

# news galleryweek

August 21, 2019

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**Agencies come together to create the Dream Center in support of foster youth**



Foster youth visiting the Tulare County Office of Education’s new Dream Center in central Visalia might be handed a form entitled “How can we help you today” with a series of over 30 boxes for them to check. Services and activities on the form range from searching for a job, receiving help with Medi-Cal, and tutoring to speaking with a social worker, obtaining emergency food or hygiene supplies, and securing housing. The boxes represent services the youth can access through representatives of several agency partners working in the Dream Center.



The Dream Center has been the vision of Beth Wilshire, TCOE's Foster Youth Services coordinator, with support from Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools, Tammy McKean, assistant superintendent, and Joe Martinez, director of Psychological Services within the Special Services Division. Modeled after a similar program operated by the Kern County Superintendent of Schools for over 10 years, the Tulare County Dream Center brings together the staff of several agencies serving foster youth. In addition to TCOE's Foster Youth Services/Homeless Education staff, the Dream Center is now home to the staff of the Tulare County Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC), three social workers from Tulare County Child Welfare Services (CWS), and an eligibility worker from TulareWORKS. The social workers have expertise in the Independent Living Program (ILP), family connections, and AB12 foster youth benefits, while the eligibility worker can help youth with Medi-Cal, food stamps, housing, and job searches. "Since we moved into the Dream Center in June, we've already seen a difference in the quality of service we provide just by having the in-house social workers," said Ms. Wilshire. "The coordination of information between CWS and school districts regarding hearings and placements has already improved."



Planning for the Dream Center began over a year ago when Jason Haley and Courtney Venegas joined the Foster Youth Services Program, both having worked for the ILP Program. Ms. Wilshire reports that in Tulare County, the Center could serve approximately 300 youth, ages 14 to 25 who receive various forms of support from ILP and the state. “Services become more intensive as foster youth graduate from high school and transition to college, the workforce, and living independently,” she said. “Last year, we had 49 youth graduate high school in Tulare County. Working together, we were able to connect 45 of them to college or service in the military.”



Moving forward, the Foster Youth Services team envisions opportunities to involve other agencies and schools to support young people. Ms. Wilshire reports that plans are being made to create a foster youth support group overseen by one of the social workers from CWS. The



program also envisions more tutoring options, psychological services screenings, a washer and dryer for youth to use, the development of Youth Empowerment Strategies (YES) organizations on Tulare County high school campuses, and an app that would notify foster youth of important events. “Thanks to the support of Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, Tulare County Superior Courts, CASA, College of the Sequoias, and our school districts, the Dream Center has already begun to seamlessly erase agency borders in their work to support foster youth,” said Mr. Hire.

The Dream Center, located at 1730 West Walnut Avenue, Suite B, will hold a community open house on Thursday, August 29 from 4:00 until 6:00 p.m. For more information, contact Beth Wilshire at (559) 730-2910, extension 5131.

*Photos above:*

*~ Nick, a student at College of the Sequoias, visits with Courtney Venegas, a Foster Youth project specialist, about updating his FAFSA application.*

*~ The lobby of the Dream Center contains a large conference room for trainings and a welcoming sign featuring all the services foster youth can access.*

*~ The conference room gives staff space to conduct trainings and hold the foster youth speakers forum.*

*~ The center provides computers to complete homework or access the internet. The center also has a shower facility and will soon have a washer and dryer for youth to use.*

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### **Registration now open for state environmental literacy conference**



The Tulare County Office of Education is one of two agencies in the San Joaquin Valley to host the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Environmental Literacy Conference. Educators in the southern San Joaquin Valley are invited to attend the conference in TCOE’s Redwood Conference Center October 28-29.

*California NGSS Statewide Rollout: Environmental Literacy* is a two-day professional learning opportunity designed for K-12 academic coaches, administrators, curriculum leads, and teacher leaders. Participants will experience grade-appropriate learning sequences with an environmental literacy focus and examples of local environmental phenomena. Community-based partners will feature resources that use the environment as a context for supporting student learning and California NGSS implementation.



“Tulare County has a long history of excellence in environmental education,” said Jared Marr, TCOE science curriculum specialist. “We appreciate the partners who will be on-hand to share how the environment can be used to teach the new science standards.”

*California NGSS Statewide Rollout: Environmental Literacy* is supported by California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, K-12 Alliance @WestEd, California Science Project, and the California Science Teachers Association. The cost of the training is \$250 per attendee and includes all materials, continental breakfast, and lunch both days.

For registration information, visit [event.me/91ELL](http://event.me/91ELL) or contact Amy Kennedy at [akennedy@sjcoe.net](mailto:akennedy@sjcoe.net) or (209) 468-9027.

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### **Tulare County Office of Education Foundation welcomes new leadership**



The Tulare County Office of Education Foundation is the nonprofit organization that raises support for TCOE programs and events. Since its creation in 2000, the foundation has been led by prominent Visalia businessman Stan Simpson, who retired from the board earlier this year. To succeed him, the board appointed longtime foundation member Janice Castle as chairperson.

Mrs. Castle is the market president for Bank of the Sierra in the Porterville/Lindsay area. She has had a 30-year career in banking and is an active member on several community boards, including the Sierra View Medical Center Foundation, the Porterville College Foundation, the Central California Family Crisis Center, and the Porterville Breakfast Rotary. Mrs. Castle and her husband are Porterville natives with family ties that go back seven generations in Tulare County. They enjoy spending time with their five children and 13 grandchildren. In her free time, Janice raises miniature donkeys.



“I am enthusiastic about the work of the TCOE Foundation,” said Mrs. Castle. “I would like to build the funding reserves to support more TCOE programs, and bring more awareness and visibility to the foundation.” One of the ideas the board has proposed is beginning a large annual fundraising event. Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire reports that the foundation will meet this fall to discuss their fundraising plans.

In addition to Mrs. Castle, the Tulare County Office of Education Foundation is served by 11 notable educators and businesspeople, including Steve Tsuboi (Vice President), Jeff Boswell (Secretary), Luis Castellanoz, John Caudle, Pansy Ceballos, Ed.D., Joe Mesa, Margaret Moholt, Guadalupe Solis, Ed.D., Terri Rufert, Ken White, and Rhonda Wilbur.

For more information on the foundation and its grant application process, contact Marlene Moreno at [marlenem@tcoe.org](mailto:marlenem@tcoe.org).

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## Coming Up!

- **August 28 & September 10**  
**CHARACTER COUNTS! Training**  
9:00am-3:00pm, TCOE Conference Center  
[More information.](#)
- **August 28**  
**Anti-Bullying Youth Symposium**  
9:00am-3:00pm, Visalia Convention Center  
[More information.](#)
- **August 29**  
**Pursuing Victory With Honor Sportsmanship Training**  
9:00am-2:00pm, TCOE Conference Center  
[More information.](#)

- **August 30**  
**Circle J Family Astronomy Night**  
7:30-9:30pm, Circle J-Norris Ranch, Springville  
[More information.](#)
- **September 5**  
**Step Up Youth Challenge Advisor Training**  
4:00-7:00pm, TCOE Conference Center  
[More information.](#)
- **September 10**  
**Tulare County College Night**  
5:30-8:00pm, International Agri-Center, Tulare  
[More information.](#)

View more events at [tcoe.org/CalendarofEvents](http://tcoe.org/CalendarofEvents).

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