

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

February 27, 2003

## For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education announces:

## **Tulare County Office of Education to host California Migrant Head Start Conference** **Renowned children's poet Francisco Alarcón is keynote speaker**

The Tulare County Office of Education will host the Migrant Head Start Conference March 4 - 5 at the Visalia Convention Center. The conference is sponsored by the California Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Coalition, of which Tulare County Office of Education's Child Care is one of six grantees. More than 200 Migrant Head Start staff members from throughout the state are expected to attend the conference.

Francisco Alarcón, one of the most eminent living Mexican-American poets, will be the keynote speaker. A professor at U.C. Davis, he has written numerous books for children and adults as well as award-winning poetry. He recently read one of his poems at the inauguration of Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante. A strong proponent of writing, he plays an active role in the bilingual community, helping children treasure their cultural and linguistic heritage.

"Tulare County is pleased to host the first state wide Migrant Head Start conference in 16 years," says Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools. "Our Child Care program has operated Migrant Head

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Start in the county for 35 years, working with farm worker families and children to provide them with skills and services to improve their lives.”

Migrant Head Start is a federally-funded program that provides early childhood education, parent training and social services for migrant families, helping preschoolers get a “head start” for kindergarten so they are not educationally disadvantaged when they start school. It is part of the broader Head Start program designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing educational and social experiences to children of low-income families.

## **Media Advisory**

Our keynote speaker, Francisco Alarcón, will be available for media interviews and photographs.

The author will attend the conference opening reception Monday, Feb. 3, from 6:30-9 p.m. in the Radisson Hotel lobby where he will share his poetry and autograph books.

His keynote speech will be Tuesday, Feb. 4, from 9-9:45 a.m. in the Visalia Convention Center, followed by a workshop from 10:15-11:45 a.m. Alarcón will be available for interviews after the workshop from 11 a.m. to approximately 12:30 p.m.

In addition, Alarcón may be interviewed by phone:

(530) 758-1198 (home)

(530) 752-1022 (office)—Office hours are 10-11:00 a.m. (MWF) and 1-2:30 p.m. (TTh).

For additional information contact Donna Orozco, Tulare County Office of Education Child Care, at (559) 651-3022.

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