

Unified Champion Schools Through the Eyes of Students

Elise Calanni | May 2018

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools, a youth engagement and activation strategy that promotes school communities of respect and dignity, is fortunate to be able to support and interact with schools and students across the country. The Unified Champion Schools program is so special because, though the goal of inclusion in every school is the same, it looks a little bit different everywhere you go. No school is exactly alike, and one size does not fit all. This is why hearing from students from a Unified Champion School is always such a privilege: every student's story is one hundred percent unique.

The same is true for Carrie Mullins and Dominic Cavazos, two high school seniors who make up a Unified pair from Alamo Heights, Texas. Unified pairs are made up of one individual with disabilities and one without. Not only are Carrie and Dominic a Unified pair, they also act as their high school's Unified Club co-presidents.



Alamo Heights High School was in the Special Olympics spotlight earlier this year, playing host to hundreds of visitors from the nearby 2018 Unified Champion Schools annual conference. The week-long conference devoted an afternoon to a visit to Alamo Heights High School and their welcome was unprecedented. The school's Unified Club planned a whole afternoon of activities ranging from an introductory presentation in the auditorium featuring a performance of their Unified theater group in the inclusive play "It's Our School Too," a showcase of their Unified basketball team in the gym, and their annual "Un-Run" where the visitors were encouraged to walk, skip, or dance around the track.

Carrie and Dominic had a very special part in this day, giving a speech to all the visitors about what Unified means to them and their school. Both seniors, they remarked on how the environment of their school changed in just the four years they were at Alamo Heights High School. It is stories like Carrie's and Dominic's that encompass the meaning of Unified Champion Schools, and thus should be shared as much as possible!



In late April 2018, Carrie and Dominic wrote a blog post on Medium sharing their experiences of attending a Unified Champion School, being co-presidents of their Unified Club, and what it means to them to be involved in the Special Olympics movement. Hearing directly from the students of a Unified Champion School is the best method to understanding the impact of this program, and allows the Special Olympics movement to celebrate outstanding inclusive youth leaders like Carrie and Dominic.

Please see below for Carrie Mullins and Dominic Cavazos's article "What Our Unified Champion School Means to Us", and an article highlighting the 2018 Unified Champion Schools annual conference, including the school visit to Alamo Heights by UCS Specialist Jerry Holy, as well as other helpful resources.

Resources:

["What Our Unified Champion School Means to Us" by Carrie Mullins and Dominic Cavazos](#)

["Unified Champion Schools Conference Puts on a Show in San Antonio" by Jerry Holy](#)

["It's Our School Too" inclusive play script](#)

<https://www.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools/>

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Elise Calanni is currently a Communications and Content Creation Intern for Unified Champion Schools, the youth engagement and activation strategy that promotes school communities where all young people, as well as adult leaders, become agents of change. The program currently is in 46 states and more than 5,500 schools and reaching 3.4 million students each year with messages and activities that promote inclusive youth leadership and social inclusion.

Special Olympics

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