

Tulare County Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news galleryweek

April 12, 2023

Winners in the Excellence in Education program announced

This afternoon, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire surprised the three winners named in the 29th Annual Tulare County Excellence in Education Awards program. The three winners notified were Tammy Bradford (Tulare County Administrator/Manager of the Year), Jennifer Powers (Tulare County Teacher of the Year), and Sonya Lopez (Tulare County School Employee of the Year).

Last month, a selection committee of Tulare County business and education leaders met to review the nominees in each of the three categories. A total of 36 nominations were received this year from Tulare County school districts. Each nomination was reviewed and scored individually by every member of the selection committee.

“Each of these individuals is deeply creative – utilizing their resources and partnerships in the community to provide greater opportunities for their students,” Hire said.

Administrator/Manager of the Year

TAMMY BRADFORD

ASSISTANT
SUPERINTENDENT,
SPECIAL SERVICES
AND SELPA DIRECTOR

Tulare County Office of
Education

Tammy Bradford

oversees the Tulare County Office of Education’s Special Services Division, with over 800 full- and part-time employees providing classroom instruction throughout the



county and numerous supplemental services. Special Services supports foster and homeless youth, children – ages 0-3 – with developmental delays, students with autism, and those needing vision, hearing, behavior, psychological, social services, and occupational/physical therapy supports. Bradford has been the division’s assistant superintendent for eight years.

Nominators recognize that her empathy for the students in her programs stems from growing up with three siblings with special needs. “From the age of 10, when the oldest of my three siblings was born, I knew that my purpose in life was to make a difference, to dedicate my time and life's work to creating opportunities for those that may otherwise see a barrier in front of them. I was determined to remove that barrier,” Bradford said.

One of Bradford’s supporters said, “She treats her job as a 24/7 endeavor, always making herself available to superintendents, staff, and parents whenever needs arise. From handling mental health crises...to meeting kids at the bus stop to make sure they get to school when they don’t want to go, Tammy is a hands-on leader, involving herself in the work that her team does day in and day out. She tirelessly works to support her staff and districts in their pursuit of supporting kids.”

Nominators also praised her leadership, transparency, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Bradford has used these skills to create new programs, including the Alternative Achievement Program for students with severe behavioral needs, the Dream Center for foster and homeless youth, and the Mental Wellness Triage Grant to place additional social workers in schools throughout the county.

Teacher of the Year

JENNIFER POWERS

FIFTH GRADE
TEACHER, HERITAGE
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL

Tulare City School
District

“Jennifer Powers has
been one of the
hardest-working

teachers anyone will ever meet,” said a colleague. “I say this with confidence because I truly believe it is physically impossible to do more than what Jennifer does on a weekly basis, year after year, with her own students and so many other students in our school.”



Powers is a fifth-grade teacher at Heritage Elementary School in Tulare, where she has worked for 14 years. She teaches math, language arts, science, social studies, and physical education to her students in fun and engaging ways. She leads wagon train simulations, book tastings, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) activities such as building towers, designing bridges, and creating catapults. Her students engage in baking to learn about fractions, manage a monthly student paycheck system, and make instructional videos to keep the learning hands-on.

Powers recognizes that her students come to her class with diverse learning styles and background knowledge, so she continually assesses their understanding and provides differentiated instruction to help each student reach the fifth-grade learning standards.

In addition to her responsibilities as a classroom teacher, she coaches the school's Poetry and Prose participants and Reading Revolution team – two TCOE events that promote literacy. She also directs Heritage's school talent show and its school play.

Since 2016, she has been her school's technology lead, assisting teachers in using technology in their instruction and showing them new tech tools that are available. She works as a mentor for new and developing teachers. She is her school's professional development lead for topics including growth mindset, mathematics standards, and writing instruction. At the district level, she is a leader in teaching reading and math progressions.

