

Annual Christmas Bird Count scheduled for Sunday, December 18

Students, parents, teachers, and community members are invited to join the annual SCICON and Circle J Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 18. The morning bird count will be held at SCICON from 8:00 a.m. until noon. The afternoon count will be held at the Circle J-Norris Ranch from 1:30 until 4:30 p.m.



For 123 years, the National Audubon Society has conducted annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) involving thousands of volunteers across the United States, Canada, and several other countries in the Western Hemisphere. CBCs are early-winter bird censuses conducted between December 14 and January 5 each year and led by community science organizations. The surveys are conducted within 15-mile diameter circles established by the Audubon Society.

In Tulare County, three active circles exist – one at the Kaweah Oaks Preserve, one at the Giant Forest Village in the Sequoia National Park, and one in Springville. The SCICON outdoor education program and its Circle J-Norris Ranch field study site both fall within the Springville survey area.

Participants in the SCICON and Circle J CBC are encouraged to bring their own lunch and water, and to dress warmly. Binoculars will be provided to those who need them. Please RSVP by calling Amanda Driver at (559) 539-2263 or 359-8575.

ABC30's upcoming *Children First* special to focus on the important role grandparents provide



ABC30's upcoming *Children First* special, "Growing Up With Grandparents," features a number of Tulare County stories. The special, hosted by anchors Jason Oliveira and Madeline Evans, will focus on the important role grandparents have in the development of children.

One of the stories in the special profiles three foster grandmothers who are making connections with students as classroom volunteers. The three women – Annabelle, Marie, and Sylvia – are part of a long-running foster grandmother program offered to special education classrooms through the Central Valley Regional Center.

The women work in Jennifer Giannetto's AcCEL classroom at Monache High School in Porterville. Giannetto explains that the grandmothers recently developed a book club for her students. "The project began when Sylvia contacted me over the summer asking if she could read aloud to the students," Giannetto said. "As school began, the readings grew into a small group discussion for the students. Sylvia selects the literature, while Marie supports the students with discussion. Annabelle creates a simple art project to pair with the reading. Their book club has become a tremendously popular activity!"

Arturo Yanez, grandfather of a student at Orosi High School, will also be profiled. Yanez and his wife raised their grandchildren. As they grew, he found ways to be active on campus to support them.

To see "Growing Up With Grandparents," tune in to ABC30 Sunday, December 18 at 5:00 p.m. or visit abc30.com/ChildrenFirst after the special airs Sunday.

University Preparatory High School to hold annual Winter Concert next week



University Preparatory High School (UPHS) will hold its annual Winter Concert at Gateway Church in Visalia on Monday, December 19 beginning at 7:00 p.m. The church is located at 1100 S. Sowell St., near Mt. Whitney High School.

In addition to the performances by UPHS chamber and concert choirs, beginning and advanced handbell ensembles, beginning guitar group, and the school's orchestra will perform.

Five UPHS students were selected for the Tulare-Kings Counties Music Educators Association (TKMEA) Honor Orchestra. They include Liam Curtiss, cello; Maya Gamez, cello; Hollen Wegley, cello; Hannah Wegley, viola; and Sophia Weber, violin. Curtiss was also accepted into the California Orchestra Directors Association (CODA) Honor Orchestra and received first chair placement.

Concertgoers are welcome to make donations at the door, which will be used to support UPHS music programs. For more information on attending the Winter Concert, call UPHS at (559) 730-2529.

Prior to Monday's performance, the advanced handbells will join the Kings Symphony Orchestra on Sunday,



December 18 at the Hanford Fox Theatre for *Christmas at the Fox* at 4:00 p.m. The advanced handbells have been invited to perform at several local theatres while the choirs have participated in *Sing Loud, Sing On* and *Nothing But Treble* at the LJ Williams Theater.

The CODA Honor Orchestra's performance will be held on Saturday, December 3 at Wilson Middle School Performance Hall in San Diego. The concert begins at 1:00 p.m.

The TKMEA Honor Orchestra will take place on Saturday, February 4 at 1:00 p.m. at the Frank "Buck" Shaffer Theater in Porterville.

Photo above:

~ University Preparatory High School students play during the school's Fall Carnival this past October.

~ Liam Curtiss was selected to the California Orchestra Directors Association (CODA) Honor Orchestra and received first chair placement. Curtiss was also selected to the Tulare-Kings Counties Music Educators Association (TKMEA) Honor Orchestra.

Board members, district leaders invited to attend District Leadership Institute



School board members, district administrators, and members of the County Committee on School District Organization are invited to attend the District Leadership Institute on January 19. The event will feature keynote speaker Dennis Meyers, assistant executive

director, Governmental Relations with California School Boards Association, plus informative breakout sessions on current education and legal matters.

Dennis Meyers is a veteran education advocate for California school children. Meyers joined CSBA in December 2011. He directs the development and implementation of the association's political and legislative strategies at the state and federal levels. In addition, he oversees CSBA's Public Affairs and Community Engagement Representatives (PACER) program, the network of staff throughout the state who work directly with school board members on advocacy and CSBA membership-related issues.

The cost of the event for school administrators and guests, which includes dinner, is \$50 per person. School board members and members of the County Committee on School District Organization may attend at no cost as guests of the county superintendent of schools. All attendees are encouraged to register for the event by January 12 by visiting tcoe.org/DistrictLeadershipInstitute.

