

# news galleryweek

April 8, 2020

## Special Services works with students and parents to continue learning at home

In the past few weeks, thousands of children and students with special needs have transitioned to learning online from home with video supports from staff of the Special Services Division. This includes students who were part of dozens of special programs and Intervention Resource Classrooms (IRCs) in school districts around the county and children who can no longer meet with the specialists who visited them in their homes on a weekly basis. This week, the *News Gallery* is highlighting ways the staff who support more than 200 students served by 17 IRCs are continuing to connect with them through a Google Classroom site.



Elementary, middle, and high school special education students in IRCs experiencing various behavioral and emotional health needs receive individualized therapeutic services. In partnership with school districts, an IRC is a dedicated safe space that students can access academic support, mental health services, social emotional supports, and social skills development, or simply hang out and take a break.

With distance learning, Tiffany Owens-Stark, IRC program manager, reports that staff have focused on creating online experiences that are as environmentally positive as an IRC classroom, with images that show students they are missed and cared about. To support the positive online environment, staff members have created videos on topics such as taking a break, accepting “no,” and cooling down. “The content prompts students and families to use their coping skills and continue learning and supporting one another,” she said. “This is our third week of phone calls to students and their families. Through listening and supportive conversations, students are able to share some of their joys and concerns.” Among them, students have appreciated when IRCs have held virtual open classroom hours, plus Google Hangouts and Virtual Fun Fridays.



“While we’re not able to answer questions such as ‘When do you think we will be able to go back to school?’, we let them know we will continue calling and supporting them, and creating fun opportunities to connect online until we are all able to meet again,” said Mrs. Owens-Stark.

*Photos above:*

*~ Following countywide school closures, IRC teachers have begun contributing content to the program’s Google site to remind students that they are still supported and cared about.*

*~ Among the content are several videos created by teachers that reinforce important coping skills students and parents can work on together.*

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## Early Childhood Education supports 1,500 preschool children at home with packets full of lessons and activities



This week, Karen Muro at the TCOE Graphics Production Center is busy printing hundreds of packets for children served by the Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP). The packets – designed for three age ranges – are full of lessons and activities for over 1,500 preschool children who are at home due to the closure of the Child Development Centers.

ECE Administrator Dr. Alex Elliott reports that the packets were designed for children ages 0-18 months, 18-36 months, and 3+ years utilizing the Home Base curriculum that specializes in incorporating items in the home to encourage parent/child engagement and educational opportunities. The packet, with four weeks' worth of activities, also includes a list of community resources and fun ideas to get the family up and moving.

Since the closure, ECEP education staff are keeping in contact with families weekly utilizing a variety of activities to engage children and families, including phone calls, video conferencing, sending pictures and emails, and even participating in a survey to name one of the teacher's goat.

*Photo above:*

*~ Early Childhood Education has developed three age-specific activity packets for parents with children at home due to the closure of Child Development Centers.*



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### Wellness Committee activities continue to grow, annual Steps Challenge concludes April 3

For the past five years, TCOE employees have participated in Healthy Tulare County Week held each April in conjunction with National Public Health Week. In an effort to not only support Healthy Tulare County Week but also maintain a healthy workforce, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire sends monthly emails covering a wide range of topics throughout the school year. Topics include the importance of blood pressure checks, ideas for being active and supporting proper nutrition, information on heart disease, stress management, diabetes, and childhood obesity, and promotion of National Women’s and Men’s health weeks.

In addition to Mr. Hire’s monthly emails, the Health & Wellness Committee conducts “Healthy Habits” events at both the Mooney and Doe Avenue sites. These lunchtime events encourage employees to stay active and healthy by providing a variety of presentations and onsite activities. Attendees can try on a vest that demonstrates how it feels to carry an additional 5, 10, or 15 pounds of fat, visually see how much fat is in food found in the standard American diet, get their blood pressure checked, collect low-fat, low-calorie recipes, learn ways to encourage drinking more water by infusing it with a variety of fruits and vegetables, and experience preparing a healthy drink through human power on a Smoothie Bike.



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Health & Wellness Committee was unable to hold the Healthy Habits events this year, but it did conduct its annual employee Steps Challenge. This

year, more than 50 employees participated and logged over 8,200,000 steps between March 9 and April 3. With approximately 2,200 steps in a mile, TCOE employees walked 3,700 miles – enough to walk across the continental United States. One employee stated, “The Steps Challenge was a fun way of challenging myself to keep moving every day. My walks are also a great time to think, ponder, and relax.”

The top three finishers in the 2020 Steps Challenge were:  
Paul Vivas of Early Childhood Education with 560,078 steps  
Joe Cadena of Information Systems with 475,183 steps  
Alma Rooney of External Business Services with 407,945 steps

For a complete list of results, visit [tcoe.org/Wellness](http://tcoe.org/Wellness).

The Health & Wellness Committee will be launching its virtual Bingo Challenge next week to encourage employees to continue practicing healthy habits at home.

*Photo above:*

*~ This year, over 50 employees participated in the annual Steps Challenge and logged 8.2 million steps.*

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## Local school boards association awards annual scholarships to Tulare County students



For over 15 years, the Tulare County Office of Education has assisted the Tulare County School Boards Association (TCSBA) with its annual scholarship program. Each year, the association offers scholarships to seniors from every Tulare County high school, including comprehensive, charter, and continuation settings. Marlene Moreno and Jennifer Fisher from County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire’s office coordinate the distribution of information to Tulare County high schools and the screening process with TCSBA board members. This year, the association was pleased to provide 26 scholarships of \$350 to the following students.

**Noelle Andrew**, Redwood High School  
**Kiarra Atwell**, Alpaugh High School  
**Rajan Batth**, El Diamante High School

**Gianna Benedetti**, Tulare Western High School  
**Shaylyn Brown**, Visalia Technical Early College High School  
**Jacob Buckley**, Monache High School  
**Sandra Carranza**, Mission Oak High School  
**Victoria Davila**, University Preparatory High School  
**Julianna Deniz**, Tulare Tech Prep  
**Catherine Entenman**, Porterville High School  
**Valerie Guzman**, Orosi High School  
**Laura Hanson**, Countryside High School  
**Elizabeth Haro**, Woodlake Union High School  
**Hayden Hilscher**, Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center  
**Mariela Huerta**, Sequoia High School  
**Julian Lara**, Summit Charter Collegiate Academy  
**Berenice Lemus**, Lindsay High School  
**Joel Mendoza, Jr.**, JJ Cairns Continuation High School  
**Chloe Miller**, Tulare Union High School  
**Jenifer Ortega**, Golden West High School  
**Asly Martinez Ramirez**, La Sierra Military Academy  
**Jasmin Ramirez**, Butterfield Charter School  
**Christopher Roidriguez-Escamilla**, Harmony Magnet Academy  
**Yaquelin Villasenor Robles**, Granite Hills High School  
**Ashton Unholz**, Mt. Whitney High School  
**Daniela Garcia Valadez**, Farmersville High School

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## 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](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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