

Winners of Step Up Youth Challenge Awards announced

Last month before schools closed in response to the COVID-19 virus, 20 middle and high school teams completed their **2019-20 Step Up Youth Challenge** projects. The projects were created in less than six months to address issues students identified at their schools or in their communities.

While the Youth Challenge Red Carpet Awards Ceremony, scheduled for April 2 at the Fox Theater was cancelled, the judging committee was able to review the projects and select winners in five categories. These winners received grant awards which will be used to further the work of the Step Up team next year. “We had so many worthy projects this year,” said Kelley Petty, who coordinates the program for Tulare County Office of Education. “The teams are doing impressive work in identifying meaningful issues and engaging community partners to solve them in a very short amount of time.”



The Overall Award in the middle school category went to **Traver Elementary School**, a first-time Youth Challenge participant. Students chose to address the school and the town’s lack of a library. While teachers at Traver School have their own collections of books, the school hasn’t

had a central library in several years. Students noted that they had to visit neighboring towns of Kingsburg, Selma, and New London to check out books needed for school. In addition, the project team noted that former students, now in high school, return to campus to access the school's wireless network to complete homework when they don't have internet access at home. As a solution, the team met with administrators from the Tulare County Public Library and representatives from the Traver Community Assistance Program (TCAPS), which committed to hosting the library in one of its classrooms. There, the community will be able to check out books, use computers and printers, and obtain homework assistance throughout the week. In June, a book vending machine will also be installed at Traver School.

The Overall Award in the high school category went to **Tulare Tech Prep**, an overall winner for three consecutive years. This year, Tech Prep students looked initially at the issue of mental health before identifying suicide as their focus area. The students worked with school administrators and the district psychologist to educate themselves on poor mental health and its causes – depression, anxiety, stress, and potentially suicide. Additional partners were engaged, including Tulare Youth Services Bureau, Fresno Pacific University, Tulare County Suicide Prevention Task Force, TCOE's Dream Center, and TCOE's CHOICES Signs of Suicide program. The team also helped to create the first Tech Prep Parents Club to engage parents in supporting their students emotionally and academically, and reached out to students at Countryside High School, which shares the same campus. Additionally, team members served as mentors to younger students in the Community Day School at Lincoln Elementary. In their grant report, the team enthusiastically reported the difference the difficult project had made – improving their lives academically, with peers, teachers and family members, and with themselves.

The Step Up Youth Challenge was developed by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors as a program to engage at-risk youth in positive leadership development and community-serving activities and to deter gang involvement. Today the program is broader, as teams identify needs at their schools and in their communities involving issues ranging from nutrition and literacy to self-esteem and homelessness. "This program is unique in that it gives schools – large and small, urban and rural – the same opportunity to address a real need and gather resources to address it," said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire. "It's an incredible example of 21st century learning."

To learn how your school can get involved in the 2020-21 Step Up Youth Challenge, which begins in September, contact Kelley Petty at kelleyp@tcoe.org.

2019-2020 STEP UP YOUTH CHALLENGE AWARDS

Overall Award

for the project that demonstrates overall excellence

Middle School: **Traver Elementary School**, Traver, \$2500

High School: **Tulare Tech Prep**, Tulare, \$2500

Meet the Need Award

for the project that best identifies and meets a school or community need

Middle School: **Strathmore Middle School**, Strathmore, \$1000
High School: **Monache High School**, Porterville, \$1000

Community Collaboration Award

for the project that best coordinates with school and community partners

Middle School: **Pleasant View West School**, Porterville, \$1000

High School: **University Preparatory High School**, Visalia, \$1000

Impact Award

for the project that has the most significant impact on the school, community, and team members

Middle School: **Reagan Elementary School**, Lindsay, \$1000

High School: **Accelerated Charter High School**, Visalia, \$1000

Sustainability Award

for the project that will either be sustained long-term in the original school or can be easily replicated in other schools and communities

Middle School: **Pixley Middle School**, Pixley, \$1000

High School: **Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center**, Visalia, \$1000

Presentation Award

for the project that best depicts their process through a slide presentation

Middle School: **Lincoln Elementary School**, Lindsay, \$700

High School: **Mt. Whitney High School**, Visalia, \$700

Photo above:

~ Traver Elementary School's Step Up Youth Challenge project to create a community library captured the attention of local media. Step Up team members are pictured with Kopi Sotiropulos, KMPH morning show host.

Planetarium & Science Center launches two new programs to support learning at home



The **TCOE Planetarium & Science Center** has developed two programs, debuting this week, to excite Tulare County students about astronomy and the world around them, even when they can't visit the planetarium.

The first is a program entitled *Life* from *Galactic Glossary* – a series of animated shorts hosted by Loony Moon, a curious and friendly moon who teaches students about a featured "space word" and how it shapes the universe. "We chose to debut our first film in the *Galactic Glossary* series today to celebrate Earth Day's fiftieth anniversary," said Conan Palmer, Planetarium & Science Center coordinator. "I want to thank Craig Alameda, our media specialist, for his amazing work in writing, animating, and producing this program. I'd also like to thank Taurie Thayer, TCOE's receptionist, for providing the voice of Loony." To view *Life*, visit [TCOE on YouTube](#).

