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71-Year-Old Grandmother From Playa del Rey to Earn Doctoral Degree From Cal State L.A.

She taught high school in West L.A. and worked in the Peace Corps in West Africa. For Barbara Hunt, learning has been a life-long experience. Hunt will be the oldest student to graduate from Cal State L.A. this spring, when she receives her Ed.D. in educational leadership. As she walks across the commencement stage at Jesse Owens Track and Field on June 12, she hopes to inspire others to learn and become engaged with their communities. "My goal is to continue to encourage students to find the joy of learning, to be critical thinkers, and to be educated and active citizens," says Hunt, 71, who lives in Los Angeles' Playa del Rey neighborhood. Hunt has spent more than three

decades in education, from teaching toddlers in West Los Angeles to training small business entrepreneurs as a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa. She enrolled as an undergraduate student at Cal State L.A. in 1962—when John F. Kennedy was president. Hunt obtained her bachelor's degree in biological sciences and master's degree in health and safety from Cal State L.A. She also earned her credentials in secondary, administrative and community college credentials from the University. "The best part of my experiences at Cal State L.A. were the biological and health sciences classes, where I participated in hands-on activities and learned how theories apply to practical applications in

the field," Hunt says. "These experiences worked along with my natural liking for explaining things to others that influenced me to become a teacher-educator." She spent several years teaching at Palisades High School before establishing four childcare centers on Los Angeles' Westside. She served as chief administrator of the centers for 17 years. When her two children graduated from college, Hunt sold her childcare centers and joined the Peace Corps. She traveled to Ghana, West Africa, where she trained small business entrepreneurs. She then helped the agency's Washington D.C. headquarters develop HIV/AIDS volunteer curriculum.

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Photo: Barbara Hunt. (Credit: J. Emilio Flores/Cal State L.A.)

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and is a proud mother to son Darius, 16, and daughter Gabby, 11. Darius was born autistic, and Daniels decided early on that Darius would be educated to the very best of his abilities. Darius attends Gardena High School and after school attends Mychal's Learning Place, an independent living and vocational skills center, where Daniels volunteers. She also helps with Special Olympics (Darius plays basketball), Studio West Gymnastics (where Gabby competes), and Crenshaw Christian Center. DeDe Hicks has served as the president and CEO of the Volunteer Center in Torrance since 1986. Through her leadership, the center has grown from a small group with a budget of \$136,000 to a non-profit organization with an annual budget of over \$2 million. One project includes Operation Teddy Bear, which provides 5,600 disadvantaged first graders with school supplies and backpacks, complete with a teddy bear. Hicks is actively involved with the Torrance Chamber of

graduate of the UC Berkeley School of Optometry, Dr. Horwitz operates the oldest optometry practice in the city of Lawndale. Chris Jeffries is a counselor for ECC's Health Sciences and Athletics Division, as well as co-president of the Academic Senate. She has served as an ECC counselor since 1992 and has also been the vice president of the faculty union, academic senate secretary, Health Sciences and Athletics curriculum committee member, and college curriculum chair. Jeffries has been a leader in the "Scholar Baller" program, which honors athletes with high academic achievement. Many of her former students have gone on to play sports at the Division I, II and professional levels. Teresa (Teri) Kuwahara is the former director of the College & Career Center at Palos Verdes High School and has spent her career advising South Bay students. Well known in the counseling community, Kuwahara is also a dedicated volunteer. She serves on the board for the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute

member at Immaculate Heart College. While raising five children, McMillan served as Manhattan Beach's City Clerk and was a founding trustee of the South Bay Hospital Foundation. She also served on the board of trustees for the South Bay Hospital District and was an advisory board member of several organizations. While working full time and attending school, Maureen Reilly was also a single parent to her son, two nieces, and two nephews. She earned an associate degree in human services, a bachelor's in sociology and psychology from Cal State Dominguez Hills, and enrolled in a graduate program. In 1998, she became a social worker for DCFS, where she remained until she retired in 2014. She now provides therapy at a small group home, focusing on troubled youth. She has worked relentlessly, in her family and in the community, to encourage youth to become successful, responsible members of society. Susan Stolovy teaches astronomy and physics at ECC, where she is known for bringing current issues

active member of numerous ECC committees, including the accreditation team and planning summits at both ECC and ECC Compton Center. In 2006, she established the Sergeant Kirk Johnston Memorial Scholarship in honor of her first husband, who had been an ECC police sergeant. Turano currently serves on the college's Foundation board and has held leadership positions within the classified employees' union. Her volunteerism extends to her community where she is an elementary school Reading Partners tutor.

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Her efforts led to standardized training that was used across West Africa. The Peace Corps then assigned her to Malawi in East Africa, where she worked at Domasi Teachers College to train elementary school teachers to teach science. Her experience in Malawi, where she met a number of professors who had Ph.D.s from the

United States, motivated her to pursue a doctoral degree. "I decided to return to Cal State L.A. so that I could update my educational skills for students in the 21st Century," says Hunt, who works part-time teaching biology and environmental studies at Woodbury University in Burbank. Hunt also finds time to volunteer as a health educator for Homeless Health Care of Los Angeles (HHCLA), a non-profit agency that provides services for homeless persons on Skid Row in Los Angeles. Her doctoral dissertation will be focused on "A Study of Counselor Perceptions as Educators for Homeless Adults in Urban Los Angeles." She is looking forward to putting her education to practical use in the classroom at Woodbury. "In order to be an effective global educator," she says, "I needed to understand the current theories and philosophy of education combined with my formal teacher training and my classroom experiences." CCN