardness Paola may have felt soon faded as she became acclimated to Early College's dual enrollment program and began to excel, sometimes earning top scores in classes where her peers were much older.

By the time she was a junior, she was balancing courses at Early College and Coastline while working a part-time job.

She enrolled in summer classes that would take care of her general education credit requirements after high school, when she'd be attending college as an actual college student.

"There were a lot of times I'd question what I was doing," Paola, now 17, admitted. "It was very stressful, but I learned a lot."

Her diligence paid off. School officials estimate Paola has earned 322.5 credits, far beyond the 220 credits required to graduate from high school.

In fact, by the time she graduates with Early College's class of 2020, she will have earned enough credits to start UC San Diego in the fall as a late-quarter sophomore.

Early College Principal Dave Martinez said he's seen Paola ascend from shy freshman to an ambitious senior who sees something she wants and goes after it with aplomb.

"She's really just a grinder," he said. "If there's an opportunity, whether it's community service or vol-



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

**PAOLA MENDOZA**, who attends Early College High School, sits at her home in Costa Mesa on Friday. Mendoza was awarded a full scholarship to UC San Diego and has earned enough college credits to start college at UCSD as a late-quarter sophomore.

unteering, she's going to put her name in the hat — give me 50 Paolas and my job's easy."

Paola was active in many Early College clubs, including the Save Our Youth (SOY) Center, Girls, Inc., a nonprofit that focuses on empowering young women and girls, and the college

readiness program Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).

Although Paola's accomplishments are impressive, impressing others is not what has inspired her stellar academic transcript.

Her accomplishments, she says, are for her parents — Claver and Cesar

Mendoza — who moved to the U.S. from Mexico 20 years ago and worked for their three daughters to have better opportunities in life.

That's why Paola's parents were especially pleased when they learned their daughter had not only earned a full, four-year

scholarship through the Angels Scholars program, but also additional scholarships provided by Girls, Inc., the National Charity League's Newport Chapter and the Draper Family Foundation Fund.

"My dad literally carried me, and my mom was half crying, half laughing," she recalled of their learning of her awards. "It was a great moment."

Starting college in the fall as a sophomore will give Paola time to concentrate on her goal of preparing for medical school with a double major in sociology and likely biology. She wants to learn more about social inequity as it relates to health and wellness.

To incoming freshmen, who have yet to step on their first college campus, she has this advice: "Please be involved in your community," she said. "You get to meet other people who may have something to teach you—try to learn from them. And never lose your motivation."

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# Daily Pilot

A Times Community News publication incorporating the Huntington Beach Independent, Coastline Pilot, Orange Coast Daily Pilot and the Newport Harbor News Press combined with Daily Pilot

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On June 27, 2019, the Costa Mesa Sanitary District Board of Directors adopted a five-year rate increase for its solid waste services. It was necessary to adjust the annual service rate to cover the increasing solid waste collection and processing costs. Year two of the rate increase will go into effect July 1, 2020. The solid waste rate will be \$20.05 a month/\$240.60 a year. The annual charge for this service will be collected on your property taxes in November 2020.

Solid Waste	Current Rate	New Rate
Single/Multi-Family	\$224.88 a year	\$240.60 a year

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### NAVARRO

*Continued from page A1*

career as a teacher in the Long Beach Unified School District. He earned his teaching credential at Cal State Dominguez Hills and a doctorate at UCLA.

Navarro's tenure did not go without trial, including at the end. With the coronavirus pandemic looming over the final months of the 2019-20 school year, the decision was made to have online graduations for all four of the district's high schools — Corona

del Mar, Costa Mesa, Estancia and Newport Harbor.

"When you start talking to families and you start talking to teachers and you start talking to students and administration, we could not guarantee, and Dr. Navarro was really clear about that, we couldn't guarantee that all of our kids would participate," Fluor said. "[We could not guarantee] that all of our kids would have equal access and that we wouldn't be placing them in jeopardy in terms of social distancing.

"That was the decision, and they worked really hard

over the period of time, and not to mention that at the time, they were all looking at the guidelines from the Orange County Department of Health, and the very stringent requirements."

Costa Mesa Mayor Katrina Foley said she believes a diverse group of people should be consulted as the district looks for new leadership.

"I wish the superintendent well in his retirement," Foley said. "I encourage the current board to actively engage the community stakeholders, including parents, alumni, students, coaches, business

leaders, elected officials and community volunteers, in the search for the next leader of the district.

"There are several members retiring this year, so I hope they will spend the time gathering input and let the new board decide on new leadership. Now more than ever, we need to drill down and create lots of opportunities to hear from diverse voices about what's needed for a modern public education system."

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### WINTERS

*Continued from page A1*

classmates, taking after-school weightlifting classes or creating new art projects in teacher Alison Rockwood's ceramics class.

