

Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news
galleryweek
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Project AWARE takes on Mental Health Awareness Month with partnerships around the county



May is Mental Health Awareness Month and TCOE's Project AWARE is ramping up awareness with partnerships throughout the county.

Project AWARE is a grant-funded, mental wellness services program that was awarded through SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) in 2022. The purpose of Project AWARE is to create a sustainable infrastructure to promote mental health awareness, provide drug and alcohol abuse prevention and intervention activities, and increase and improve access to culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate and trauma informed school and community based AWARE grant activities and services.

Light Up Green

Through the Light Up Green campaign, Mental Health America (MHA) is celebrating the 75th annual Mental Health Month. Light Up Green is part of MHA's Mental Health Month campaign, in which they ask buildings and structures across the United States to light up green, the color for mental health awareness throughout May. It is one of the most visual



ways to support mental health awareness and the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) is joining in!

The Tulare County Office of Education will have multiple sites lit up green in the evenings for awareness. To see a map of participating organizations across the county, click [here](#).

Mental Wellness Stickers and Rush Bowl Discount

Out to eat around the county during May? Look for a Project AWARE sticker on products at TCOE's Redwood Café, Max's Cookie Company & Cakes, The Human Bean (Tulare County locations only), and Rush Bowls in Visalia!



Along with Project AWARE stickers, Rush Bowls will also offer 50% off its popular Power Bowl on **May 23 and May 24**. Proceeds from the sale will be donated to Project AWARE.



Mental Wellness Bracelets

Several businesses and organizations will also be showing their support for mental health awareness with green bracelets from Project AWARE!

Those organizations include: Central Valley Legends (boys basketball team), Visalia True Elite (girls basketball team), South Valley United Soccer Club, Tulare Police Department, Porterville Police Department, Rush Bowls, Quadrant Fitness, Rosa's Restaurant (Visalia), and How We Roll Ice Cream (Visalia).

Free Movie Mornings and Community Event with Galaxy Theatre

Through a partnership with Galaxy Theatres, Project AWARE will be showing the documentary *Angst*, which features decorated Olympic swimmer, Michael Phelps. The film includes candid interviews with teens about anxiety and how anxiety is common and natural.

Schools are encouraged to register their students for morning screenings of [Angst](#) Monday through Thursday during the month of May at either the Porterville or Tulare Galaxy Theatres' locations. Mental health professionals will be in attendance at each screening to answer questions and for support. Schools can register for the screenings by contacting Fabian Valdes at fabian.valdes@tcoe.org.

The community is invited to a screening of *Angst* on the evening of May 21 at Galaxy Theatres Tulare. The community screening will include a discussion at the end as well as mental health focused booths for more information. To register for the community screening visit tcoe.org/ProjectAWARE/Angst.



To stay updated on all that Project AWARE is doing for Mental Health Awareness Month, follow them on Instagram at [projectAWARETCOE](https://www.instagram.com/projectAWARETCOE) or visit tcoe.org/ProjectAWARE. To bring Project AWARE to a campus or an event, click [here](#).

Photos above:

~ The Tulare County Office of Education is lighting up green, alongside Mental Health America, to celebrate the 75th annual Mental Health Month.

~ Cookies from TCOE's Redwood Café will feature Mental Health Awareness Month stickers from Project AWARE on them.

~ Rush Bowls in Visalia will have a 50% sale on its popular Power Bowls on May 23 and May 24 with proceeds being donated to Project AWARE.

~ Members of Tulare Police Department and Galaxy Theatres Tulare, pose for a photo with Project AWARE bracelets at the Tulare Police Department.

Disney Conservation Fund to support salamander habitat restoration at SCICON



In March, Aurora Gomez, a producer at ABC30 in Fresno, encouraged Friends of SCICON to apply for a grant through the station's parent company, The Walt Disney Company. Coinciding with Earth Month, Disney Conservation Fund announced that it was seeking applications for grants that protect, restore, and celebrate the environment.

Working with Friends of SCICON, Dianne Shew, administrator of SCICON, developed an application that checked all the boxes.

The Central California floods of 2023 ravaged the reproduction areas for the California and Ensatina salamanders at SCICON, depositing tons of sand into the quiet pools where the amphibians live and breed. Shew reports that SCICON staff members have observed a few of the salamanders returning this year.

In order to restore the habitat that existed before the floods, the Friends of SCICON proposed to dredge the salamanders' former reproduction pools, reestablishing their natural habitat and giving over 8,000 sixth-grade students an area to observe and monitor the species, along with turtles and other wildlife.

To show support for the Friends of SCICON proposal, seven members of ABC30 visited SCICON last week to lend a hand in removing some of the sand. The group, which is part of Disney VoluntEARS, toured SCICON and then moved 20 wheelbarrows of sand that impacted the salamander habitat.

