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Audience listens to Mariachi Band; San Leandro Adult School honorees with administrators (photo by Cathy Gamble); Anthony Chavez, keynote speaker (at last year's Peace Rally); parent volunteers from SLHS and District staff serve enchiladas and smiles at First Annual Latino Student Achievement Night

SLUSD Scholars honored at the District's first Latino Student Achievement Night—Anthony Chavez, grandson of activist Cesar Chavez gave keynote

[San Leandro, May 25, 2010] The John Muir Middle School auditorium was filled to capacity last Thursday evening at the first annual Latino Student Achievement Night, a celebratory event hosted by parent groups of the San Leandro Unified School District (SLUSD) to recognize educational excellence. Balloons filled the space directly below the stage and festive paper cutout decorations were strung all across the ceiling. Over 550 students in grades fifth through twelfth, as well as adult education, were identified by their administrators for scholarship and commitment.

Although not all students recognized could attend the event, the turnout far exceeded what could be considered an ambitious goal for a first year event. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers and friends snapped photos and took movies of scholars, who received thunderous applause for their achievements—including San Leandro Adult School's oldest graduate, Mr. Edward Carillo.

“All 22 of our adult students honored tonight – as exemplified by Mr. Carillo (graduating at age 63) – illustrate deep commitment to education, in spite of life's many challenges,” said Principal

Brad Frazier, San Leandro Adult School. "Each of them has shown determination and drive in improving their lives and those of their families."

In her remarks, delivered in both English and Spanish, Cindy Cathey expressed pride in the achievements of the students, saying, "There are 563 students who met the criteria to be acknowledged here tonight and we are enormously proud of them. We also know that they did not get here on their own. Parents, families, friends, teachers, principals, and all school staff we would also like to thank for your support to our young Latino scholars."

The theme of family, including the family of the larger community was also articulated by the keynote speaker Anthony Chavez, grandson of civil rights activist Cesar Chavez, when he spoke to the students:

"I also want to congratulate your parents, teachers and friends. Without them, you would not be here....in the end, we belong to a much larger family...and we have a duty to work for change...we have a duty to ourselves and our families and communities to be lifelong learners...to keep our minds open and curious and to pay attention...education should lead

to a life of service....that is what gives life its joy and meaning."

The program showcased performances by Mariachi Azteca de San Jose and the mariachi band headed by SLUSD's own Esteban Zapiain. The SLUSD Board of Education President Mike Katz-Lacabe and Trustees Morgan Mack-Rose, Diana Prola and Carmen Sullivan acknowledged the students achievements. Dignitaries in the audience included San Leandro Mayor Tony Santos, Vice Mayor Ursula Reed, Councilmembers Joyce Starosciak and Jim Prola. But the most important VIPs were the scholars themselves, and their families.

"It was exhilarating to assist in the orchestration of this wonderful event," said event planner Sheila Lawrence, SLUSD Director of Student Support Services. I could see the pride and joy in the eyes of all in attendance as students received their awards, which made all of the stress that I was feeling the night before melt away."

The First Annual Latino Achievement Night was sponsored by the San Leandro Unified School District English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) and District English Language Advisory Committee (DELAC); the PTA's and PTO's of Garfield, Jefferson, Madison, McKinley, Monroe, Roosevelt, Washington, and Wilson Elementary Schools, Bancroft and John Muir Middle Schools and Lincoln and San Leandro High Schools; and San Leandro Adult School and faculty and staff; the San Leandro High Graphic Studio, Mi Pueblo Market, the San Francisco Foundation and Kurt Burton Photography. To view images of the event, please visit the photographer's website at www.kurtburton.net. Photos will be available for viewing and purchase beginning this Friday through June 30, 2010. All proceeds will go to benefit San Leandro Unified School District schools. At that time, a list of all students honored will also be posted on the District website at www.sanleandro.k12.ca.us.