

Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news
galleryweek

May 3, 2023

Weeklong student internship available at Circle J-Norris Ranch



This month, Circle J-Norris Ranch is seeking applications from high school students who want to serve as research technicians in June. Up to 15 students may be selected to help establish research plots for the program's Long-Term Oak Forest Inventory – an ongoing project that serves both Tulare County students and researchers within the University of California system.

Under the supervision of Lead Teacher Amanda Driver, students will work five hours each day June 5-8 using GPS coordinates to locate, mark, verify, and label study plots on the ranch. The internship pays \$250 per student.

High school students interested in applying for a research technician internship are encouraged to email a letter of interest to Amanda Driver at circlej@tcoe.org. The deadline to apply is May 19.

The Circle J-Norris Ranch is the field study site of the SCICON program and home to the UC Merced/SCICON Field Station.

Vanessa Cantu named new administrative legal assistant, Shelly DiCenzo to retire



For 17 years, Shelly DiCenzo has been the Tulare County Office of Education’s (TCOE) administrative legal assistant, keeping the office, the county superintendent, the board of education, and the Business Services Division apprised of state and federal laws and regulations.

“Shelly has filled a very unique position within our organization, supporting her division, my office, and our board on policies and legal matters, including inter-district transfers and expulsion appeals, school district governing board vacancies, and the latest state and federal regulations,” said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools

Tim Hire. “She has also supported the Tulare County Committee on School District Organization. Over her career, we have greatly appreciated how she has handled changes and responsibilities with thoroughness and a meticulous attention to detail.”

Additionally, DiCenzo has been the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) coordinator for TCOE, and has assisted with elections for the school districts, community college districts, and the county board of education. She assisted with the distribution and collection of various information between Business Services and school districts, including district budget hearings, instructional materials resolutions, audit contracts, annual audits, annual organizational meeting forms, and annual notification to parents.

Last month, Vanessa Cantu, a Visalia native and paralegal, was hired to work alongside DiCenzo until she retires in June. Cantu was a paralegal for local attorney Dale Bruder for six years. “I was drawn to the legal field out of a personal passion for helping people,” Cantu said. “I would like to thank the TCOE staff for being welcoming and reflective of the core values. I look forward to meeting more staff members and assisting TCOE for many years to come.”

On her retirement, DiCenzo said, “I have met so many wonderful people and learned so much during my time at TCOE.” She and her husband, Steve, a teacher with Visalia Unified School District, will retire to Montana this summer. DiCenzo, previously worked for Tulare County’s County Counsel before joining the Tulare County Office of Education.

A retirement reception is being planned in her honor on May 19 from 8:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. in the Cedar Room at the TCOE Administration Building in Visalia.

Photo above:

~Shelly DiCenzo (left) is retiring next month as TCOE’s administrative legal assistant. Vanessa Cantu will succeed her.

Local school boards association awards annual scholarships to Tulare County students

For 20 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 24 scholarships of \$300 to the following students:

Raul Acevedo, Summit Charter Collegiate Academy
Alyssa Aceves, Golden West High School
Michelle Barranco, La Sierra Military Academy
Aidan Brown, Mt. Whitney High School
Aleyda Ceballos Valenzuela, Tulare Western High School
Brooke Doherty, Mission Oak High School
Alena Garver, Dinuba High School
Melba Grinner, Sequoia High School
Erica Jimenez Vallejo, Visalia Technical Early College High School
Jake Kroutil, Porterville High School
Carter Lang, Exeter Union High School
Jenna Lopez, Ronald Reagan Academy
Estrella Martinez, Strathmore High School
Jose Medina Telles, Granite Hills High School
Kylie Nagel, Tulare Union High School
Sofia Perez, El Diamante High School
Ariana Rodriguez, Farmersville High School
Carmen Roman, Orosi High School
Oscar Saldaña, J.J. Cairns Continuation High School
Jillian Smythe, Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center
Alyssa Sozinho, Redwood High School
Jesusita Vargas Roque, Harmony Magnet Academy
Chunmin Zheng, Lindsay High School
Victoria Zisumbo, Woodlake Union High School

CHOICES' Friday Night Live Lip Sync Battle brings live performance back to the convention center after three-year break

Tulare County students got the Visalia Convention Center rocking last Friday with the return of the Friday Night Live (FNL) Lip Sync Battle. Thirteen acts from eight schools participated in the 33rd annual event coordinated by the Tulare County Office of Education's CHOICES Programs. A panel of local educators, students, and community members judged the acts.



Winning first place in the Lip Sync Category was Monson-Sultana Joint Union Elementary School with its "Queen Mix" performance. Monson-Sultana student Zackary Rico won the judges' hearts with his portrayal of Queen frontman Freddy Mercury. Waukena Joint Union Elementary School came in second with "Ella Baila Sola." Liberty Elementary School took third with its performance of "Ice Ice Baby/Shake It Off Remix."