Gomez shared that station VoluntEARS support organizations throughout the Central Valley, including local food banks, children in foster care and the hospital, and teens with disabilities who need a little help getting ready for their proms.

To see ABC30's story on the SCICON salamander habitat restoration, visit <https://abc30.com/videoClip/science-conservation-green-earth/14747579/>.

Photo above:

~ Employees from ABC30 in Fresno volunteered to help restore a portion of salamander habitat at SCICON last week. The team volunteered as the station's parent company, The Walt Disney Company and Disney Conservation Fund, awarded a grant to restore habitat damage done by the Central California floods of 2023.

Prizes awarded for top projects in yearlong Step Up Youth Challenge



The awards ceremony for the annual Step Up Youth Challenge was held last night at the Tulare County Office of Education. Seventeen teams completed the yearlong challenge, identifying needs and developing projects to meet those needs at their schools and in their communities.

Schools that won the Community Collaboration, Sustainability, Impact, and Meeting the Need category awards each received \$1,000 from the County of Tulare's Step Up Program. The Phil Cox Best Overall projects received \$2,500 each. The following schools received the challenge's major category awards:

Live Oak Middle School (Tulare)

Middle School Community Collaboration Award

Lovell High School (Cutler)

High School Community Collaboration Award

Traver Joint School (Traver)

Middle School Sustainability Award

Golden West High School (Visalia)

High School Sustainability Award

Carl Smith Middle School (Terra Bella)

Middle School Impact Award

Countryside High School (Tulare)

High School Impact Award

Reagan Elementary School (Lindsay)

Middle School Meeting the Need Award

Accelerated Charter High School (Tulare)

High School Meeting the Need Award

Kings River Union School (Kingsburg)

Phil Cox Best Overall Middle School Project

University Preparatory High School (Visalia)

Phil Cox Best Overall High School Project



In addition, several schools presented their projects to judges weeks prior to the awards ceremony. Two schools were awarded an additional \$500 for **outstanding presentations**. These schools were **Bellevue Elementary School (Porterville)** and **Mission Oak High School (Tulare)**.

The Step Up Youth Challenge is an annual community service competition coordinated by the Tulare County Office of Education. Support for the program comes from the County of Tulare's Step Up initiative and the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency.

Twenty elementary teams compete for prizes in the annual Science Olympiad



Last Saturday, hundreds of students launched rockets and hot air balloons, floated paddleboats, tested the strength of bridges made from pasta noodles, and catapulted gummi bears at the annual Science Olympiad for elementary students. In addition, they completed tests on subjects related to astronomy, biology, geology, and the environment. A total of 21 competition events were held at Ridgeview Middle School for a total of 20 teams from elementary schools throughout the county.

In the 2024 Science Olympiad Division A (Grades 3-6), the winners were:

1st Place: Oak Grove Elementary School, Visalia (Team 16)

2nd Place: Annie R. Mitchell Elementary School, Visalia (Team 3)

3rd Place: Hurley Elementary School, Visalia (Team 5)

4th Place: Sundale Union School, Tulare (Team 9)

5th Place: Liberty School, Tulare (Team 12)

College and Career Readiness hosts Community Design Challenge



Last week, seven high school teams participated in this year's Community Design Challenge – an event that was created in 2010 as INTERNNECT, a student design competition developed by Mangini Associates, Inc., a Visalia architectural firm. The program returned this year after being interrupted by the pandemic. TCOE's College and Career Readiness program now coordinates the competition with support from local architect Gilbert Bareng and Katina Velasquez of Mangini Associates.

“We are delighted to continue the Community Design Challenge,” said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools. “This program is an amazing opportunity for our future designers and engineers to practice collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and especially creativity!”

Students from four Tulare County high schools presented their final projects last week to a panel of judges. The projects were conceived and developed by student teams based on a real community need.

In first place and receiving a \$1,500 check from the Tulare County Office of Education Foundation was KingCraft Architects from Harmony Magnet Academy in Strathmore.

The team's project reimagined the site circulation, entrance kiosk, amphitheater, and a visitors' center at Success Lake, east of Porterville.

Receiving second place and a \$1,000 check was NextGen, Inc. from Redwood High School in Visalia. The team expanded the existing Valley Strong Stadium, which is the home of the Visalia Rawhide, to comply with future Major League Baseball stadium standards. The project included a new indoor batting cage, and expanded locker and workout facilities for women and visiting teams.

In third place and receiving a \$500 check was OHS Design from Orosi High School. The team's project was the development of a reverse osmosis device that could be purchased by residents in East Orosi to treat their water supply, which is unsafe for drinking.

Photo above:

~ Harmony Magnet Academy's KnightCraft Architects won the 2023-24 Community Design Challenge for their proposal to renovate the park at Success Lake, east of Porterville.

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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.