



ALUMNI PORTRAITS OF PERSISTENCE

BY ELIZABETH ROJAS

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SHCA CLASS OF 2018-2023

ADRIAN MURGUIA

SHCA ALUM 2018
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES, 2022
MAJOR: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Ever since he was a kid, Adrian knew that he wanted to be involved in law enforcement. And today, his dream has come true, Adrian is now Officer Murguia! Adrian loves what he does, as there is camaraderie, sisterhood, and brotherhood. He has the opportunity to help people every day, make connections and learn something new. His job truly makes him look forward to all the opportunities that may arise with tomorrow!

While in high school, Adrian loved to play sports and was involved in football and baseball. These were helpful in building his mental and physical toughness, which still help him to this day. While in college, he realized he had to get his foot in the door somehow or someday. That way he would know if he was on the right track with his career choice. Thus, he joined the Police Department as a cadet where he was able to help with reports, join officers in ride-alongs and above all else, a preview of life as an officer. He loved his experience so much that he became determined to continue his career in law enforcement.

By the time he reached his senior of college, he applied to the Police Academy in the spring, knowing that it took about six months to complete the process. He finished college in May of 2022 and joined the police academy in July 2022, becoming a police officer in 2023!



What would you like for high school students to know?

I wish I had taken classes in psychology or business to broaden the range of classes I was taking. My major did not have a direct benefit in my specific profession. Most of the things that you need to become an officer happen in the police academy.

I wish I had dormed on campus, as commuting wasn't part of the college experience I was expecting. Above all else, *GET INVOLVED!* Do not get stuck going through the motions. Get out of your comfort zone, join clubs and Greek life. Join study groups or create your own. Throw yourself out there! You never know what connections you can make unless you get to know other people.

Lastly, do internships! They will give you hands-on experience in the career field you are interested in being part of and will help you be a more qualified candidate.

Any last advice?

It's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to be wrong. You can't improve without mistakes and wrong decisions. It will only make you better. It is only up from there! - Officer Murguia



VAHS CLASS OF 2018-2023

ELIJAH GARCIA

VAHS ALUMNUS 2022
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MAJOR: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



Elijah Garcia is only beginning his second year on the campus of California State University, Northridge, but already has a wealth of experience in his two semesters on campus. Elijah was introduced to campus last summer as one of the of the nine Valor freshman who were admitted to the Extended Opportunity Program (EOP). This program is offered across all 23 campuses of California State University, as well as four of the UC campuses (Berkeley, Davis, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz). EOP was begun with the explicit goal of, “improving access for low-income, first-generation, and historically disadvantaged students with potential for academic success by making higher education a possibility.” Elijah, and many other Valor alumni, have taken advantage of this program.

Included among the many benefits of EOP are an extra grant through financial aid, which in 2023-24 is \$1,600, a summer bridge program before a student’s freshman year, and early registration through a special team of EOP counselors. Elijah credits EOP with the wonderful start to his college experience: “They allowed the transition to my first year in college to feel seamless. To the current seniors that are thinking of applying to EOP, I would highly recommend that you do.” Elijah has decided to major in Mechanical Engineering, which is one of the most difficult majors on campus.

However, that has not gotten in the way of his academic success. After the fall semester, Elijah was placed on the Dean’s List, which is an honor reserved for anyone who receives a 3.50 GPA for the previous semester. In addition to his success on campus, Elijah put in work while at Valor - he arrived at CSUN with 34 credits, which he earned through a combination of AP and dual-enrollment credit through

Valor’s partnership with Los Angeles Mission College in Sylmar. Elijah credits Valor Academy with preparing him to be in constant communication with his professors on campus. He said that Valor’s office hours were crucial to him developing the habit of being in touch with his professors. He says that those relationships are a big part of what has helped him thrive in a tough field of study. His biggest piece of advice to the current seniors who plan to head to college next year is to be open and outgoing while on campus. He says that relationship building has been an integral part of his success during his first year in college.





RKHS CLASS OF 2020-2023

LITZY MARTINEZ

**RKHS ALUMNA 2020
CSUN ALUMNA 2023
B.A. IN JOURNALISM**

Rise Kohyang High School is the newest high school at Bright Star Schools with the class of 2020 being the founding class. Litzy Martinez graduated in June 2020 and went to continue with her education at CSUN. Fast forward to June 2023, in exactly 3 years she has become the first RKHS Alumna that received her bachelor's degree from a 4 year institution in journalism!

Litzy has always been involved in school. Not only was she a part of the founding class at RKHS but she also participated in founding the Triton Times the student newsletter. It was a fun experience and thanks to some of her classmates, teachers, and mentors she was able to start something new and fun. During her sophomore year of high school, she attended the End of the Year Life Experience Lesson (LEL) in Washington D.C. and visited the Newseum, a museum that was dedicated to the history of news and journalism. It was this trip that inspired to use her gift of writing to do something good.

