



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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NEWS RELEASE



Date: July 2, 2025

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LOCAL STUDENTS COMPLETE YOUNG SUPERVISORS ACADEMY

Twelve high school students from Aptos, Watsonville, Pajaro Valley, and CEIBA College Prep have successfully completed Class 3 of the Santa Cruz County Young Supervisors Academy, a first-of-its-kind leadership program founded by Supervisor Felipe Hernandez and his staff to introduce youth to the inner workings of local government and public service.

Over the course of two and a half immersive weeks, the students participated in workshops on leadership development, toured County and community facilities, met with elected leaders and department staff, and engaged in hands-on learning through field visits and policy simulations. The Academy was designed not only to inspire the next generation of changemakers, but to give students the tools to shape a more equitable, resilient, and inclusive future in the community they call home.

"As a County Supervisor, one of the most rewarding parts of public service is helping prepare the next generation to lead," said Supervisor Felipe Hernandez. "Programs like the Young Supervisors Academy show our youth that they can make a difference in Santa Cruz County and beyond. This program would not be possible without the support of my Board colleagues, dedicated County employees, private sector partners, and community-based organizations."

This year's young supervisors were Jennifer Martinez-Gonzalez, Yasmin Genis-Ramirez, Gabriel Olivera, Maria G. Garcia Mendoza, Yaretzi Rodriguez-Marin, Esau Villalpando-Lariz, Emely Hernandez-Herrera, Daniela Hernandez-Herrera, Ernesto Martinez, Gabriella Garcia, Mitzel L. Dodge Rocha, and Emma Orejel.

As a capstone project, participants took part in a Mock Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Hearing focused on current issues including homelessness and a proposed tiny homes project in Watsonville. Held before an audience of family, mentors, County officials, and community leaders, the exercise gave students a chance to research, deliberate, and advocate on complex policy matters that impact real lives. Each student was recognized with a Certificate of Recognition and a personalized letter of recommendation honoring their contributions and commitment.

For more information about the Young Supervisors Academy, contact the Office of Supervisor Felipe Hernandez at (831) 454-2200.