



PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Agua Fria High School District Celebrates the

Ford NGL Designation of the Academies of the Southwest Valley

(Litchfield Park, Ariz. – February 3, 2025) – Excitement filled the ballroom at the Wigwam Resort as educators, business leaders, and community partners came together to celebrate a milestone moment for the Agua Fria High School District. The District has officially been recognized as Arizona’s first Ford Next Generation Learning ([Ford NGL](#)) “Academies” school district—a transformation launched this year with the class of 2028.

“This initiative was a cornerstone of our 10-year strategic plan, shaped by our community’s vision for transformation and collaboration,” said Governing Board President Kristen Acton. “Through strong partnerships with local businesses, we have created a pathway that connects students to in-demand, high-wage careers, while expanding educational choice to meet the evolving needs of the workforce.”

Superintendent Mark Yslas echoed that sentiment, emphasizing that student success isn’t one-size-fits-all. “Not every path leads to college, and that’s okay,” he said. “Some students will enter the workforce right away, others will pursue trade programs, the military, or start their own businesses. The Academies are designed to help them figure out what’s right for them—before they graduate.”

The ceremony highlighted the District’s deep partnerships with local businesses and industry professionals. Bringing together some of the most influential leaders within the West Valley to share why the Academies is not only transformative but making an impact on student success already.

Sintra Hoffman, President and CEO of WESTMARC, stated, “as the lead convener for the Academies of the Southwest Valley, we are happy to share the responsibility of preparing the future workforce for their real-world careers. Our role is pivotal in driving the academic transformation through recruiting and referring business partners prepared to offer students quality workforce experiences to be career ready upon graduation.”

Municipal support was also highlighted. Cheryl Covert, Assistant Director of Economic Development at the City of Avondale said, “when students are equipped to thrive in their careers, they become the foundation for sustaining and strengthening our cities.”

To honor those who have played a pivotal role in making the Academies a reality, the District presented commemorative plaques to its eight founding partners: WESTMARC, the Center for the Future of Arizona, the Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce, West-MEC, Estrella Mountain Community College, and the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, and Goodyear. Their leadership and commitment have laid the foundation for a transformation that will shape the future of education and workforce development in our region.

The ceremony concluded with a call to partnership. The District emphasized the power of collaboration in sustaining and expanding the Academies. Those who had not yet partnered with the District were called to join in equipping current scholars for the future workforce.

For more information on the Academies of the Southwest Valley and partnership opportunities, please visit aguafria.org/partnerships.

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Agua Fria Union High School District was established in 1955. Today, the district serves the communities of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, with six high schools: Agua Fria, Canyon View, Desert Edge, Millennium, Verrado and Agua Fria Online. Plus the District offers two alternative programs: Coldwater Academy and New Directions. More information can be found at aguafria.org



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El Distrito de Escuelas Secundarias Agua Fria Union se estableció en 1955. Hoy en día, el distrito sirve a las comunidades de Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, con seis escuelas secundarias: Agua Fria, Canyon View, Desert Edge, Millennium, Verrado y Agua Fria Online. Además, el distrito ofrece dos programas alternativos: Coldwater Academy y New Directions. Más información se puede encontrar en aguafria.org