School Employee of the Year

SONYA LOPEZ

TECHNICAL JOB DEVELOPER/WORK-BASED LEARNING COORDINATOR, PATHWAYS DEPARTMENT

Porterville Unified School District



A Porterville native, Sonya Lopez returned to her hometown to “pay it forward” – working to support students in transitioning to college and career as part of the district's Pathways Department. “Looking back at my own educational experience, if it wasn't for my teachers, counselors, and staff that helped me navigate school and motivated me to reach my full potential, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my postsecondary education,” she said. “One of the most rewarding parts of being in the

field of education is that I have the ability to encourage and support students to keep moving forward and reach their goals.”

Lopez provides students with work-based learning activities that support college preparation, career exploration, and workforce readiness. She also builds strong partnerships with business professionals and community organizations to increase student work-based learning opportunities. She is the force behind seeking out and placing over 1,500 high school students in internship opportunities.

To do this, she maintains relationships with hundreds of community and industry partners. This includes partners from across the state that she seeks out to engage pathway students in person or on a virtual level. The common thread in seeking partners is how their expertise will benefit youth and help them rise up.

The relationships she promotes aids the PUSD Pathway Department with placing students in the work place. Lopez works closely with the City of Porterville, the Porterville Chamber of Commerce, and many other organizations in the greater Porterville community.

Lopez supports Porterville Unified’s various pathway advisory boards. She also helps to coordinate a number of events, including the business partner “meet and greet” for freshmen, mentor conference for sophomores, mock interviews, and senior projects and portfolio reviews.

AWARDS PROGRAM

The winners, finalists, and nominees will be honored at the 29th Annual Tulare County Excellence in Education Awards on October 25, 2023. Educational Employees Credit Union (EECU) generously supports the awards program. For more information on Excellence in Education, contact Marlene Moreno at marlenem@tcoe.org.

Photos above:

~ Tulare County Administrator/Manager of the Year Tammy Bradford (with flowers), Tulare County Teacher of the Year Jennifer Powers (with flowers), and Tulare County School Employee of the Year Sonya Lopez (center) were announced as Excellence in Education winners on Wednesday.

Family Engagement Resource Fair set for Saturday

TULARE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION | EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A banner for the Family Engagement Resource Fair. It features a light blue background with a string of colorful triangular bunting flags (orange, teal, and red) across the top. The text "FAMILY ENGAGEMENT" is in a bold, white, sans-serif font, and "Resource Fair" is in a white, cursive font below it.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT Resource Fair

Tulare County Resource & Referral's big Family Engagement Resource Fair returns Saturday, April 15 from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. The free event will be held at the Tulare County Office of Education's Doe Avenue Complex, located at 7000 Doe Avenue in Visalia. The fair promotes early learning care and services for Tulare County families.

Over 30 community agencies — such as Family Services of Tulare County, Parenting Network, Tulare County Public Library, Central Valley Regional Center, and Tulare County Child Abuse Prevention Council — will be available to share program information with families. Various agencies will be on hand to promote comprehensive programs and services including adult nutrition education, family services, parent education, mental wellness, affordable housing, and school readiness.

This family engagement event will also feature inflatable games, a trackless Thomas the Train ride, and raffle giveaways for all to enjoy.

For more information regarding the Family Engagement Resource Fair, please contact Tulare County Resource & Referral via email at referralsrr@cc.tcoe.org or by phone at (559) 651-0185.

Registration open for Theatre Company Summer Camp

The Theatre Company is proud to announce that registration is open for the OnStage 2023 Summer Camp! This year's production will be Disney's *Winnie the Pooh Kids*.

Over the course of three weeks, students will have the opportunity to learn theatre skills, make new friends,



build confidence, and perform in this beloved Disney classic. Auditions will occur during the first few days of camp for any solos and speaking parts, but any student who signs up for the camp will be able to participate.

The Summer Camp is open to all Tulare County students entering first through sixth grade in the fall of 2023. The camp begins on June 12 and will be held Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. in the Sequoia Room at TCOE's Doe Avenue Complex. The final performance will be on Friday, June 30 at 7:00 p.m.

The cost to register is \$100 per student and registration is available at www.tcoe.org/TheatreCo/OnStage. Registration for the camp closes June 5.

For more information on registration and scholarships, or any additional questions, email Theatre Company director Bethany Rader at bethany.rader@tcoe.org.

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