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Council raises landscape assessments

BY JOSHUA FENTY
Fontana Herald News Staff

The city of Fontana recently set the landscape and lighting assessment rates for Fiscal Year 2026-27, including increases for the Village of Heritage and Hunter’s Ridge Landscape Maintenance District (LMD No. 2 and 3, respectively). According to the staff report, maintenance costs have grown, while revenues are being outpaced by operating costs, and some

districts are having to rely on General Fund subsidies to cover the costs.

“These districts were originally established between Aug. 5, 1980, and Feb. 19, 1991, and continue to fund landscape and lighting maintenance services that benefit properties within each district,” Accounting Supervisor Samuel Perez said. “Approval of the annual levy will authorize the continued collection of assessments necessary to maintain these services in

the upcoming fiscal year.”

For FY27, the proposed rate for LMD No. 2 is a 2%, \$11.09 per unit increase from the prior year, equaling \$565.84 per unit. The proposed assessment rate for LMD No. 3 will increase by 10% — adding \$60.50 per unit to equal \$665.50. The staff report states that while the 2% increase is not sufficient for solving the structural deficit, it is the maxi-

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Fontana’s Superintendent retires after 35 years

SPECIAL TO THE FONTANA HERALD NEWS


Fontana Unified School District Superintendent Miki R. Inbody announced her retirement in December 2026, concluding a 35-year career in public education defined by student-centered leadership, expanded opportunities for students, and a lifelong commitment to the community that shaped her.


A Fontana Unified alumna and first-generation college graduate, Inbody’s educational journey began as a Head Start student before attending Maple Elementary School, Alder Middle School and graduating from Fontana High School. She continued her education at Chaffey College before transferring to California State University, San




Inbody (right) stands with rising Poplar Elementary fifth-grader Jesslyn Montes (left) who posed as “Mini Miki” during the annual 2026 State of the District event, a representation that all Fontana Unified students have the potential for bright futures. (FontanaUSD/SUSubmitted)

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Youth

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Uplifting Arts Academy earns state recognition

BY AMOS YOUNG

Fontana Herald News Contributor

California State Treasurer Fiona Ma joined Fontana Mayor Acquanetta Warren, Superintendent Cali Binks and hundreds of families on June 27 as Uplifting Arts Academy presented its “We Are One” spring recital. Nearly 100 student artists took the stage at Fontana High School Auditorium in celebration of the organization’s mission: Nurturing Children. Strengthening Families.

Prior to the performance, Treasurer Ma met privately with a group of Uplifting Arts Academy fathers and mentors to thank them for their role in supporting the next generation. During the program, she presented founders Shaquan and Amos Young with a Certificate of Recognition. Her visit and remarks reflected a growing recognition that community organizations play an important role in helping young people thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

Through dance, theatrical arts, mentorship, and family engagement, Uplifting Arts Academy helps young people build confidence, character, leadership and belonging while strengthening connections between children, families and the community.

The need is real. Across the Inland Empire and High Desert, many young people reach adulthood without a first job or structured work experience, and an estimated one in five children experiences a mental health disorder each year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Access to mentorship, the arts, and real-world opportunity remains uneven from one community to the next. Uplifting Arts Academy works to close that gap, using the arts as an entry point and mentorship as the foundation for lasting growth.

Student artists presented performances in ballet, jazz, hip-hop, contemporary, tumbling and theatrical arts, showcasing months of dedication and growth before a packed audience of parents, educators, community leaders and supporters. The evening also featured a father-daughter dance, celebrating the important role fathers and mentors

play in a child’s development.

The attendance of Ma, Warren and Binks reflected a shared commitment to investing in children and supporting organizations that strengthen families and communities. Binks currently serves as superintendent of the Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District and previously served as superintendent of the Fontana Unified School District.

Guest speaker Brandon Penn, a pastor and chief mentor at Reach Beyond Church in Fontana, encouraged families not to face life’s challenges alone, reminding the audience that lasting growth happens through mental wellness, community and supporting one another.

Mike Villegas, whose family has traveled from the High Desert for the past five years so his daughter could continue being part of Uplifting Arts Academy, reflected on the academy’s impact. “We’ve made that drive every season because we knew our daughter had found a place where she would be encouraged, challenged and loved,” Villegas said.

“Our mission is to nurture children and strengthen families,” said Shaquan Young, founder, CEO and artistic director of Uplifting Arts Academy. “Dance is what people see, but confidence, belonging, and hope are what we’re building. When families and communities invest in children together, they change lives.”

Founded in Fontana, Uplifting Arts Academy serves children and families throughout San Bernardino and Riverside Counties and continues to expand its impact with the development of a Youth Workforce Readiness Center, which will extend its work among at-promise youth.

“We Are One proved to be more than the title of a recital,” said Warren. “It reflected what is possible when a community comes together to invest in its children.”

Uplifting Arts Academy will host its Summer Dance Camp from July 20-31 at its Fontana campus, where



Fontana Mayor Acquanetta Warren, Superintendent, Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District Cali Binks, CEO & Artistic Director, Uplifting Arts Academy Shaquan Young, and Fiona Ma, California State Treasurer. (Uplifting Arts Academy/Submitted)

students will grow in dance, leadership and creative storytelling before performing in an end-of-camp showcase. This fall, the academy will bring the community together for Rise Together, a celebration of youth, family, and local impact. Families and community members can learn more about both at upliftingartsacademy.org.

Founded in 2018 by Shaquan and Amos Young, Uplifting Arts Academy is a Fontana-based youth organization serving children and families across San Bernardino and Riverside

Counties under the mission “Nurturing Children. Strengthening Families.” Through dance, theatrical arts, mentorship, and family engagement, the academy helps young people ages 3 to 24 build confidence, character, and leadership. Its programs include seasonal recitals, a summer dance camp, the “I Can” mentorship program, the annual Voices Rising Youth Mental Health & Arts Summit in partnership with the city of Fontana, and a developing Youth Workforce Readiness Center. ■