

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

May 12, 2014

For Immediate Release

Contact: Robert Herman
Public Information Officer
(559) 733-6606 – office
(559) 303-8568 – cell

Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

Countywide *Excellence in Education* Winners Announced

Teacher of the Year, School Employee of the Year and Administrator/Manager of the Year Named

A selection committee of 15 Tulare County business and educational leaders met recently to review the Tulare County Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year and School Employee of the Year nominations for 2014. The *Excellence in Education Awards* program, now celebrating its 20th year, honors “the best of the best” in the three educational categories. A total of 30 nominations were received this year from Tulare County school districts, the College of the Sequoias and Porterville College. Each nomination was reviewed and scored individually by every member of the selection committee.

“The winners are truly champions for children,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “Each winner has a heart for seeing that students grow into independent, successful young adults. These creative individuals have designed and fostered innovative programs to help students meet those goals.”

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Once the selection committee reviewed each nomination and the scores were tallied, County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak visited each of the winners to inform them of their award. The winners in the 2014 *Excellence in Education* program are:

Administrator of the Year

John Snavely, Ed.D., Superintendent, Porterville Unified School District

Dr. Snavely has served as superintendent of the Porterville Unified School District since 2001. In that time, he has overseen the development of some of Porterville Unified's most notable programs, including the construction of two new elementary schools, two new high schools, a new middle school and a new Adult School Complex. In addition, he has championed the development of the district's dual immersion program, a NASA-sponsored middle school academy, an increase in the number of Student Pathway Academies and the development of the National Academy Foundation School of Engineering at Harmony Magnet Academy.

His commitment to furthering the district's career pathways has led to Porterville Unified being selected as the mentor district for the Tulare Kings Linked Learning Consortium, a statewide school/business partnership initiative. For his work with Linked Learning, he was recently recognized as the inaugural recipient of the state Educator Champion Award.

Dr. Snavely is involved in numerous state, regional and local organizations, including serving on state committees for the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the Coalition for Adequate School Housing and the California Association of School Business Officials. Locally, he has

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

been involved with the Porterville Chamber of Commerce, the Porterville Rotary Club and numerous other organizations.

Teacher of the Year

Anne Clifford, Teacher of the Severely Handicapped, Tulare County Office of Education

Anne Clifford has been a teacher of the severely handicapped with the Tulare County Office of Education for 19 years. In 1997, she brought her great love for students and her high energy teaching style to a newly opened class for adult students known as Community Based Instruction (CBI). Anne's class was the first of its kind in Tulare County, becoming a model for eight other CBI classrooms now operating throughout the county.

Ms. Clifford was praised by her nominators for teaching valuable life skills to her students, who are 18-22 years old. In her classroom, students learn job skills, how to navigate the city transportation system, how to manage money, proper social skills in public places and much more. Working together with parents and family members, she helps students become as independent as possible, even finding employment for them when she can.

Ms. Clifford was an early adopter of CHARACTER COUNTS!, a program which underpins all her daily instruction. Through it, students reflect on their behavior as measured by the Six Pillars of Character – Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. She has been a national leader in infusing the program into special education instruction and has twice presented at National CHARACTER COUNTS! Conferences/Trainings.

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

School Employee of the Year

Ruben Alvarez, Work-Based Coordinator, Porterville Unified School District

Mr. Alvarez began his career with Porterville Unified in 2010 as the Work-Based Learning Coordinator within the district's Student Pathways Program. In this position, he manages multiple activities for students in the realm of student internship placement and career and college preparation training. On the business side of the program, he serves as a key liaison for up to 10 professional advisory boards supporting the Student Pathways Program.

Porterville Unified has benefitted from Mr. Alvarez's many years of job placement and training experience, gained in a variety of education and community service organizations. In the short time he has worked for the district, Mr. Alvarez has connected with over 200 business professionals to support the district's work-based learning initiative. He has also served to place over 600 high school students in internship positions. Last year alone, he trained 500 Porterville students in the skills they will need for a successful interview.

In addition to his work with the district, Mr. Alvarez has been an ambassador for the Porterville Chamber of Commerce, served on the Tulare County Youth Council, and founded the Porterville Youth Flag Football League. He has also been a presenter at numerous conferences on work-based learning.

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Finalists

Two finalists are selected in each of the three categories:

Administrator of the Year

Tanya Goosev, Principal, Orosi High School, Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District

Larriann Torrez, Assistant Director, Tulare Adult School/Principal, Sierra Vista High School, Tulare Joint Union High School District

Teacher of the Year

Melody Kelley, Fourth-Grade Teacher, Pleasant Elementary School, Tulare City School District

Joni Jordan, Curriculum/Outcomes Coordinator, College of the Sequoias

School Employee of the Year

Jody Arriaga, Accounts Payable Supervisor, Tulare County Office of Education

Bobbie Velasquez, Secretary to the Superintendent, Lindsay Unified School District

Recognition Event

Award recipients, finalists and nominees will be honored at a recognition breakfast beginning at 7:30 a.m. on October 28, 2014, at the Visalia Convention Center. Event attendees will enjoy a video highlighting the work of the overall winners.

“We greatly appreciate the support of our partners in this event – the Educational Employees Credit Union, its President/CEO Beth Dooley, and board of directors,” says Jim Vidak. “Together, we have the privilege of recognizing the many talented men and women who devote their lives to educating children and young adults in Tulare County.”

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

For more information, contact Marlene Moreno, Administrative Assistant, at (559) 733-6302.

TCOE

Rel. 35/14