DEL LAGO ACADEMY STUDENT AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS QUESTBRIDGE SCHOLARSHIP

Escondido, CA – Del Lago Academy Senior Rita Sauceda has received a College Match Scholarship to the University of Notre Dame through QuestBridge, a national nonprofit that connects the nation’s most exceptional, low-income youth with leading colleges and opportunities. Recipients of the scholarship are granted a full, four-year scholarship worth more than $200,000. Her scholarship package includes tuition and fees, room and board, and travel expenses.

Rita first learned of the scholarship the summer before her senior year.

“I like the high school experience I’ve had at Del Lago Academy because I was able to form close relationships because it’s so small, including with my counselor, Mr. Ramirez,” said Rita. “He told me to apply because it would be a good experience and would help me with my other college applications. Even though I was nervous because so many of the schools were top ranking schools that were far away, I did it.”

Most of the schools Rita had been looking into were close to home and more economical options.

“I had already been thinking of college but was thinking I would go to a state or UC school,” she said. “I knew my family was going to do everything possible to see me go to college, but I didn’t want to burden them. I was thinking that I would go wherever would be cheapest.”

Rita was happy to receive the news that she was a finalist, at which point she ranked the schools she was interested in attending. In December she received an email letting her know she had an update to her application and opened it by herself. She was surprised to learn she had been matched.

“I had still been working on other applications and was nervous at the thought of actually matching with a school,” said Rita. “I didn’t fully believe that I was getting a full ride. Not until they paid for my mom and me to take a trip to the school in February. Then it seemed more real to me.”
Rita is the oldest of three. She has two younger brothers, one in fifth grade, and another who is a freshman at Del Lago Academy. She will be the first in her family to go to college. The last few years have been tough for Rita and her family. Her grandmother lives with them and requires full time care. Rita, along with her mom, acts as a primary caretaker.

Rita has also taken it upon herself to start two businesses to earn money to help her family, a toy store she helps run remotely with her aunt in Mexicali and a screen-printing business she runs out of her house in Escondido. At school she’s President of the MEChA Club on campus, involved in the Associated Student Body (ASB), and is a part of the Random Acts of Kindness Club. Outside of school she dances with two ballet folklorico groups, Ballet Folklorico Caliztlan in Escondido and Wakushmaa Folk Productions in Chula Vista.

Rita plans on studying business with a specialization in international business. She is most looking forward to having a college experience and studying abroad. She will graduate with her class on June 3 and leaves to the University of Notre Dame mid-August. Rita would encourage other students to apply for the QuestBridge scholarship.

“Obviously the scholarship is a full ride and that is great but overall I’ve had such a good experience,” she said. “I met a lot of people who helped me out along the way and now I feel like I have a community with other students who also applied. I met people from Ireland who were applying and made good friends with people who are going to other colleges but have faced similar circumstances as me.”

Del Lago Academy School Counselor Jose Ramirez encourages students to apply for scholarships every year and highlights the QuestBridge scholarship and potential life-changing effects it can have.

“I don’t just tell students to apply,” said Ramirez. “I walk them through the process. I tell my students that their journey is my journey. I didn’t have someone walking me through the process of applying for college so I feel that it’s my responsibility to help students and create these opportunities for them. Being a school counselor doesn’t feel like work,” said Ramirez. “It is my passion.”

Ramirez is one of two school counselors at Del Lago Academy. At every high school in the district, counselors are responsible for supporting the mindsets and behaviors for student success that promote the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need to achieve academic success, college and career readiness, and social and emotional development. School counseling staff help students explore their abilities, strengths, interests, and talents as these traits relate to career awareness and development. They seek to identify and utilize resources, like the QuestBridge scholarship, that complement comprehensive school counseling programs to help students reach their full potential.

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**About Escondido Union High School District**

The Escondido Union High School District has empowered students to graduate prepared for college, career, and life through excellence in learning for more than 125 years. The district serves more than 7,000 students across five high schools including: Escondido, Orange Glen, and San Pasqual, Del Lago
Academy and Valley; as well as the Escondido Adult School. More than 900 staff members are employed by Escondido Union High School District, which offers more than 180 courses, including nationally recognized Advanced Placement courses, College & Career Technical Education, Independent Study, after school enrichment, career exploration, STEM opportunities, and more.