Photo above:

~ (l-r standing) Tulare County Board of Education Trustees Judy Coble and Celia Maldonado-Arroyo took their oath of office for a new four-year term this week. New and veteran board members are invited to attend the District Leadership Institute on January 19. The institute will provide them with information on current issues in education.

Slick Rock Student Film Festival accepting entries, deadline March 11

Video entries for the 2023 Slick Rock Student Film Festival are due March 11. Middle and high school students living in Tulare, Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, or Merced counties may enter videos in a total of 20 categories, including two new ones.



New this year is a category entitled "Social-Media's Negative Impact on Mental Health Short Film," sponsored by Kaweah Health – a new sponsor. Filmmakers in this category are challenged to produce a powerful short film that educates the viewer on how the algorithms built into social-media platforms create addiction, and equips and challenges the viewer to make intentional decisions to guard against social-media addiction and its negative impact on mental health.

The second new category is "Nutrition and Physical Activity Public Service Announcement (PSA)." Filmmakers in this category will create a PSA addressing the importance of nutrition education, access to healthy foods/beverages and/or physical activity opportunities in their community.

A "Best of Show" winner for both middle and high school categories will be selected from all films entered in the festival.

Visit tcoe.org/SlickRock for information on film categories, deadlines, and the awards ceremony, which will be held live at the Visalia Fox Theatre on May 12.

Tulare County College Night Scholarship applications due March 31

First awarded in 2006, the annual Tulare County College Night Scholarship is given to one graduating senior who has an outstanding academic record and a commitment to community service. The scholarship was envisioned by the TCOE College Night Committee as a \$1,000 award, renewable for up to four consecutive years.



Tulare County graduating seniors are invited to submit applications for the College Night Scholarship by visiting tcoe.org/CollegeandCareer/scholarship. The application deadline is March 31, 2023.

The website includes information on the submission requirements, including an application, two written essays, two academic recommendations, and official transcripts. Finalists for the scholarship will be interviewed by the committee May 3, 2023.

Annual CAC calendar focuses on the power of supportive siblings for children with special needs

At the meeting of the Tulare County Board of Education Monday, Dr. Anthony Martin, chairperson of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and director of Expanded Learning Opportunities at the Burton School District, presented the CAC's annual "Meeting Challenges" calendar. For over 30 years, the



calendar has highlighted the needs and abilities of special education students in Tulare County.

This year's calendar is entitled "The Power of Supportive Siblings" and features students with special needs and their siblings from throughout the county learning from and helping one another. The calendar also highlights various professionals within the Tulare County Office of Education, the Central Valley Regional Center, and the Parenting Network who have siblings with special needs.

"For their part, children and adults with disabilities teach their siblings how to look at life through a new lens. With unbridled enthusiasm, they take on life's challenges with great determination. They teach us how to laugh, how to love, and how to embrace diversity in ourselves and the world around us," the calendar reads.

State education code established the creation of CACs. In Tulare County, this 16-member committee is comprised of parents of students with special needs, parents of general education students, general and special education teachers, representatives from community agencies, and a student or adult with special needs.

CHOICES Program partners with Visalia Unified to support social and emotional development

Last week, the CHOICES Prevention/Intervention Education program hosted a WhyTry professional development training for Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) staff members. The WhyTry program is a social and emotional learning curriculum for K-12 teachers and counselors emphasizing the importance of developing relationships and cultivating resiliency. The CHOICES



Program piloted WhyTry on VUSD sites earlier this year. CHOICES now offers WhyTry at schools throughout the county as a tool to engage all young people, as well as encourage unmotivated students, support those who have experienced trauma, and increase academic success.

The training for Visalia Unified staff is part of a partnership in a three-year Proposition 47 Learning Communities for School Success Program (LCSSP) grant awarded to

CHOICES last year. The goals of the LCSSP partnership are keep the most vulnerable pupils in school and to enhance the actions identified in the district's LCAP.

Brandon Gridiron, VUSD Equity and Student Services administrator, reports that the WhyTry program has been very well received by students and teachers on district campuses. "Now more than ever, students benefit by acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions. The response from staff and students from last year's WhyTry pilot program is positive, and we appreciate the opportunity to build on this success by training our staff as well as our students," Gridiron said.

In addition to the WhyTry curriculum within the LCSSP project, the CHOICES program also provides training and technical support to VUSD staff and students in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) and Signs of Suicide (SOS). TCOE also contracts with VUSD to provide increased staffing for key student support positions to address district LCAP objectives. These positions include district liaisons/case managers and student support intervention program counselors.

"WhyTry a natural addition to our services as CHOICES programs focus on supporting and promoting student health, well-being, and safe learning environments," Frank Silveira, CHOICES Program administrator, said. "The opportunity to expand and bring this program to many more schools by training staff is a win for our community's children, as they build their own goal setting, decision-making, and empathy skills. CHOICES welcomes the opportunity to partner with other districts to complement their LCAP activities devoted to serving vulnerable student populations."

Editor: [Robert Herman](#), Communications Director

Contributors: Nayirah Dosu, Marlene Moreno, Jennifer Fisher, Amanda Driver, Jeff Fritz, Kathleen Green-Martins, Therese Arnold, Amy Silveira, Jeff Lynch, Frank Silveira

To receive the News Gallery Week, sign up [here](#), or contact Jennifer Fisher at jenniferf@tcoe.org or (559) 733-6172.