

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

January 28, 2009

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*****PRESS ADVISORY*****

SECOND ANNUAL “ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION” EVENT

WHAT: Approximately 120 foster youth from Tulare and Kings county high schools will be treated to a special program entitled “Access to Higher Education.” The event is designed to encourage high school students in the foster youth system to explore and enroll in educational opportunities beyond high school.

The event will be held at College of the Sequoias and begin with a motivational address by Dean of Science, Mathematics and Engineering, Dr. Robert Urtecho. Following Dr. Urtecho’s presentation, students will attend a resource fair featuring representatives from four-year universities, community colleges and private colleges. Students will also attend a discussion panel with former foster youth now attending college. The panel will be moderated by Ms. Kizzy Lopez from the Renaissance Scholars Program – a program that supports former foster youth at Fresno State.

The highlight of the event will be special guest speaker Andrew Bridge. Mr. Bridge spent 11 years in Los Angeles County foster care. He then went on to earn a scholarship to Wesleyan, become a Fulbright Scholar, and graduate from Harvard Law School. Andrew’s memoir *Hope’s Boy* is the true account of his life with his mother, a young mentally-ill woman, and of his life in foster care without her.

As an adult, Andrew has spent his career bettering the lives of the nation’s most vulnerable children. His work has garnered national media attention including articles in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Time Magazine*.

WHO: 120 foster youth, five former foster youth now attending college, representatives from local colleges and universities and author, Andrew Bridge.

WHEN: Saturday, January 31
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

WHERE: College of the Sequoias
Ponderosa (Lecture Hall) and Alta Peak (Student Union) buildings
Visalia, CA

- more -

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VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES:

Photo: Speaker and author Andrew Bridge; former foster youth speaking to audience.

Video: Talk to former foster youth from Fresno State about their experiences applying to and attending college; author Andrew Bridge about his work with foster youth; and Tulare County Court Commissioner Charlotte Wittig about the need for this event.

MORE INFORMATION:

The Access to Higher Education event was modeled after a similar program developed by Judge Leonard Edwards, Judge-in-Residence for the Administrative Office of the Court and a retired judge of the Santa Clara County Superior Court. In October 2007, Judge Edwards visited Tulare County to promote creating greater opportunities for foster youth. The organizing members of the Access to Higher Education event accepted his challenge. Organizers include College of the Sequoias, Tulare County Superior Court, Tulare County Office of Education, Tulare County Independent Living Program (a division of Tulare County Health and Human Services); and Tulare County Probation Department and CASA of Tulare County.

The Fresno Regional Foundation, the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency and the Tulare County Office of Education are sponsors of the event.

Members of the media: Certain restrictions apply in photographing and interviewing foster youth. Please see Robert Herman or Tulare County Superior Court Commissioner Charlotte Wittig at the event for details.

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