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Astronaut shares dream with students

Once a migrant farm worker, Jose Hernandez is now a space pioneer.

By **ERICA PEREZ**

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SANTA ANA — Astronaut Jose Hernandez today shared his journey from migrant farm worker to space explorer with students, encouraging them to pursue dreams even if they may seem impossible.

“Sometimes I still wake up in the morning and I pinch myself and I say, ‘Man, I can’t believe I’m an astronaut,’” Hernandez, 43, told the crowd.

Hernandez spoke to some 50 students from Santa Ana College’s Math Engineering Science Achievement program in the school’s planetarium. Afterward he stopped to talk with about 100 third-graders from Laguna Beach and Anaheim.

“It’s the American dream,” said Middle College High School student Manny Macias, 14. “I want to be him.”

Hernandez, who became a mission specialist with NASA in 2004, earned his undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from University of the Pacific and his master’s degree from UC Santa Barbara.

During his two-day visit sponsored by the city of Santa Ana and the Latino Youth Leadership Institute, Hernandez plans to speak to several community groups. He’ll be at the Discovery Science Center at 9 a.m. Saturday to speak with students.



NASA astronaut Jose Hernandez poses for photos with Laguna Beach and Anaheim students visiting Santa Ana College's Planetarium.

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