

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

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## **Media Alert**

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**Tulare County Office of Education Announces:**

## **The Gas Company Student Entrepreneur Challenge Begins January 25**

**Student Teams to be Selected for New Annual Competition at Biz Talk Student Edition**

On Thursday, January 25, teams of young entrepreneurs and teachers from Tulare, Kings and Southern Fresno County high schools will gather at Biz Talk Student Edition in Visalia to kick off The Gas Company Student Entrepreneur Challenge. The event is being held at the Visalia Marriott, adjacent to the Convention Center, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

The Student Entrepreneur Challenge was created from the vision and support of The Gas Company with coordination by the Tulare County Office of Education and the Lyles Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at Fresno State. Other supporters include the Tulare County Economic Development Corporation and the Kings County Economic Development Corporation. The purpose of the event is to encourage students to develop products, services or other economic growth ideas that can be applied in the San Joaquin Valley. The Challenge's partnership between business and education, working together to promote entrepreneurialism, also supports Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's recently released proposal for the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley.

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"This unique program pairs some of the Valley's best and brightest students with business mentors on an entrepreneurial adventure – one that we believe could yield real results in solving some of our regional issues," said Eugene "Mitch" Mitchell, regional vice president of external affairs for The Gas Company. "It creates a unique collaborative between our educational, business and public policy institutions that benefits our students and holds great promise for our communities. We're excited to see how this all unfolds."

Prior to the event, team teachers were invited to submit an application for the competition. Based on these applications, a limited number of teams will be selected for the Challenge. Selected teams – which will be announced following the morning keynote address – will receive instruction on preparing for the competition. Cash incentives will be given to all teams participating in the Challenge, with an additional grand prize given to the winning team. The students will work with their coaches and local business mentors for the remainder of the semester – making presentations of their products or services before a panel of judges in May.

"We greatly appreciate the support of The Gas Company in making this event accessible to our students," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "The Student Entrepreneurial Challenge comes at the right time as we face the future of the San Joaquin Valley. The experience students will gain in the Challenge will be a huge asset as they become leaders in shaping the Valley's future."

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The event's keynote presentation will be made by Dr. Ed Sobey, founder of Kids Invent! – a program co-founded at Fresno State's Lyles Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. Dr. Sobey develops hands-on, inventing activities that help students learn science. He gives workshops on “inventing to learn” to teachers, museum staff, and the public throughout the US, in Europe and Asia, and he leads several Kids Invent! camps each summer. In addition to Dr. Sobey's presentation, students will participate in several critical-thinking exercises, meet other business leaders and entrepreneurs and visit with representatives from college and universities.

Biz Talk Student Edition joins the popular Visalia-based business conferences and symposiums organized by Harlan Hutson Productions. The event reflects Biz Talk's mission of connecting business leaders to new people, new ideas and new opportunities.

For more information please contact Robert Herman, Public Information Officer at (559) 733-6606.

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