

# news galleryweek

April 7, 2021

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## Students return to SCICON for day visits as program continues to offer virtual instruction



A group of students from Springville Union School visited SCICON for a day trip last week – the first to visit the campus since the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to close last March. Staff members shed tears of joy seeing the district’s big yellow school bus approach the parking lot.

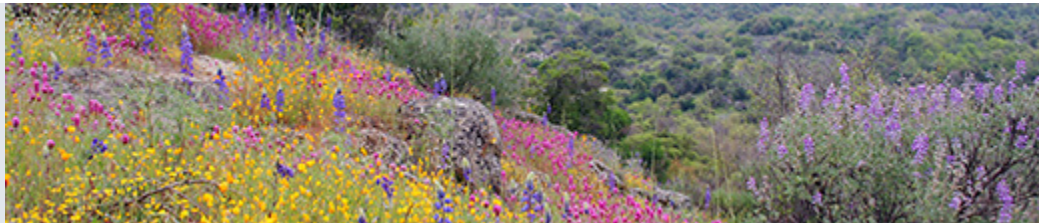
SCICON naturalists were careful to instruct students to wear their masks at all times, maintain social distancing, and not share equipment with one another. The excited sixth graders visited Listening Hill, Wormville, and the tree nursery, learning hands-on biology and ecology lessons.

“It was a great day to see students learning on campus again,” said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools. “I am equally as proud of the work the program did to continue to serve Tulare County students virtually, without missing a beat.”



Almost a year ago, SCICON began connecting with students whose visits had been cancelled due to the pandemic. SCICON staff developed fun and educational videos, helping students to learn key science standards and SCICON traditions and songs, and explore the exciting world of the school's Raptor Center and Discovery Room. In September, the program began offering custom Zoom sessions for fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms with lessons in aquatics, ecology, forestry, and geology, and visits to the Phyllis Wall Museum. SCICON Director Dianne Shew reports that since September the instructional staff has conducted over 700 Zoom presentations for fifth- and sixth-grade students, reaching an astonishing 11,000 students. So impressed with the virtual service that the school provided its students, the Visalia Unified Board of Education will be providing the SCICON Zoom team with a special commendation at a board meeting later this month.

SCICON looks forward to safely welcoming other classes for day trips and continuing to conduct lessons via Zoom until it can resume its overnight program. For more information about visiting SCICON or arranging live Zoom lessons, call Dianne Shew at (559) 539-2642.



#### **Circle J-Norris Ranch to hold wildflower walk April 10**

The Circle J-Norris Ranch program is inviting families to visit the program this Saturday to enjoy guided wildflower walks along its many trails. The free event is scheduled for April 10 from 1:00 until 3:30 p.m. Reservations are required and space is limited. COVID protocols will be observed and visitors are required to wear a mask.

Reservations can be made by visiting [bit.ly/CircleJWildflowerWalk](https://bit.ly/CircleJWildflowerWalk) or by calling (559) 539-2263. Visitors are encouraged to wear comfortable walking shoes and bring their own water.

*Photos above:*

*~ SCICON naturalists welcomed students back to campus last week for the first time in over a year. Springville students enjoyed visits to Wormville and the tree nursery to learn biology and ecology lessons.*



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## CHARACTER COUNTS! in a Positive School Climate



As more students begin to return to Tulare County campuses, the CHARACTER COUNTS! (CC!) Program has organized a number of trainings to support teachers in developing student character. On April 21, April 22, and May 1, the program will offer virtual sessions for educators new to CC!. Participants will learn why character development matters for academic success, social-emotional growth, and positive school climates. Participants will also learn how to implement a CHARACTER COUNTS! program utilizing the Six Pillars of Character to impact the youth they serve.

