



**Santa Maria Joint Union**  
**HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**NEWS \* NEWS \* NEWS**  
**PRESS RELEASE**

Monday,  
March 30,  
2026

On Tuesday, March 17th, the Central Coast California Rare Fruit Growers Association (CRGF) visited the Agriculture & Farming class at the Mark Richardson Career Technical and Education Center to educate and teach the students the importance of and how to graft trees.

The CRGF is the largest amateur fruit-growing organization in the world, with members in 48 states and US territories, and in 35 countries. The Central Coast Chapter provides student scholarships, tours of local orchards and businesses, teaches grafting to local schools, organizations, and the general public, as well as how to prune trees. They also hold an annual scion exchange in February that is open to the public.

Brisia Ochoa, 12<sup>th</sup> grade from SMHS, said, "It was so fun. I enjoyed grafting the trees. I never imagined it'd be so easy to do."

Eric Castaneda, 12<sup>th</sup> grade from PVHS, said, "It was interesting to learn how to mix a plain tree and turn into a fruit growing tree."

"Grafting is an industry norm. Almost 100% of fruit trees are grafted. So, it's a valuable skill to learn. It's also something people can do for the rest of their lives. Understanding how plants grow and how to join them together."- Mr. Steve Gambriel, Agriculture Farm Pathway

The CRFG and MRC Ag Farm students grafted a total of 100 trees and 5 different varieties with the hope of potentially planting them into our future orchard out here at the Mark Richardson Center farm.

The SMJUHSD has nearly 40 Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathways and about as many Industry Partners.

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