

125 Years of History: Mt. Diablo High School

This is the eighth in a series of articles on the eight schools with which the Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation works.

In 1901, thirty-five high school students met their two newly-hired instructors to begin their studies at the brand-new Mount Diablo High School (MDHS). Two years later its first three students graduated. Now, one hundred twenty-five years later, MDHS enrolls 1,440 students. In May last year, eighteen of its graduates proudly walked the Event Center stage to accept Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation (RSF) awards.

Like many East Bay schools, MDHS serves a diverse population; 71% are Hispanic, 7% African American, 6% white, 4% Asian, 3% Filipino, and 9% represent other ethnicities. Because 70% of MDHS students live in Bay Point, which has no high school, they commute 20-30 minutes daily each way. The rest live in and around Concord. Many are the first in their families to pursue a college education; the majority qualify for free lunches. They often hold part-time jobs and help at home while their parents work one or more jobs. Still, 83.5% of them graduate. College and Career Advisor Erika Ramos is proud of each one and she notes, "The scholarships give them hope and remove financial barriers."

Ramos certainly knows what she's talking about; she herself is an MDHS graduate and in 2018 received an RSF scholarship. She used it to attend Diablo Valley College and UC Berkeley and eventually returned to provide college and career advice to students at her alma mater. She has the support of Principal Markell McCain, who is now in his fourth year and, like Ramos, grew up in Contra Costa County.

Their success can be measured in part by the number of MDHS students awarded RSF scholarships; 15% of the 119 RSF scholarships awarded last year to students at the six high schools and two community colleges with which RSF works went to MDHS students.

One of these students, Evelyn Lopez Jauregui, says receiving the RSF scholarship was "an honor and a privilege that has helped me so much." She notes that the money has helped purchase required school supplies and covered part of her tuition. Evelyn is now a freshman at the University of California-Davis.

Another scholarship recipient, Johana Hernandez, says that the scholarship played a large role "converting my dreams of higher education into a reality. I can focus on my education without having to worry about financial precarity." As a high schooler, Johana was active in speech and debate, while at the same time teaching Ballet Folklorico after school, helping convey cultural values to fellow students through dance. Johana is currently enrolled at the University of California-Santa Barbara, majoring in sociology. She sends her thanks to RSF donors.

Submitted by: Shirley Wiegand, RSF Trustee