In the Dance Category, first place went to Savannah Silveira of Mission Valley Elementary School in Tulare for her solo hip-hop performance. Oak Valley Union Elementary School took second with its performance to "Throwback Mix." Monson-Sultana took third for its "Janet Jackson Dance Mix."



Sundale Union Elementary School took first in the Novelty Category with a performance to "Fabulous." Second went to Monson-Sultana with a performance to "September." Oak Valley Union took third with its performance of "We Go Together."

"The students showed a lot of courage performing on stage," said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire. "It's that courage that will help them be resilient as young adults!"

Photos above:

~ Students from Monson-Sultana Joint Union Elementary School were the winners in the Lip Sync Category.

~ The winner of the Dance Category was Savannah Silveira, a student at Mission Valley Elementary School.

~ Students from Sundale Union Elementary School won in the Novelty Category for their performance of "Fabulous."

Fourteen books selected as exemplary in annual Young Authors' Faire event



This week, organizers of the annual Young Authors' Faire (YAF) announced that 14 books had been selected as exemplary works in the month-long, online exhibition. The books are organized into five categories of exemplary work – Fiction, Non-Fiction, Class Book, Hand-drawn Illustration, and Graphics/Images.

For 2023, over 100 students from 10 schools developed 45 imaginative books. To enjoy all of the books submitted to YAF, click on the Virtual Book Gallery link at www.tcoe.org/YoungAuthorsFaire. A link to the 14 exemplary books can be found at the bottom of the page.

Every year, the Tulare County Office of Education invites students to participate in YAF. The event offers budding writers in grades K-8 an opportunity to showcase their writing and illustration work at the county level and be recognized in a variety of genres. In recent years, the books submitted to the event have been published online.

Photo above:

~ Springville Union School sixth-grader Charlotte LeGette's book, Bradley Bones, won an Exemplary award in hand-drawn illustration.

Around the County

Eight Tulare County student-athletes awarded scholarships for academics



On Tuesday, eight student-athletes from seven Tulare County high schools were named CIF Central Section Scholar Athlete Awardees. Each year, the Central Section has been able to honor many deserving senior student-athletes with an award and scholarship for their outstanding achievements both in the classroom, the community, and in their athletic endeavors.

Receiving a plaque, patch, and \$500 scholarship from the Central Section, were awardees **Ashley Guerra**, Woodlake High School; **Daniel Garza**, Farmersville High School; **Isabella Duran**, Lindsay High School; **Gabriel Gonzalez**, Lindsay High School; **Marley Montgomery**, Golden West High School (Visalia); **Pedro Mendez**, Redwood High School (Visalia), **Emmah Burnes**, Mission Oak High School (Tulare); and **Braxton Nunley**, Tulare Union High School.

For more information on the awards, visit www.cifcs.org.

Photo above:

~ Lindsay High School's Isabella Duran, left, and Gabriel Gonzalez, right, are pictured with Lindsay High School athletic director John Caesar. Duran and Gonzalez were two of eight CIF Central Section Scholar Athlete Awardees from Tulare County high schools.

Tulare Union graduate signs with Washington Commanders



This week, Tulare native and UCLA student Kazmeir Allen agreed to terms as an undrafted free agent with the Washington Commanders NFL team. He will not officially sign with the team until they pass their physicals on May 11, [according to the Commanders](#).

Allen played football and ran track both in middle school and high school. As a senior at Tulare Union High School, Allen became the nation's greatest single-season scorer and he won the state's 100-meter dash. At UCLA, he was a running back, receiver, and return specialist.

(Ronald Martinez / Getty Images)



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Promoting mental health awareness on your campus is a proactive and positive way to start a conversation and show support for students and their families. Throughout the month of May, we will share information from [this](#) handout that includes strategies to create a positive mental wellness culture at your school and at home, as well as resources to support mental health and wellness.

Enhancing Mental Health & Wellness at Home

- Identify ways to relax with your child - a movie, walk, reading together
- Engage in family fun activities together
- Emphasize their strengths through positive reinforcement
- Make goals with your child - practice goal-setting with smaller or easier goals to achieve
- Assist your child in maintaining routines at home
- Model behavior - demonstrate your own personal focus on mental health by talking about mental health and doing things for yourself (e.g., yoga, walking)



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

Contributors: Nayirah Dosu, Marlene Moreno, Amanda Driver, Shelly DiCenzo, Vanessa Cantu, Fernie Marroquin, Brittaney Quinonez, Juliana Davidian, Judy Williams, Alex Elliott

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