

news galleryweek

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La Sierra kicks off new year with an eye on its past and future growth



Like a precision drill unit, La Sierra Military Academy has pivoted to view its past and pivoting again to look toward its future. The school launches the new year committed to deepening its military culture while adding new activities and features for a well-rounded high school experience.

“When I came to La Sierra last year, I began with a review of the school’s charter,” said Dr. Scott Pierce, the school’s administrator. “The staff and I have had numerous conversations about returning to the school’s roots while building in more of the social experiences students have in high school.”



At the first student rally held last week, signs of the new emphasis on military culture were evident. As students stood with their battalions, which are organized by grade level, Pierce spoke about a new tradition the staff created to honor veterans. The tradition would be an annual recognition of select local men and women who served in various branches of the military. Photos of the veterans will be displayed in a newly-created Veterans Hall in the school. Pierce then introduced the program's first honoree, Army veteran and retired history teacher Kent McNatt. McNatt, who was Pierce's high school basketball coach at Tulare Union, has been a longtime supporter of the school and numerous other youth development activities and programs in Tulare County.



Evidence of the school's new social experiences was also apparent. Following the veteran's ceremony, the school's 225 middle and high school students buzzed with excitement, waiting to see what was in store for them. The first

activity was an egg race through an obstacle course. The egg race was followed by an energy Pictionary contest involving both teachers and students. Between the activities, Pierce made an announcement about the school's first dance of the year, which was held later that evening.

At the rally, Pierce also introduced the staff. Among them was California State Guard Captain Dave Archer. Archer, the former director of the Porterville Military Academy, begins teaching military science and applied leadership next month. Archer's presence on staff will not only strengthen the school's military culture, but also aid in the potential public service career technical education pathway program. Pierce explained that the pathway is being considered as a partnership with military, and local law enforcement, fire fighters, and first responders to provide students education and work experience in these fields.



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To support students' post-graduation plans, the school has also established a new College and Career Center. Led by counselor Gabrel Castro, the center features new computer stations accessible to students interested in researching college and technical training programs, completing FAFSA federal financial aid applications, and building a resume. Castro and her staff have plans to open the center several times this fall for parent nights.



"We are very excited to watch as La Sierra continues to build on its history of supporting students' social-emotional development, now strengthening their leadership abilities and expanding college and career opportunities," said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools. Parents interested in arranging a tour of La Sierra Military Academy are encouraged to contact the school at (559) 733-6963.

Photo above:

~ Cadets enjoy a friendly egg race at the school's first rally last week.

~ Former educator Kent McNatt, right, is the first veteran to be inducted into the school's new Veterans Hall. La Sierra Military Academy administrator Dr. Scott Pierce looks on.

~ English Language Arts teacher Ronni Aguilar plays a game of Pictionary with students from her battalion.

~ California State Guard Captain Dave Archer joins the staff to teach military science and applied leadership next month.

~ Mathematics teacher Jaycee Totty leads his battalion to a competition.

County agencies help get students to SCICON

Over the course of four days, staff from TCOE, SCICON, Tulare County Health and Human Services, Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District (COJUSD), and a medical clinic in Dinuba, worked together to provide COVID-19 testing for over 150 students, counselors, and staff from COJUSD so students from El Monte Middle School could visit SCICON. Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire and Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services Julie Berk coordinated the work of the agencies. Along with getting the incoming visitors tested, the staff at SCICON were also tested.

“They are having a wonderful time,” said SCICON administrator Dianne Shew. Shew reported that there are five teachers and 98 students on campus this week. SCICON is running its standard program over four days, instead of five, with safety adjustments made due to COVID.



Around the County

Granite Hills opens new CTE Justice Center



Porterville Unified School District held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Granite Hills High School's new LJE (Law, Justice, and Ethics) Pathway CTE Justice Center on Wednesday, August 18. The CTE Justice Center features a working courtroom where students can practice in a mock trial environment, as well as two forensics labs. It is the

first high school in California to have a courtroom center according to retired Tulare County Supervising District Attorney Robert Dempsie.

Porterville Unified public information officer, Jason Pommier, said the CTE Justice Center also adds another facility that can be used for district trainings and that there is interest from the county district attorney's office to use the center for training since the county has offices in Porterville.

On February 17, the CTE Justice Center will also host the Tulare County Mock Trial finals.

Photo above:

~ A ribbon-cutting ceremony for Granite Hills High School's new LJE (Law, Justice, and Ethics) Pathway CTE Justice Center was held on Wednesday, August 18 in Porterville. Photo courtesy of Porterville Unified School District.

Around the County is a regular feature of TCOE's *News Gallery Week*. To be considered for this section, Tulare County districts are encouraged to share major student, school, and district achievements and high-resolution photography with Rob Herman, communications director, at robh@tcoe.org.

Distance Learning Resources

- [Arts All Around Us](#)
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