Earth Day began in 1970 as a way to bring national attention to the planet and its natural resources. The very first Earth Day celebration was effective in helping to change the public's perspective on pollution and the preservation of the planet. The observance of Earth Day flourished in the United States and quickly spread around the globe. People contribute by planting trees, recycling, picking up trash, and much more. Today, over 1 billion people in 190 countries celebrate this observance, with these numbers continuing to grow each year.

In addition to the *Galactic Glossary*, the Planetarium is also launching a series of ongoing and frequent social media posts to keep astronomy learning going at home. The first post was made yesterday afternoon and it included information about the annual Lyrid meteor shower and the Comet Thatcher. Future posts will highlight night sky objects, historic moments, and noteworthy scientists. More programs are planned for the coming months, with online features introducing new characters and presentations available at the planetarium. To stay up-to-date on these posts and all the new material from the Planetarium & Science Center, follow [TCOE on Facebook](#).



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Photos above:

- ~ *The Galactic Glossary features a cast of characters, including Loony Moon. In the first video, entitled Life, Loony tells viewers what makes our planet so special and how we can protect it.*
- ~ *The planetarium is also creating a series of social media posts, such as an announcement about the annual Lyrid meteor shower which was posted earlier this week. The posts are designed to encourage astronomy learning at home and will feature information about night sky objects, historic moments, and notable scientists.*

ERS makes three student events virtual

The staff at Educational Resource Services has taken three of its remaining student events and made them virtual. Two of the events – the long-running Young Authors' Faire and Reading Revolution – have been reimagined for students who previously enrolled to participate. The third event – Night at the 21st Century Museum – is open to all teachers who want to submit exemplary student work created during this time of distance learning.

K-8 students who were registered to participate in **Young Authors' Faire**, which was originally scheduled for April 23, are invited to create digital versions of their original books or develop entirely new e-books for an online event to be developed later this year. Digital books are due April 30. Teachers who have questions about the process of submitting their students' work are encouraged to contact Juliana Davidian at juliana.davidian@tcoe.org.



Students registered to participate in the annual **Reading Revolution**, originally scheduled for May 15 and 21, are invited to enter projects in one or both new competitions – Cover That! and TCOE RR Book Chat. For Cover That!, students can choose their favorite book from the official list and design an alternative book cover that differs from the original using knowledge gained while reading the book. Book Chat invites students to select a title from the official book list and create a two-minute presentation using video, Google Slides, PowerPoint, or other presentation applications to describe the book and convince viewers why they should read it. Reading Revolution projects are due May 21. Students must [register online](#) to participate.

Finally, the annual project based learning showcase, **Night at the 21st Century Museum** (N21CM), has been reimagined as an opportunity for teachers to highlight the work they and their students are doing through distance learning. Open to grades K-12, N21CM will accept images, presentations, and videos showcasing distance learning work. These artifacts will then be displayed in an online gallery for others to see and use in their learning later this year. Registration to participate in N21CM is due April 30. All projects are due May 11.

For more information on these student learning opportunities, please visit TCOE's Common Core Connect website at tcoe.org/VirtualStudentEvents.

Photo above:

~ The annual Young Authors' Faire has been reimagined as a virtual student event. Students previously registered to participate in the event may submit electronic versions of their books this month.

Weekly arts activity newsletter spurs creativity at home

As the world seeks ways to cope with COVID-19, the arts are taking center stage. The internet and social media are brimming with videos of virtual choir and dance performances, concerts performed on balconies in Italy and New York, and live sessions with renowned musicians and artists from around the globe. The power and impact of the arts is on full display. With the importance of the arts in mind, TCOE is launching a new resource for students and families entitled *Arts All Around Us – Encouraging Creativity Outside The Classroom*.

This weekly newsletter features questions and activities designed to inspire families to connect with the arts in fun and engaging ways. Using the Artistic Processes of the new California Arts Standards as a guide, *Arts All Around Us* provides a simple framework for arts learning at home. Available in both English and Spanish, each newsletter will highlight a work of art and provide opportunities for deep exploration, connections, and creativity. Activities require no technology, minimal supplies, and are accessible to all ages. “We hope that this weekly resource will provide families with an entry point into the arts and creativity,” said Kate Stover, TCOE’s arts consultant. “Now more than ever, the arts can be a healing, learning tool.”

To access this week’s edition of *Arts All Around Us*, visit tcoe.org/ArtsAllAroundUs.

Photo above:

~ Copies of the new weekly Arts All Around Us are available online. Each newsletter will feature arts-based activities students and their family can do together at home.



Four Tulare County schools win Bonner Center Awards for character education



This year, four elementary schools from Tulare County received the **Bonner Center's 2020 Virtues and Character Recognition Awards** from California State University, Fresno for their exemplary character education programs. The honorees were **Strathmore Elementary School** and Tulare City School District's **Alpine Vista School, Pleasant Elementary School, and Wilson Elementary School**. The Bonner Center Awards were established in 1996 as a program within the Kremen School of Education & Human Development to review and recognize exemplary elementary and middle school character education programs. Teachers and administrators interested in learning more about creating or further developing a character education program are encouraged to contact Kelley Petty, Tulare County CHARACTER COUNTS! Coordinator, at kelleyp@tcoe.org.

Coming Up!

- Many upcoming student events have been cancelled or postponed. Check the current list of all student events (cancelled, postponed, and tentatively scheduled) on the [Student Events](#) webpage.

View more events at tcoe.org/CalendarofEvents.

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