"I will miss seeing my friends every day, and my friends will miss me, especially Reese," he said during a conversation with family members.

With high school nearly behind him Winters, like others enrolled in Newport-Mesa Unified School District's special education program, will move on to the Adult Transition Program, which provides job and life skills training to help recent graduates establish adult

lives that are as independent as possible.

The 18-year-old, who has a penchant for organizing things, has an idea for what he'd like to do for a job someday.

"I want to work at Vons and help clean," Winters said of his future plans. "I want a truck to pick up new stuff for the store. I want to be a coach and do what Xavi does."

Mom Dora Danesi said when her son was a baby, she worried about his future. But with the help, love and support he's received from Estancia, she's allowing herself to feel hopeful about what's next.

"I was just afraid of what was next — now I'm excited," she said. "Estancia is

a wonderful school. It's been nothing but love and acceptance."

To help add some sweetness to her son's transition, Danesi planned a graduation surprise.

On Saturday, Winters was to walk down a makeshift commencement aisle alongside longtime friend Zeke Eampietro, a graduate of Corona del Mar High who also has Down syndrome, in a small ceremony put together by their respective family members to recognize the graduates.

The two families have themselves become inseparable since the two sons were enrolled in an early infant program run out of Laguna Beach Middle School. Eampietro is known for be-

ing more boisterous and outgoing, where Winters is a bit more introverted and takes time getting to know people.

Where Winters is cautious about the future, Eampietro is boldly inclined otherwise.

"No, I'm not afraid. I'm pretty excited," said the 18-year-old Eampietro. "I think what's next is getting to know some new people."

Whatever the future may hold for Winters, it's clear those who know and love him aren't going anywhere.

"He's going to be a part of our program, and he's going to be on the bench with us," Castellano said.

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### BAUTISTA

*Continued from page A2*

work," Bautista said. "But I was dedicated to doing it because I wanted to change."

And change he did. Consulting with Tran on a near-daily basis to keep track of his progress, the teen earned so many credits he

graduated months ahead of his peers, earning mostly A's and B's. Back Bay/Monte Vista is having a virtual graduation ceremony on YouTube at 2 p.m. Monday, and Bautista plans to watch it with his family.

Today, he's back in Los Angeles with Perez and her husband, Mike Bayona, a father figure to him. In the fall he will attend Rio

Hondo College, where he hopes to learn drafting and architecture.

His dream is to work side by side with Bayona, a construction worker, building homes in countries in need of housing. It's a dream his old teachers used to doubt he'd accomplish, given his grades and standing, but these days he's feeling hopeful.

"I feel like what happened to my friend was a way for me to wake up. I thank God for that," he said. "One year ago, I never thought of completing high school, and now I've done things I never thought I could do. I want to see what more I can do."

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### FASHION

*Continued from page A2*

School in Mission Viejo. Now with graduation over and his classmates — some, since kindergarten — heading off in their own di-

rections, Anthony said he wanted to encourage them to not take life for granted, which he said he knew was a cliché.

"To make life seem that life is short, that approach — it will change your life forever. It will," Anthony

said. "I know there are some seniors that are scared. I'm still scared of going into the real world. It's not as dandy. It's harsh sometimes."

"But at the end of the day, we gotta put on our helmets, our armor and go

in and conquer everything we can do," he said. "If there's a door closed, don't stop. Keep going. If something happens, we don't stop. We never stop."

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**COSTA MESA HIGH** senior Jennifer Henriquez Ayala is shown in front of her school, which will broadcast a virtual commencement ceremony for graduating seniors on Tuesday.

## HENRIQUEZ

*Continued from page A1*

working on the Bs," she said of her grades.

When the 18-year-old looks back on her time in the States so far, she's astounded by how much she and her family have been through.

"It's pretty crazy," she said. "Most of the time, I don't think about everything I've done. But when I think about it, we've come a long, long way."

At Costa Mesa High, where more than 60% of students speak Spanish as their primary language, a

robust ELD program works to integrate learners into mainstream classes. Still, Henriquez's individual progress has not gone unnoticed.

Costa Mesa High Principal Jake Haley recalled the teen's swift transformation from shy freshman to confident and self-possessed senior who, before the coronavirus pandemic, could be seen on the sidelines of athletic games assisting players as an advanced sports medicine student.

"She is an absolute light on this campus," the principal said. "She is so delightful, so joyful and so full of life and hope. This is who

you want to represent this school."

It wasn't until Haley spoke with Henriquez at the school's homecoming celebration that he learned the extent of her early struggles with learning English.

"Sometimes we have no idea what students are dealing with because we only see them in these little moments," Haley said of the teen's accomplishment. "That more than anything makes you take a step back and say wow and be proud of her and her journey."

