

'White Rose' ceremony initiates opening of all-girls school in S.A.



Rebecca Ibarra, Ana Alicia Hinojosa and Jordan Hernández, future students of the San Antonio Young Women's Leadership Academy, share a smile at the school's White Rose Induction Ceremony. With the academy officially opening in August, the ceremony was the first opportunity for all 150 new students to meet. (Photo by Roberto J. Pérez)

By Ciarra Adams

With this fall bringing the opening of the first ever all-girls public school in San Antonio, the staff of the new San Antonio Young Women's Leadership (YWL) Academy and leaders of San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) are embracing education history-in-the-making.

This past week, the future students of the academy attended a formal induction ceremony and were introduced to their soon-to-be teachers and administrative staff leaders.

"Tonight is a very exciting night for the Young Women's Leadership Academy," said Angela Dominguez, principal for

YWL. "The first day of school is August 25, and this is the first time all the girls have been able to come together."

Each of the 150 sixth and seventh grade girls was formally presented a white rose by Dominguez, academic dean Erica Gonzalez, and other school faculty members.

"It is important for the girls to feel special tonight, because they are special; they are part of something important," said Carmyn Neely, executive director of the Foundation for the Education of Young Women, who also served as keynote speaker for the induction ceremony.

Neely and SAISD superintendent Robert Durón, used the event

as an opportunity to iterate the YWL mission of providing quality, single-gendered education to the San Antonio community.

"It goes without saying that the opportunity that awaits these young ladies is incredible," said Durón.

The new academy will amass female students from 60 different schools. It will offer a curriculum geared toward college preparatory education with a special focus in subjects such as math, science and technology—subjects that are traditionally thought to be "for boys."

The Classes of 2014 of 2015 will be the first to complete the school's courses, with a new grade level added each year.

"We are excited to see everything come together and to know that these programs will be available to girls in this community in the future," said Dominguez.

A crowd of parents and family members attended the White Rose ceremony along with pupils. Among them was Suzie Valdez, whose daughter will be a seventh-grader this fall.

"I was impressed with what the [YWL] program offered," said Valdez. "They seem to be prepared to go a long way to prepare the girls for the future. I also think being at an all-girls institution removes some of the distractions girls face at a [co-ed] school."

Valdez said that she and her daughter, (and no doubt a majority of the community) feel both excited though a little apprehensive about the school's opening.