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NEWS RELEASE

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Central Union High School Celebrates the Launch of “Voices del Valle” Podcast Series to Empower Teen Voices in the Imperial Valley

El Centro - Central Union High School's SpartanSound Productions officially kicked off the launch of “Voices del Valle” a KPBS Explore Project and Collaboration, with a listening party on Wednesday, July 16, 2025. The student-driven podcast is aimed at amplifying the voices of teens in the Imperial Valley, with the mentorship from KPBS podcast professionals. This exciting initiative features eleven episodes, each running between 20-30 minutes, showcasing unique stories, perspectives, and aspirations from our Central Union High School students. A trailer will air on August 11, 2025 with the podcast series set to run at the beginning of this school year.

“Voices del Valle” is designed to provide high school students with a platform to share their experiences and insights, embodying the Explorer Spirit that characterizes life in the Imperial Valley. The podcast series are coming of age stories, which consist of two to three segments, a featured song by a SpartanSound Production student, and a discussion on a wide variety of topics from growing up in the Imperial Valley, conversations with local celebrities, teen pregnancy, hispanic culture, homelessness experiences, and so much more.

As part of this initiative, Central Union High School collaborated with KPBS, engaging in two day trips designed to enhance learning and skill development. The first trip took place on December 11, 2024, inviting KPBS staff to visit Central Union High School where they conducted workshops and interactive sessions that provided insights into the podcasting industry. During the second trip, students had the opportunity to tour and record at the KPBS facilities.

In Fall 2023, KPBS launched a request for ideas for its third by-annual Explore Program, inviting community members to propose innovative audio or video content showcasing local arts and culture. The initiative offers seed funding for the most promising projects. Central Union High School's SpartanSound Productions classes submitted a proposal titled "Voices del Valle," which was selected for funding and advancement in the KPBS Explore 24 Program. Remarkably, this was the only high school proposal ever submitted to the program since its start in 2012.

"The 'Voices del Valle' podcast is a great opportunity for our students to explore their creativity while developing essential skills in storytelling and audio production," said Dr. Thomas Tacke, Music Teacher at Central Union High School. "We are excited to partner with KPBS and look forward to the amazing opportunities this collaboration will bring."

"What makes this podcast different is it's student led and student produced, we don't have anything like that at KPBS," said Julio Ortiz Producer Editor for the Podcast Port of Entry with KPBS. "We are very excited because these students are blazing the trail for the future generations."

"I'm super excited to listen to all the different stories, they're so relatable," said Grace Navarro, Senior at Central Union High School. "Every kid in The Valley has a story, every kid in The Valley is different."

"Being part of this project was really eye opening for me, I was able to exercise my communication skills and become more open and easy for conversations," said Angela Sanchez, Senior at Central Union High School.

"I really enjoyed working on this project during my senior year with two of my best friends, it kept us busy from worrying about the plans for our future," said Domenick Ramos Felix, a recent Central Union High School graduate.

The episodes will be aired on KPBS and can be streamed on all the different podcast streaming services. We hope that you stay tuned and join our students on this remarkable journey.

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Students who participated in Voices del Valle Podcast series pose for a picture for KPBS editor



Dr. Thomas Tacke welcoming students to the KPBS Voices del Valle podcast series listening party