

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

December 14, 2004

For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

Anonymous Donor Gives Over \$800,000 to Fund SCICON Expansion

Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak announced this week that the Tulare County Office of Education's Clemmie Gill School of Science and Conservation (SCICON) program will receive a \$811,000 gift from an anonymous local donor. The donor's gift has been designated exclusively for the purpose of constructing a new student village at the outdoor education program. Former Tulare County Board of Education President, Chris Reed, and Tulare County Office of Education Foundation Chairperson, Stanley Simpson of Buckman-Mitchell Insurance, and William D. Pine, CPA, were instrumental in introducing the donor to Superintendent Vidak, who detailed the expansion plans.

Once completed, the new village will include six new student cabins, boys' and girls' restroom facilities, an outdoor arbor/classroom structure, an amphitheater and a staff housing building.

The village is planned for the western side of the site – within walking distance of the existing 300-seat dining hall. “This location gives us opportunities to develop new activity centers and

- more -

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Page 2

trails for our students, while at the same time minimizing the environmental impact on the existing cabin sites,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “The addition of these cabins will mean that 60 to 70 more Tulare County students can visit this incredible program each week. We are ecstatic that this single gift can make our expanded vision for SCICON come true,” concludes Mr. Vidak.

SCICON Administrator, Rick Mitchell, identified the need for additional student housing at a presentation to the Tulare County Board of Education in November. The growth in Tulare County student population and the elimination of year-round classes were beginning to impact SCICON’s ability to accommodate all fifth- and sixth-grade classes. Mitchell and Superintendent Vidak estimate construction for the new project will commence in 2005.

SCICON is one of California’s finest outdoor educational programs. It is located on 1,100 acres above Springville. Last year, over 13,000 fifth- and sixth-grade students visited the school for a one-day or week-long experience in outdoor education, natural science and conservation. In addition, 1,000 high school students serve as cabin counselors each year. SCICON is a product of over 40 years of school and community involvement. Community support has enabled this state-of-the-art environmental education school to become a model for similar programs throughout the country. SCICON is host to its own natural history museum, raptor center, planetarium and observatory and tree nursery.

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Tulare County Office of Education

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Page 3

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