

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:

Educators of the Year to be honored at the 19th Annual Confucius' Birthday Celebration at Chinese Cultural Center September 27, 2012 • 6:00 p.m. • Chinese Cultural Center • 500 S. Akers St., Visalia

The 19th Annual Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Celebration will be held on September 27 to honor three of Tulare County's best teachers. The invitation-only ceremony – which will be held at the Central California Chinese Cultural Center in Visalia – continues the long tradition of celebrating the careers of educators on the birthday of China's great philosopher and advocate for universal education — Confucius. "It's a privilege to recognize three outstanding teachers for their compassion, creativity and dedication," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "The remarkable love and dedication they have for their work is making a huge difference in the lives of the students they serve."

Each year, the Tulare County Office of Education and the Chinese Cultural Center work together to select one elementary, one middle and one high school teacher for the award. This year's honorees include: Janelle von Helf, Sequoia Union School District (Lemon Cove); Lisa Coorough, Springville Union School District; and Stephen Reid, La Sierra Military Academy, a program of the Tulare County Office of Education (Visalia).

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Elementary school educator Janelle von Helf is a first grade teacher at Sequoia Union School District, the same school she attended as a child. Superintendent Larry Lakey says, "Janelle is the epitome of an outstanding teacher. She has students using critical thinking skills, high frequency words and, by end of the year, they are writing very well." Mr. Lakey also praised her student engagement. "Her classroom is alive with energy and enthusiasm," he says. Ms. von Helf appreciates Sequoia Union's small school setting and the opportunity she has to watch students grow. "My reward is seeing their accomplishments over the years and how good they feel about themselves," she says.

Middle school educator Lisa Coorough is an English and History teacher at Springville Union School District. She is a graduate of Springville School who returned as a teacher, having earned a Master of Arts degree in education at Fresno Pacific University. Ms. Coorough is her school's CHARACTER COUNTS! chairperson, student council advisor and assistant principal. "I spend a lot of time preparing students as young as 7th grade for college," she says. "So when a former student wrote in her college application essay that she wanted to be an elementary school teacher at Springville School because of the influence her teacher had on her, that was the greatest reward I could receive."

High School educator Stephen Reid has taught mathematics at La Sierra Military Academy in Visalia for seven years. He, too, appreciates his school's small size, which has allowed him to support students from seventh grade through their senior year. "It gives me a great sense of

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accomplishment to work with students over many years," he says. His principal, Anjelica Zermeño, says that he has a special gift for building positive relationships with students and making learning relevant. "Stephen is always willing to go above and beyond for students to see that they succeed. He is also an instructional leader on campus and supports his colleagues in the same way," she says.

For information on the Educators of the Year honors, contact Robert Herman at (559) 733-6606.

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