With coronavirus pandemic stay-at-home orders still in place, Costa Mesa

High School will broadcast a virtual commencement ceremony for graduating seniors on Tuesday at 6 p.m. Henriquez plans to watch the broadcast at home, surrounded by her parents and siblings.

In the fall, she will attend Orange Coast College, where she'll explore coursework that could set her on the pathway to a career in the medical field.

"I've always wanted to help people in some way," she said of her career ambitions. "It sounds cliché, but it's true."

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## ASHER GREEN

is halfway to his private pilot license, which started with ground school at Orange Coast College.

Kevin Chang  
Staff  
Photographer



## GREEN

*Continued from page A1*

ready to go beyond Newport to study public policy and international relations at Princeton but expects to miss the California weather while in New Jersey.

He admitted to being a little disappointed that he wouldn't have a traditional high school graduation, but he was forgiving of the school district officials who decided to cancel in-person ceremonies in favor of online video tributes.

"I know they're doing what they can," he said. "The situation is what it is, and I understand they're doing what they have to do."

As a pilot, perspective is something Green literally has.

He's already put his aviation skills to philanthropic use. In early May, he sat in the co-pilot seat alongside his father and jour-

neyed the 20 air hours to Chicago and back to pick up 11,000 N95 masks bound for the Navajo Nation. The sprawling reservation, which reaches into Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, and a volunteer network of private pilots committed to help deliver much-needed supplies to health care workers.

The back two seats in their four-seat Ovation was filled with masks, like groceries in the back of the family car.

It wouldn't have been an especially comfortable flight for a non-pilot, Green said — their plane doesn't have a pressurized cabin, and with limited power, they had to fly low over the Rocky Mountains.

But over the flatlands, without the bumping around, there was plenty of opportunity for good conversation.

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## HODEL

*Continued from page A1*

gional Division I final.

"That was one of the best years of sports that I had, that freshman year," said Hodel, who graduated from Huntington Beach on Wednesday.

"We went to the finals in both soccer and basketball. That was so much fun, and I feel like one of the major things I missed were the teammates on both of those teams and not being able to continue with basketball. We called ourselves the 'Freshmen Four.'"

The other freshmen on the co-Sunset League champion girls' basketball team that season were Sophia Escalante, Nicole Palmer and Marisa Tanga.

In the end, it was volleyball that won out when Hodel had to decide on which sport she would play in college. She has signed with the Stanford beach volleyball program.

"I've been around Huntington Beach High School," Oilers volleyball coach Craig Pazanti said. "I was a freshman in the fall of 1985, so aside from a stint coaching college and a few years when I was at Mater Dei, I've been basically around this high school my whole life."

"I can't remember a better pure athlete coming through the school, I mean

female athlete, for sure. Obviously you've got [Pro Football Hall of Famer] Tony Gonzalez on the male side, several male athletes, but I don't remember a female athlete coming to the school since the 1980s, when I've been around, that had her prowess when she was coming in as a freshman."

Hodel started as a middle blocker, then moved to opposite, and concluded her high school career as an outside hitter for the Oilers.

Pazanti said that volleyball was a newer sport to Hodel when she got to high school, but he added that her innate ability to adapt combined with her athleticism accelerated her growth in the sport. He said that he believed that Hodel could have developed into the best middle blocker in Orange County had she been allowed to stay at the position all four years.

With a Division I-bound libero also on the team in Mia Christensen (UC Riverside), Pazanti said the position changes came about because he wanted to have Hodel on the court for all six rotations.

"I just didn't want to take her off the floor, and that was my whole justification," Pazanti said.

Hodel was a three-time Daily Pilot Dream Team selection for girls' volleyball, earning first-team all-league honors three times



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**XOLANI HODEL** shows off a Rubik's Cube she completed.

and the team's MVP award twice.

Excellence did not just come in athletics, either. Hodel finished high school with a 4.66 weighted grade-point average, placing her 10th in a senior class of 699 students at Huntington Beach.

"I hope I will be still training for beach volleyball," Hodel said of what lies ahead for her. "I hope to be a pro beach volleyball player, but I also want to be able to study engineering at Stanford. I'm not sure what type of engineering yet. I was looking into electrical or energy systems engineering."

Hodel is still putting the pieces of the puzzle together concerning her fu-

ture. That is not to say that she has trouble with puzzles, as she can solve a Rubik's Cube.

Even the math and science-inclined Hodel appreciates when someone simplifies a subject the way that she appeared to do so with sports. She said she felt that way about Dr. Mimi Woods.

"I feel like she was one of the first teachers to really explain everything so clearly," said Hodel, calling Woods' calculus class one of her favorite high school memories. "I don't think calculus is supposed to be that easy, but she made it so understandable."

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