

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:

Dianne Shew to become new SCICON administrator

Shew to succeed long-time administrator Rick Mitchell, who will retire June 30, 2014

Visalia – Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak announced today that Dianne Shew has been selected to succeed Rick Mitchell as the administrator for Tulare County Office of Education’s SCICON outdoor education program. “Dianne has a long history with SCICON and has had great success with the staff and expanding the program’s services,” says Mr. Vidak. “Although she has big shoes to fill, we are confident Dianne will continue SCICON’s excellent educational programming with her great enthusiasm and energy.”

Ms. Shew has been an employee of SCICON for 13 years. She began her career with the program as the Forestry Specialist and was promoted to Program Specialist in 2012. Working under the guidance of Rick Mitchell, Dianne oversaw all naturalists, interns and specialists. During her time as Forestry Specialist she expanded the nursery program, reaching out to the community and supporting Arbor Day by providing tree seedlings for students who attend.

Ms. Shew is very active in the Springville community with the annual rodeo and the Women's Club. She is a member of the Springville Union School Board and is currently serving as

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President. Following in the footsteps of her mentor Rick Mitchell, Dianne's goal is to maintain the standards and traditions that have made SCICON the premier outdoor school in the West. “It is a testament to Rick’s work that people say to me, ‘How are you going to make sure SCICON stays the same?’ instead of ‘What are you going to do to make SCICON better?’”

Rick Mitchell, who has been SCICON administrator since 1990, will retire June 30. Under his leadership, the program has grown to accommodate 15,000 fifth- and sixth-grade students annually. In the past 24 years, Mr. Mitchell has overseen numerous projects, including the development of the Circle J-Norris Ranch field study site, the construction of the Eagle Point Village, the expansion of the Phyllis Wall Museum of Natural History and the John Muir Lodge, and the completion of two special education classrooms/cabins. In a recent report of the California Outdoor School Administration, reviewers called SCICON the “gold standard of outdoor science school programs.”

Mr. Mitchell has also overseen changes in the SCICON curriculum, working with classroom teachers to align instruction with the California State Standards and now the Common Core State Standards. He says, “I have been fortunate to discover early on the power of teaching science in a ‘hands-on way.’ I have been extremely fortunate to find a program like SCICON where I could combine the teaching of science and introducing students to the wonders of the natural world.”

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In 2005, Rick Mitchell was selected Tulare County Administrator/Manager of the Year in the Excellence in Education Awards program. In 2006, he received the Howard Bell Award from California Association for Environmental & Outdoor Education. In 2011, he was given an Administrator of the Year Award for ACSA Region XI.

For more information on SCICON, call (559) 539-2642, or visit www.tcoe.org/SCICON.

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