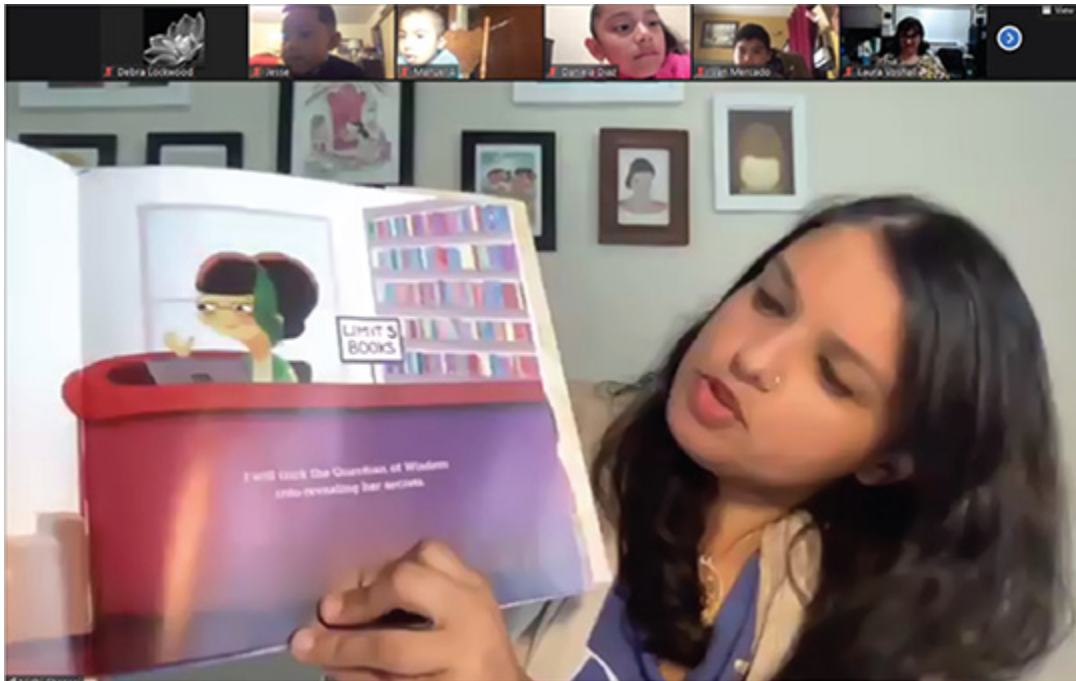
For veterans of the program, CHARACTER COUNTS! is offering three sessions of its Coaching Hour on May 12. During Coaching Hour, participants will dig deeper into the CC! curriculum as trainers demonstrate various lessons. Participants will also gain 'ready-to-use' lessons for in-person and online learning.

Additionally, the CHARACTER COUNTS! Program is offering consultation services for teachers. Kelley Petty and her staff are available to provide customized guided instruction in person or via Zoom on a variety of topics, including Pillar of the Month lessons, ethical decision-making, and developing leadership with character. For more information on CC! guided instruction services, contact Kelley Petty, CC! coordinator, at [kelleyp@tcoe.org](mailto:kelleyp@tcoe.org).

For information on registering for the trainings or Coaching Hour, visit [tcoe.org/CharacterCounts](https://tcoe.org/CharacterCounts).

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## National authors inspire Earlimart students to write creatively



For the past two years, after school students in Earlimart have been inspired to write by men and women who make a living doing it – children’s book authors. Last month, students met virtually with Nidhi Chanani, author of the graphic novel *Pashmina*. Prior to Ms. Chanani’s visit, the students had been learning how to write and illustrate their own graphic novels. Students received copies of her book and interacted with her as she talked about her work. In addition to writing and illustrating books, she has created artwork for Disney, Hasbro, and Paramount Pictures. Her award-winning book, *Pashmina*, is currently in production by Netflix as an animated musical.

The grant-funded program began in 2019 when Tulare County Office of Education English Language Arts Curriculum Specialists Tim Budz and Jenean Bray, and Library Media Supervisor Debra Lockwood partnered with the Earlimart School District to develop a special after-school program. The team won a two-year California State Library Student Author grant for students in Alila and Earlimart Elementary Schools’ after school program to develop the skills and strategies for self-directed narrative writing.

Hundreds of students and 11 Earlimart teachers have been involved in the project, which includes writing units and additional virtual visits with award winning authors and illustrators. A visit from Juana Martinez-Neal was held last year; Rafael Lopez will speak to students later this month. The grant has also helped to fund graphic novel mentor texts for teachers’ classroom libraries, illustration guides, and supplies for the students.

Debra Lockwood reports that a virtual exhibition of the graphic novels students have developed is being planned for later this year when the grant program concludes. For more information about the Earlimart student author program, contact Debra Lockwood at [debra.lockwood@tcoe.org](mailto:debra.lockwood@tcoe.org).

*Photo above:*

*~ Last month, author and illustrator Nidhi Chanani visited with Earlimart students virtually to talk about her career. She is pictured reading I Will Be Fierce by Bea Birdsong – a book she illustrated.*

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## Distance Learning Resources

- [Arts All Around Us](#)
  - [TCOE Learning at Home](#)
  - [TCOE's Educational Resource Services Library](#)
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