

## Three teachers to be honored through Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards Program

Since 1994, the Central California Chinese Cultural Center has partnered with the Tulare County Office of Education to honor teachers through the Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards event. Chinese people around the world often mark the occasion of Confucius' birthday in late September by recognizing exemplary teachers. Each year, members of the Chinese Cultural Center hold a dinner celebration at their facilities in Visalia to honor one elementary, one middle, and one high school teacher.



On Thursday, September 19, invited educators, family, and friends will celebrate three exemplary teachers at the 26th Annual Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards.

“This year’s winners are exceptional teachers who have a passion for building character and life skills in their students,” said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire. “The positive difference they make in the lives of their students will be remembered for years to come.”

The winners of the 2019 Educators of the Year Awards are:

### **Terri Dillard, First-Grade Teacher Rockford School**

Terri Dillard is entering her 25th year as a teacher. She began her career at Sunnyside Union School before transitioning to Rockford School in 2000 where she serves as a first-grade teacher. Mrs. Dillard is praised by Rockford Superintendent Caron Borba as “one of the most dedicated teachers that I have ever met.”

Mrs. Dillard spends her break time and lunches with students in her classroom, helping them improve on their reading skills. She takes struggling readers to great heights, giving each student special attention to ensure that no one slips through the cracks.



“Even after 25 years in education, Terri is willing to try new teaching methods and adapt her teaching style and curriculum to enable her students to be 21st century learners,” said Mrs. Borba. “She is a great role model and help to new teachers as well. When I think of Terri Dillard as a teacher, she is rock solid.”

“I feel my job is to give my students a solid foundation in education and help build their character,” said Mrs. Dillard. “I work it into lessons and use books at story time that have character-building themes. We often use the themes to talk about how we treat each other when situations arise in class or on the playground. I also try to share stories about things happening around them to teach them compassion.”

**Anderson Schmidt, Physical Education  
Teacher/Coach  
Sunnyside Union School**

In his sixth year at Sunnyside Union School, physical education teacher Anderson Schmidt has established himself as a campus leader. Sunnyside Superintendent Steve Tsuboi reports that upon arriving, Mr. Schmidt set out specific goals and objectives to develop Sunnyside's first true physical education program. His program can be described as a true learning environment that requires students to think, research, and apply specific topics along with the outdoor physical activities. In addition to his teaching duties, Mr. Schmidt is Sunnyside's coach for all sports, including football, soccer, basketball, track and field, cross country, and baseball. “He also developed our first cross-country team and the Marathon Madness program where his students run 26 miles in 26 days with many far exceeding this distance,” said Mr. Tsuboi.



“My main goal as a physical education teacher is to help students develop life-long learning skills to address their health, fitness, and nutrition,” Mr. Schmidt said. “I hope to instill confidence in them and the ability to take their dreams and set the goals they need to achieve them.”

In addition to his responsibilities for physical education, Mr. Schmidt has worked with several new educators as a Teacher Induction Program support provider. Most remarkably he took on the role of English Language Development teacher for the junior high students last year, demonstrating his willingness to step outside his teaching area for the betterment of the students.

## **John Lujan, Mathematics Teacher Strathmore High School**

John Lujan is a mathematics teacher at Strathmore High School with 20 years of teaching experience across all grade levels. On some days, he might be in his classroom explaining math problems and guiding students to solutions. More often though, he's at the Strathmore High School farm helping students learn math concepts through real-world applications. A self-described chili pepper farmer, Mr. Lujan uses his knowledge of agriculture to teach students in his classes, which range from math skills for freshmen to consumer math for seniors. At the farm, students have planted their own seeds and learn math through the business of farming, marketing, and sales.



“Twenty years from now, my students may not remember the point slope formula, but they will remember how I treated them,” said Mr. Lujan. “I try to treat them with respect and create a fun learning environment.”

Porterville Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Nate Nelson shared that Mr. Lujan possesses the unique ability to connect with every student and an enthusiasm for teaching that gets them excited about learning. Mr. Lujan has used his abilities to lead a Reconnecting Youth class, and serve as a coach for Math Super Bowl teams and the Step Up Program. Mr. Lujan won a National Education Association Human Rights Leadership Award in 2015. He is currently the Strathmore High School Class of 2022 co-advisor, Key Club advisor, and announcer for the football team.