Litzy took a lot of AP courses in High School and enrolled into CSUN with may credits that moved her up to a higher grade during her Spring semester of her freshman year: this was what allowed her to complete her studies in 3 years instead of 4. She took advantage of her classes and continued to work hard until she realized she was able to graduate an entire year earlier than her classmates. While at CSUN she continued to be involved and became a writer for her campus newspaper, The Daily Sundail. She was assigned to cover the Latinx, Black & Asian community on campus. Way to go Litzy! But that is not all, she mentioned "As a multimedia journalist, we aren't only required to know how to write. We have to know how to film, audio edit, take photographs and so so much more." We are really proud of you Litzy! Not only are you part of the founding class for RKHS but you became the first RKHS Alumna to graduate with a bachelor's degree.



Some advice given by Litzy to all of our students is the following, "Please don't ever feel ashamed that you did not get into the 'top' colleges in the nation. I've interviewed and talked to so many professionals in various industries and I always ask about their education background. Some did not attend college while others started at a community college and transferred. It doesn't matter if you attend a private university, UCs, Cal States, or community college. What matters is the network you make with the people around you and the experience you develop throughout the year."

Congratulations Litzy! Everyone at RKHS is really proud of you and we wish you the best in this new journey of yours. Can't wait to see you become the full time author you want to become.

BRIGHT STAR SCHOOLS

ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS TEAM

All Bright Star Schools Alums, high school graduates, will be supported in graduating from college for up to 6 years. Our goal is for our Alumni to earn a Bachelor's, Associate's, Career Technical Education degree, or workforce development certificate from an accredited college or program. If you are a BSS Alumni from the class of 2018-2022, we will be there to help you navigate, thrive, and succeed in graduating from higher education.



KYLE PETRIE

BA, BOWDOIN COLLEGE

As the ASCS Coordinator at Valor Academy High School, Kyle's primary responsibilities revolve around ensuring that all Valor alumni receive adequate support with the financial, academic, and social-emotional concerns that they face while pursuing higher education. Kyle is primarily motivated by the belief that higher education is the foundation that will allow our students to be successful and happy in both their careers and personal lives. He has worked in urban public education for over 13 years. He initially entered the field as a high school history teacher in the Bronx, NY, as part of Teach For America. After his time in New York, Kyle spent seven years as an AP teacher, advisor, coach, and Director of Alumni Support at Gary Comer College Prep on Chicago's south side.

VAHS ASCS COORDINATOR
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2018-2023
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KIMBERLY ARTEAGA

BA, UC SAN DIEGO

Kimberly Arteaga received her B.A. in Human Development and minor in Chicana/o studies from UC San Diego. She was born and raised in LA and the first one in her family to go to college and graduate. She has been supporting students in higher education, college access and retention programs for over 7 years. Part of her passion for working with students comes from her own-lived experiences. Through her multiple roles she has supported and guided high school and college students attaining a higher education and beyond. She has also worked with community members and parents in supporting students achieving their hopes and dreams. Kimberly is excited to continue working with students in her current role as the RKHS Alumni Support and College Success Coordinator.

RKHS ASCS COORDINATOR
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We have just hired a highly talented, experienced, and determined ASCS CC & CTE Coordinator who will be supporting our community college and CTE alumni from SHCA and VAHS shortly. More news to come in our November 2023 edition!



ELIZABETH ROJAS

BA, COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT AND SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Originally born and raised in South Central Los Angeles, Elizabeth, a first-generation college graduate obtained her bachelor's degree in Hispanic Studies and Communications from the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in St. Joseph, Minnesota. She also studied abroad in Guatemala where she was able to connect to her roots through food and poetry. Elizabeth has served as a college coach, mentor, and college counselor at public and parochial schools in Minnesota, working with first-generation and low-income college students. She is thankful and grateful for the countless mentors she had along her journey. She looks to pay it forward to under-resourced and historically excluded communities, to ensure they have access to information, resources, and higher education.

SHCA ASCS COORDINATOR
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GENOVEVA CORTES

BA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
M.ED. HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Geno developed and launched Bright Star's ASCS Program to support the organization's alumni to persist in and graduate from higher education. ASCS tracks, supports, and coaches Bright Star Schools' alumni to get to and through higher education, with a goal of 55% of Bright Star Schools alumni graduating with a bachelor's or associate's degree, vocational certificate, or from a workplace development program within six years of high school graduation. She has over two decades of experience working as an elementary and middle school teacher, K-12 and college administrator, and program coordinator. She was Bright Star Schools' founding math teacher for Stella Middle Charter Academy in 2003, and currently serves as the Director of the Alumni Support and College Success (ASCS) Program for the organization.

ASCS DIRECTOR
SUPPORTING ALL CLASSES WITH GRADUATE SCHOOL
APPLICATION PROCESS
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