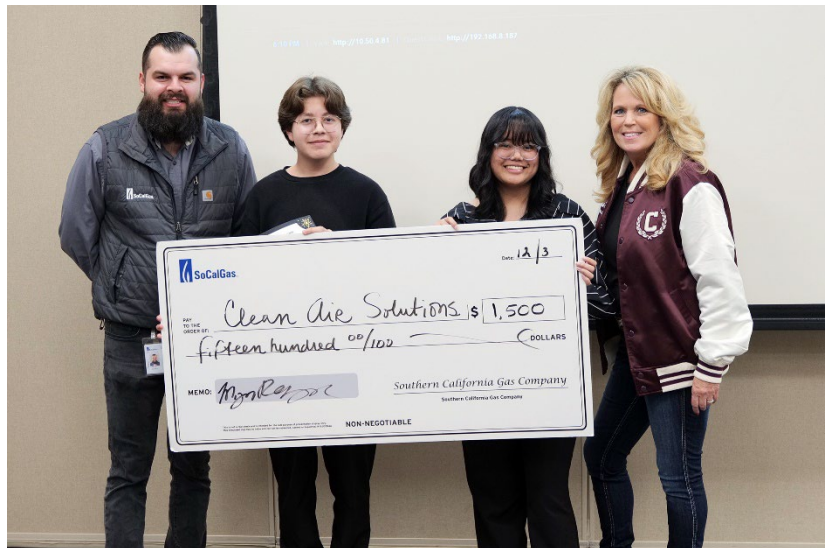


Team from Harmony Magnet Academy wins SoCalGas Challenge with project to monitor air quality

Five teams of high school students competed December 3 in the annual SoCalGas Challenge. Teams were challenged to propose climate solutions within their communities.

Winning first place and a \$1,500 prize from SoCalGas was the team of Dylan Aguayo and Isa Cross from Harmony Magnet Academy.



The pair placed monitors in classrooms at several schools within the Porterville Unified School District. The monitors measured both outdoor particulate matter and indoor carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels – both of which can negatively affect student health. In schools that registered high in CO₂, the team proposed the installation of HEPA or MERV air filtration systems.

Prior to creating their project, Aguayo and Cross had been interns for a program called CAPS, Climate Action Pathways for Schools, a nonprofit organization based in Oakland. “CAPS reached out to us to talk about (HVAC) filters,” Aguayo said. “They wanted to help teach students about this. And that really got our attention, and we wanted to expand more into that project – to check over time to see how it has been affecting all the schools. So I feel like it was really nice working with (Stanford University researcher) Jessica Yu, the person who provided us with the monitors... She was really nice, really passionate about her work. And I felt like that transferred onto us, and seeing how passionate she was to talk about the subject really motivated me.”

In second place, receiving a \$1,000 prize, was a another team from Harmony Magnet Academy with a project entitled “Organic Waste Solutions.”

In third, receiving a \$500 prize, was a team from Lindsay High School with a project entitled “Resilient Energy Solutions.”

The SoCalGas Challenge was originally created in 2007 as a competition for high school students to develop business plans for products and services needed in the Central Valley. The original competition, which ran for over 10 years, returned last spring thanks to renewed support from SoCalGas. The competition is coordinated by TCOE’s College and Career Readiness program.

Judges for the competition included Miguel Ramirez, public affairs manager with SoCalGas, and Cathy Albyn, area leader of marketing for Raising Cane’s.

Photo above:

~ Winners of the SoCalGas Challenge are (l-r) Dylan Aguayo and Isa Cross. The students pose with competition judges Miguel Ramirez of Southern California Gas Company and Cathy Albyn of Raising Cane’s.

University Preparatory High School to hold annual Winter Concert December 16



University Preparatory High School (UPHS) will hold its annual Winter Concert at Gateway Church in Visalia on Monday, December 16 beginning at 6:00 p.m. The church is located at 1100 South Sowell Street, near Mt. Whitney High School. UPHS chamber

and concert choirs, intermediate and advanced handbell ensembles, concert band, and the school's symphony orchestra will perform.

A member of the orchestra, Liam Curtiss, has been accepted into two prestigious youth orchestra groups. Curtiss, a junior, will perform with the California Orchestra Directors Association Symphony Orchestra December 7 in Santa Monica and with the California All-State Symphony Orchestra in Sacramento on January 18.