For more information about the Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards, contact Marlene Moreno at [marlenem@tcoe.org](mailto:marlenem@tcoe.org).

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## **TCOE awarded grant to help with county's 2020 Census efforts**

Special efforts are being made this fall to promote awareness of the decennial U.S. Census, which will be conducted in April 2020. To help convey the importance of participating in the 10-year census – particularly among the county's hard-to-count populations – TCOE has partnered with the County of Tulare and other government, social service, and education agencies.



“A complete and accurate count of our county’s population is essential,” said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire. “Census data determines the number of seats our state has in the U.S. House of Representatives and the way billions of dollars in funds are distributed to state and local governments – including our schools.”

Beginning in March, the U.S. Census Bureau will distribute postcards to every household in the nation. Residents will be given a unique code which they can use to complete the census questionnaire online. The bureau hopes that 80% of all questionnaires are completed online.

This summer, TCOE received a \$43,000 grant from the California Complete Count – Census 2020 office. Analyzing the data provided by the Census Bureau, Mr. Hire discovered that the majority of Tulare County’s 43 school districts have hard-to-count populations in some or all of their census tracts. In developing a strategic plan for the grant, TCOE proposed to partner with 14 school districts to create 19 Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QACs). The QACs will be staffed by district personnel who will be trained to assist residents in completing the census questionnaire online at select school sites during extended evening hours in March and April. The QACs will be located in both rural and urban districts with the hardest-to-count populations.



To support census awareness, the County of Tulare developed an information card entitled *Census 2020 – Know Your Rights*. The card, which is printed in English and Spanish, features information on the census process, how the information is collected, what it is used for, and what agencies it is shared with. The County has also organized the Tulare County 2020 Census Complete Count Committee (CCC) which has been meeting monthly in TCOE’s Redwood Conference Center. Tulare County school districts are welcome to attend the meetings to learn about community outreach opportunities in their area.

For copies of the *Know Your Rights* cards or for a schedule of the Tulare County 2020 Census CCC meetings, please contact Robert Herman at [robh@tcoe.org](mailto:robh@tcoe.org).

*Photo above:*

*~ Benita Duran, a partnership specialist with the U.S. Census Bureau, is pictured addressing administrators from TCOE's Migrant Education and Early Childhood Education Programs on the project's timeline and the educational resources available to schools and parents.*

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## Red Ribbon Celebration set for October 21-25

The annual **Tulare County Office of Education Red Ribbon Week** will be held **October 21-25** with the theme of *Send a Message, Stay Drug Free*. The Red Ribbon Week committee will host fundraising activities throughout the week with an emphasis on making positive life choices without the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. This year, the committee has chosen the Tulare County Office of Education Foundation as the recipient of proceeds collected during Red Ribbon Week. The foundation provides support to TCOE programs and events through grants.

Orders for the **Red Ribbon t-shirts** – now on sale – are **due by Thursday, September 26** at noon. For a copy of the order form and to see updates about Red Ribbon Week, visit [tcoe.org/RedRibbon](http://tcoe.org/RedRibbon).



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## Nominations now open for Kids of Character Awards



**Nominations** for the annual **Kids of Character** recognition program and the Provident-Salierno Family Foundation Awards are being **accepted through September 27**. Teachers, family, and community members may recognize a Tulare County K-12 student for their outstanding character by visiting [tcoe.org/KidsofCharacter](http://tcoe.org/KidsofCharacter). Featured students will be announced during **CHARACTER COUNTS! week, October 20-26**. This year, the Provident-Salierno winners and finalists will be honored at an awards ceremony to be held at TCOE's Redwood Conference Center (6200 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia) beginning at 6:00 p.m. on October 30.

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## Coming Up!

- **August 29**  
**Pursuing Victory With Honor Sportsmanship Training**  
9:00am-2:00pm, TCOE Conference Center  
[More information.](#)
- **August 30**  
**Crisis Prevention, Preparation, and Response Forum**  
8:30am-3:00pm, 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.](#)

- **September 15**  
**SCICON Open House**  
for 6th grade students and their families  
11:00am-4:00pm, SCICON Campus, Springville  
[More information.](#)

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

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To receive *News Gallery Week*, visit [tcoe.org/GetTheGallery](http://tcoe.org/GetTheGallery), or contact Jennifer Fisher at [jenniferf@tcoe.org](mailto:jenniferf@tcoe.org) or (559) 733-6172.

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