

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces: Senaída García, Project Director for TCOE's Child Care Educational Program, to Retire after 37 Years of Service

Visalia: Senaída García, the project director for the Tulare County Office of Education Child Care Educational Program, will retire today after more than 37 years of service to the Tulare County Office of Education and the children and families of Tulare County.

Throughout García's many years as director, the Tulare County Office of Education Child Care Education Program has flourished. Considered by many as a "pioneer" in the field of early childhood education programs, Senaída García worked to create the first program that utilized a variety of funding sources to meet the needs of parents beginning in 1967.

"Senaída García is a role model to us all. Senaída's belief in the importance of each person attaining their educational goals to create change in the community is apparent in the way she lives her life and encourages others to do the same," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak.

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A Fresno State University graduate, Garcia was the first female and Hispanic board member of the Visalia Unified School District. Inducted into the College of the Sequoias Hall of Fame in 1989, chosen as the Visalia Chamber of Commerce Woman of the Year in 1996, recognized as one of the Visalia Soroptomist International Women of Distinction in 2003 and lauded as the Manager of the Year in 2003 as part of Tulare County's Excellence in Education Awards, Senaida Garcia has made a difference in the lives of many residents of Tulare County. Garcia is the longest seated member of the Foodlink Board of Directors and also champions United Way. In addition, Garcia is a board member on the Tulare County Children and Families Commission.

Throughout her career, Garcia's philosophy was to recognize that parents are the first teachers and that early childhood education is vital in creating life-long learners. One of her career goals of providing early childhood educational services in every community of Tulare County became a reality under her tenure as director. The program now has a center-based, home-based or licensed family child care program in all the communities with 41 Head Start child development centers in the county, including the recently-opened center on the Tule River Indian Reservation.

At the time of her retirement, she oversaw more than 600 staff members and provided services to more than 6,000 children and their parents. Garcia says one of the greatest honors she has ever received came in September 1998 when Child Care opened its model center and training site and the vote was unanimous to name the center the "Senaida Garcia Child Development and Training Center."

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“While I am sorry to have Senaida retire, I respect and understand her decision,” says Superintendent Vidak. “I have been honored to work with her and to see the children and families she served benefit from her vision and untiring devotion.”

“Senaida’s day-to-day presence will be missed by her friends and TCOE family, but her legacy lives on in her namesake center and the outstanding programs and services that she’s nurtured over the past 37 years,” continues Vidak.

“I wish her the best of luck in the future. I feel blessed to have known her as a colleague and a friend,” says Vidak.

Ray Chavez, a program coordinator, is serving as the acting director of Tulare County Office of Education Child Care Education program until a permanent director is hired later this year.

#TCOE#

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