

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

September 23, 2014

Media Alert

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

Educators of the Year to be honored at the 21st Annual Confucius' Birthday Celebration at Chinese Cultural Center September 25, 2014 • 6:00 p.m. • Chinese Cultural Center • 500 S. Akers St., Visalia

The 21st Annual Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Celebration will be held on September 25 to honor three of Tulare County's best teachers. For over two decades, the Tulare County Office of Education has partnered with the Central California Chinese Cultural Center to honor teachers on the birthday of Chinese philosopher Confucius – an occasion Chinese people around the world use to celebrate great educators. The invitation-only awards program recognizes one elementary, middle and high school teacher. This year, the honorees are: Paula Dunbar, a kindergarten teacher at Roosevelt Elementary in Lindsay; Joel Gilster, an eighth-grade science teacher at Washington Intermediate in Dinuba; and Helen Milliorn-Feller, lead teacher and English instructor at University Preparatory High School (UPHS), which is a charter school of the Tulare County Office of Education.

"These remarkable educators have a tireless dedication to their students and their schools," says County Superintendent Jim Vidak. "Their energy and 'above and beyond' attitudes should be an

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inspiration to all of us."

High School Educator of the Year **Helen Milliorn-Feller** is UPHS's lead teacher and the school's English instructor. She has been with UPHS since it opened in 2009. In that time, she has shared her infectious love of learning, encouraging students to be ready for the challenges of a university. As a founding member of the faculty, Mrs. Milliorn-Feller has overseen the process of ensuring UPHS classes meet the A-G requirement set by the University of California. She has also designed and implemented the school's Advisory, Academic Support, and Enrichment classes. "Helen puts the 'readiness' in our college readiness program," says UPHS Principal John Kelly.

Whether she is helping the UPHS Leadership Team design curriculum, serving as the faculty liaison to the UPHS Parent Support Organization, or teaching students to integrate technology into their writing and presentations, Mrs. Milliorn-Feller brings dedication, focus, and passion to her work. Always available to students, she freely volunteers her time as advisor for several campus clubs at UPHS, as well as the junior/senior program, various fundraising events, student award ceremonies, parent recognitions and spirit rallies. Mrs. Milliorn-Feller is also coordinator of the Single Subject Credential and an adjunct faculty member at the Graduate School of Education at the Fresno Pacific University Visalia Center. She helps shape the professional lives of many teaching candidates and acts as their master teacher.

Joel Gilster has been selected as the Middle School Educator of the Year. Mr. Gilster has been an eighth-grade science teacher at Washington Intermediate School in Dinuba since 2003. In 2012, he

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was selected as Dinuba Unified's Teacher of the Year. School administrators say that he brings excitement and energy to the campus and affects all students on a daily basis. This is demonstrated in the themed videos and technology he uses at school rallies.

In addition to his responsibilities as a science teacher, Mr. Gilster spends countless hours producing T-Bird TV on a weekly basis. T-Bird TV is an 8-10 minute show that uses student-led news programs and comedy to promote positive school culture. He is Washington Intermediate's activities director, a mentor teacher, a former BTSA Support Provider, and the After School Tutorial Administrator. This past summer, he developed an online curriculum for his eighth-grade students to access at school and at home. He has also created computer-based applications to help track student tardies and detentions. Washington Intermediate Principal Mike Roberts says, "Joel is constantly thinking about the students, working way above his normal call of duty for them."

Paula Dunbar will be honored as the Elementary Educator of the Year. The lead kindergarten teacher from Roosevelt Elementary School in Lindsay is described as a master teacher who lets her enthusiasm for learning and student success take her to ever higher levels of teaching excellence. Mrs. Dunbar is continually expanding her knowledge and skills and freely shares them with others. Mrs. Dunbar's Interim Principal, Debra Warner, says, "Paula is always the first to step up to the plate when a teacher is having difficulties or needs assistance. She freely opens her room for other teachers to visit and observe her in action."

Paula is a master at creating high interest cross-curricular instruction in all content areas that allow

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her students to be actively engaged in their learning. Mrs. Dunbar brings with her six years of experience in children's mental health and 19 years in education to students in Earlimart and Lindsay Unified. Paula is skilled at adapting the environment for emotionally or academically challenged students. She welcomes struggling learners and guides them to reach their highest level of success.

Mrs. Dunbar is also actively involved in the community. She has served as Lindsay High School cheer advisor, a Dollars for Scholars Volunteer and Orange Blossom Festival Queen's coronation chairperson. Additionally, she is active in her local church and a valuable member of Roosevelt's Parent Teacher Organization.

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

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