Those attending the UPHS Winter Concert 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.

Stage & Space Collaborative to host *A Holiday Celestial Spectacular* December 19



Tickets are now available for the planetarium's *A Holiday Celestial Spectacular* on December 19. The evening will feature four showings of the dazzling planetarium program, "Aurora Lights of Wonder."

Visitors will enjoy music by the University Preparatory High School handbell choir, singers from a variety of Tulare County high schools, family games, and photos with Santa!

Tickets are \$5 per person and showtimes are every hour at 4:15 p.m., 5:15 p.m., 6:15 p.m., and 7:15 p.m.

For showtimes and tickets, visit tcoe.org/Planetarium/PublicShows.

Registration now open for Anti-Tobacco & Marijuana Challenge Bowl

CHOICES Prevention/Intervention Education (PIE) is inviting sixth- and seventh-grade teachers to register their teams for the annual Anti-Tobacco & Marijuana Challenge Bowl, scheduled for March 4 at the Tulare Galaxy Theatres.



The Anti-Tobacco & Marijuana Challenge Bowl is a fast-paced, game-show style competition open to sixth- and seventh-grade students who will test their knowledge of facts about the dangers of tobacco and marijuana use. PIE staff members provide the curriculum for students to prepare for the countywide competition.

Space is limited; register today at bit.ly/ATMCB2025. For more information, contact Brittaney Quinonez at brittaney.quinonez@tcoe.org.

Tulare students-athletes honored for good character



In partnership with the Kiwanis Club of Greater Tulare, TCOE's CHARACTER COUNTS! Program recognized this fall's Pursuing Victory with Honor (PVWH) student-athletes at a breakfast this week. For 16 years, the Kiwanis Club of Greater Tulare has recognized student-athletes, nominated by their coaches, each season for their sportsmanship. The awards included a certificate, a PVWH patch, a PVWH t-shirt, and a lawn sign that read "An Athlete of Character Lives Here."

Tulare Western High School

America Martin, Senior, Girls Water Polo

Coach McGuire said, "I cannot say enough about America. She is happy, kind, and one of the best things about our water polo program. There is nothing better than a coachable player. Her dedication to the sport is relentless; when practice sets get hard, she digs in and leads the team with commitment and stamina, all with a smile! She is one of the first to compliment other players. It is a pleasure to know her as a person, student, and athlete. I am thankful and blessed to have her on our team."

Elijah Parnell, Senior, Boys Water Polo

Coach Hodge said, "Young men like Elijah know how to take the leadership role from sports into all aspects of their life, which ultimately sets them up for success in life. The lessons learned and the development of character Elijah has experienced is unmatched. He is a great team player and is always looking to support the younger players. Elijah is our role model for all players, he keeps his cool in tough situations, and leads with respect for fellow teammates, opponents, and referees."

Mission Oak High School

Maleena Martin, Senior, Girls Water Polo

Coach Moya said, "Maleena demonstrates leadership characteristics far beyond her years. She is dependable, determined, and driven. She has led her team well these past three years as varsity captain. When I think of Maleena, I think of an unstoppable individual that is kind, welcoming, and respectful to all."

Ethan Rodriguez, Senior, Football

Coach Martin said, "Ethan is an outstanding young man who puts his heart and soul into whatever he is doing. As one of our team captains, he is a leader on and off the field and cares about his teammates. Ethan is a quiet and humble leader who leads with his actions. He truly epitomizes our program mantra - faith, family, football - Ethan is all of that."

Tulare Union High School

Andrea Sandoval, Senior, Girls Cross Country

Coach Lapadula said, "Andrea is a young woman of tremendous character, and it shows during athletic competitions and in the classroom. She is a dedicated student-athlete who contributes to sports programs. Even through injuries, Andrea spends time

at practices and competitions supporting her teammates. As a coach, I am grateful to be able to trust and rely on Andrea to find ways to make our team stronger and successful. I've had the privilege to be her teacher and coach and she is so deserving of this recognition."

Nathan Christiansen, Senior, Boys Water Polo

Coach Pederson said, "Nathan is an all-around student of character, but especially in the area of respect and good citizenship. I have seen this demeanor all four years of him playing for me and even opposing coaches, players, and parents have noticed it as well. I am fortunate to have had a player like Nathan on my team."

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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.