

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:

Countywide Excellence in Education Winners Announced

Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year and School Employees of the Year selected in annual awards program

A selection committee of 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 2018. The Excellence in Education Awards program, now celebrating its 24th 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. Each nomination was reviewed and scored individually by every member of the selection committee.

“The winners are truly champions for education,” said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “Each winner has a heart for seeing that students grow into successful young adults, and for collaborating with their fellow educators to build healthy campus and district cultures.”

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. For the first time in the program’s history, there was a tie in the School Employee of the Year category – resulting in two individuals sharing the award. The winners in the 2018 Excellence in Education program are:

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WINNERS

Administrator/Manager of the Year: Eloya Segura, School Psychologist, Tulare City School District

Eloya Segura is the highly respected school psychologist for the Tulare City School District. She has supported the district for over 25 years and has 35 years of combined experience in the field of school psychology. Eloya holds a master's degree in education from UC Santa Barbara and a bachelor's degree in Law & Society with an emphasis on Criminal Justice from UC Santa Barbara.

District administrators praised Eloya for visiting families in their homes, listening nonjudgmentally to their challenges, providing transportation, and helping them navigate appropriate agencies. Because of her involvement with local children's mental health services, health clinics, nonprofit organizations, and her parish, Tulare families now have greater access to much needed support services.

As part of her duties as district psychologist, Ms. Segura provides individual and group counseling for students, evaluates the social/emotional development and mental health of students, provides trainings for parents and staff members to help meet the educational needs of students, and serves as a facilitator of a multidisciplinary team in the evaluation IEP process. As a board member of the Tulare Youth Service Bureau for nearly 30 years, she has promoted the expansion of school-based mental health services.

In the community, Ms. Segura founded a Ballet Folklorico children's group and a scholarship committee within her church. As part of the Hispanic Alliance for Culture, Education, and Recognition (HACER) in Tulare, she has helped to plan the city's Cinco de Mayo family events, organized triannual student recognition dinners and helped raise over \$168,000 in scholarships for students in the Tulare Joint Union High School

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District. Ms. Segura was the 2015 United Women's Organization "Taking Leadership in Wellness" honoree and the 2008 Cesar E. Chavez "Service with a Heart" recipient.

Teacher of the Year: Susan Ang, Math Teacher, Orosi High School, Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District

Throughout her Excellence in Education nomination packet, Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District administrators, colleagues and students commended Mrs. Ang for her caring nature and for going "above and beyond" to ensure she's available to meet students' needs, particularly if they're struggling with math content. When she came to Orosi High school, she immersed herself in the community and the culture. "My students saw that I was invested in them, and, as a result, they became my adopted children and I became their second mother," she said. Mrs. Ang stays after school four days each week to work with students in her math classes, and takes the lead coordinating Saturday school. "There are moments in that after school small group setting that students will share their life stories," she said. "I get to know more about them and this improves my instruction." Colleagues note that Mrs. Ang persistently asks her students for more effort, better quality, and a deeper understanding every day.

Susan Ang is fully credentialed to teach all math courses at any grade level. She is a coach for the school's Science Olympiad team and advisor to the Math Club – a club that has grown from 15 members to 160 members under her direction. In addition, she supports students attending the district's alternative education sites. Mrs. Ang has worked for the district for 11 years.

Mrs. Ang completed a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering, a master's degree in teaching and some doctoral studies at the University of the East in the Philippines. At Orosi High School, she teaches an array of higher level math courses, including Advanced Math, Calculus and Advanced Calculus.

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One of the most moving examples of a student she was able to reach was a young man who attended the district's independent studies program. The young man was on probation for gang activities, having been expelled from two district high schools. Mrs. Ang noticed that he was relatively good at math and used this to try and get him to think about college. Due to her persistence, the student graduated from College of the Sequoias in May with associate's degrees in both science and math, and will transfer to a four-year university.

Co-School Employee of the Year: Jose Juan Juarez, Lead Custodian, Palm Elementary School, Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District

Juan Juarez is the lead custodian at Palm Elementary School in the Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District. His responsibilities include maintaining a safe and clean campus environment and providing proper training and guidance to custodial staff. He has worked for the district for the past 18 years and has been responsible for driving the bus on regular routes and for special events.

Visitors to Palm Elementary will marvel at the school's manicured landscaping and colorful flowerbeds. Mr. Juarez is responsible for the school's pristine appearance, saying, "Students, parents and staff need and deserve to work in a clean environment. It is the goal of my team and I to make sure nothing is left unsanitary. There is so much more to keeping a place clean than simply making sure everything is orderly. When offices, classrooms, and bathrooms are clean and sanitized, those working and learning in the facilities are less likely to get sick. When teachers and students are sick, there is always a loss in learning."

A key member of the management team in the day-to-day operations of Palm Elementary, Mr. Juarez works in a positive, cooperative spirit that translates to increased morale. He is creative in finding solutions to problems and to the development of new projects and special events, using his knowledge of safety, facility

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use, environmentally-friendly service practices, and – most importantly – customer service, to improve the experience for staff, students, and parents at Palm Elementary.

Co-School Employee of the Year: Bobby Richardson, Transportation Supervisor, Tulare Joint Union High School District

Bobby Richardson is the transportation supervisor for the Tulare Joint Union High School District. Under his direction, the district transports approximately 3,300 students, averaging 1,600 miles daily in a fleet of 30 busses. He coordinates all his driver's routes, driving when necessary. He works with parents concerned about routes, and is in constant communication with the Tulare Police Department and the California Highway Patrol. He has taken it upon himself to develop district-wide safety plans with regards to route options for emergency situations and trains his department in mandated child abuse reporting and sexual harassment.

“Our bus drivers are the first district representatives that student bus riders see in the morning and the last district representatives they see in the afternoon,” he said. “The bus ride can be long for many students, sometimes up to two hours each day. A mutually positive and respectful relationship between our drivers and our student riders is key to fostering a productive environment for learning.” To establish a positive experience for students, Mr. Richardson worked with the district’s Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) coordinator to train the transportation team in the program. Using PBIS, bus drivers now provide incentives, such as PBIS raffle tickets, to students who demonstrate positive behavior or good deeds.

Mr. Richardson and his team are directly responsible for the district receiving over \$1,000,000 in grant funds that have provided nine new buses and more than 10 clean air grants for diesel particulate filters, greatly reducing emissions and helping to keep the valley air cleaner. Mr. Richardson has also secured additional grants exceeding \$100,000 that have been used to purchase electric vehicles, further reducing emissions. He has also worked tirelessly for months with the Air Resources Board to mitigate a \$318,000 fine down to zero.

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FINALISTS

Two finalists are selected in each of the three categories:

Administrator of the Year

AnnMarie Azevedo, Office Manager, Sundale Union School District

Krista Herrera, Ed. D., Director of Educational Services: Curriculum & Instruction, Burton School District

Teacher of the Year

Angie Beason, Classroom Teacher/New Teacher & ELA Coordinator, Sundale Union School District

Zilda Hilliard, English Teacher, Mission Oak High School, Tulare Joint Union High School District

School Employee of the Year

Jeannie Dugan, Site Secretary, Ridgeview Middle School, Visalia Unified School District

Macario Lopez, Lead Custodian, Sierra Vista High School, Dinuba Unified School District

RECOGNITION EVENT

In Tulare County, the Excellence in Education Awards program was created in 1995 as a partnership between the Tulare County Office of Education and Educational Employees Credit Union (EECU). Each year, award winners, finalists and nominees are honored at an awards breakfast at the Visalia Convention Center. This year, the event will be held October 30. 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.”

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