

Tulare County  
Office of Education

*Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools*

news  
galleryweek  
May 9, 2024

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## Slick Rock Student Film Festival set for Friday, May 10

The 2024 Slick Rock Student Film Festival – Central California’s largest student film competition – is Friday, May 10 beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the Visalia Fox Theatre. This year, the festival received 474 film entries from 43 Central Valley middle schools and high schools.



Nearly 200 middle and high school films receiving a “Premiere Cut” designation will be screened at the Fox Theatre beginning at 9:00 a.m. Friday, continuing until about 3:00 p.m. A screening schedule is available at [tcoe.org/SlickRock](https://tcoe.org/SlickRock) or click [here](#).

At 5:00 p.m., students who played a central role in producing Slick Rock films will walk the red carpet into the theater. The awards ceremony will begin at 6:00 p.m. The public is welcome to attend the screenings and the awards ceremony at no cost.

Middle and high school students in the six south Central Valley counties of Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, and Tulare were eligible to compete in the festival. Middle school students (grades 6-8) could enter films in seven categories, while high school students (grades 9-12) had a choice of 13 categories. For a list of competition categories, visit [tcoe.org/SlickRock/Categories](https://tcoe.org/SlickRock/Categories).



Slick Rock is generously supported by the Tulare County Suicide Prevention Task Force, ABC30, TCOE – Project AWARE, Tulare County HHSa Mental Health – Alcohol & Other Drugs Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services (Operation Prevention – Tulare County Prevention Coalition); Tulare County HHSa Public Health – Tobacco Prevention (Tobacco-Free Coalition); and the TCOE – Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Program.

For more information, visit [tcoe.org/SlickRock](http://tcoe.org/SlickRock) or contact Kathleen Green-Martins at [kgreen@tcoe.org](mailto:kgreen@tcoe.org).

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## Visalia student-athletes recognized for Pursuing Victory with Honor



In partnership with the Downtown Visalia Kiwanis, TCOE's CHARACTER COUNTS! Program celebrated this spring's Pursuing Victory with Honor (PVWH) student-athletes at a lunch on Tuesday. Downtown Visalia Kiwanis recognizes student-athletes, nominated by their coaches, each season for their sportsmanship. The awards included a PVWH certificate, shirt, pin, patch, and a lawn sign that reads "An Athlete of Character Lives Here."

Below is a list of the Pursuing Victory with Honor award winners along with abbreviated quotes from their coaches:

### **CENTRAL VALLEY CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL**

**Haley VanderMaarl, Swimming:** Haley VanderMaarl is a great athlete and a great person to be around. She is always respectful and gives everything she has in competition as well as in practices. She's always giving 100%. She is always wanting to improve and she often asks coaches how she can do better, or what techniques need to be implemented so that she can improve her times. I am thankful to have been able to coach Haley this year and she will be missed as she moves on to college next year.

**Wyatt Talk, Track:** Wyatt Talk is a great athlete, student, and person who personifies all six of the Pillars of Character. He always seeks to compete fairly and follow all of the rules of the event. Wyatt is also the first to congratulate a teammate or opponent on a great performance, and also the first to encourage someone who had a disappointing race or is struggling with the workout. The CVC track and field program will miss Wyatt's positive attitude and responsibility next year as he moves on to college.

### **EL DIAMANTE HIGH SCHOOL**

**Isaiah Wright, Golf:** Isaiah is a soft-spoken person but is very passionate about his pursuits in life. Isaiah joined the golf team as a freshman with very little experience but worked hard and became one of our top performers as a senior. He is very analytical in his approach to golf and to life. Although he is soft spoken, Isaiah is a deep thinker and a very good conversationalist. Isaiah is very respectful. I have complete respect for him. Isaiah is very deserving of an award that recognizes sportsmanship as it should be.

**Lauren Pelayo, Swimming:** Lauren demonstrates the Pillar of Responsibility daily and at the highest level. She recently finished her senior swim season while also competing/performing as a member of the El Diamante dance team, In Motion, and also working as a dance instructor in the Sundale after school program. She also maintains a 4.0 GPA. She has shown our younger swimmers what it takes to be successful, and they look up to her and want to be like her. We are so grateful for her commitment and leadership. She will be hard to replace.

### **GOLDEN WEST HIGH SCHOOL**

**Tristan Perez, Softball:** Tristan is not just a talented player; she is a true embodiment of dedication, leadership, and excellence. Her commitment to academic excellence is unparalleled, having received academic honors throughout her high school years with a remarkable GPA of over 4.0. Tristan's journey so far is a testament to her hard work, passion, and commitment. We are proud to have her as a part of our team, and I have no doubt that her future is filled with even greater achievements and successes.

**Eric Meyst, Golf:** Eric Meyst is an outstanding young man. Over the course of the last two seasons, I have watched him enjoy every round regardless of his playing partners. He has had some challenging situations and handled them with grace and dignity, as a true sportsman should. Eric is a multiple sport athlete, playing both golf and football while maintaining a 3.0 GPA. It is my pleasure to nominate Eric Meyst for this award.

## **MT. WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL**

**Tanner Lopez, Swimming:** Tanner Lopez is a leader and a role model for his teammates and the swimming community. He demonstrates integrity in all aspects of swimming while pushing himself to continually improve through hard work and discipline. He wins with dignity and humility, and always shows respect for his teammates and opponents. Tanner, along with his undeniable talent, displays exceptional sportsmanship and is truly the type of athlete every coach dreams of working with.

**Hennesey Madera, Track:** Hennesey is a three-sport athlete that is in her second year of track. She cares deeply about her teammates, and she shows this by the way she treats them. Hennesey is respectful to all people. She is a great communicator. She is reliable, trustworthy, and accountable for her actions. It has been a pleasure to know Hennesey and have her on the team. Hennesey will attend West Hills next year where she will play soccer.

## **REDWOOD HIGH SCHOOL**

**Alexis Lopez, Softball:** Alexis is one of the hardest working athletes I have had the pleasure of coaching. She is respectful to her coaches, teammates, competitors, and to the game. She is someone who can always be relied on. Alexis is a true leader on and off the field, and brings her best effort and attitude each and every day. For these reasons, she is more than deserving of being recognized.

**Cruz Rodriguez, Baseball:** Cruz Rodriguez is a model student-athlete who is a much-deserving recipient of this award and recognition. A leader in both the classroom and on the field of competition, Cruz is a natural-born leader. As evidenced by his 4.00 GPA, Cruz prioritizes his education above all else. On the field of play, Cruz competes with respect for his teammates and opponents. He is quick to take on responsibility and is always quick to ensure tasks are distributed fairly. A varsity captain, Cruz is looked up to by many players in our baseball program.

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## Chinese Cultural Center Educators of the Year announced

Last Friday, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire and members of the Central California Chinese Cultural Center – Wendy Jay, Joanna Fung, and Marilyn Gong– surprised three educators, notifying them that they had been chosen as Educators of the Year.

Since 1994, the Central California Chinese Cultural Center has partnered with the Tulare County Office of Education to honor one elementary, one middle school, and one high school teacher as part of the Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards. Often, Chinese people around the world mark the occasion of Confucius' birthday in late September by recognizing exemplary teachers. Each year, members of the Chinese Cultural Center hold a dinner celebration at their event center in Visalia.

“This year’s winners are exemplary teachers who go to great lengths to ensure their students are engaged and success,” said Hire. “They are also making positive impacts beyond their classrooms, effecting their entire schools.”

The winners of the 2024 Educators of the Year Awards are:

### Elementary Educator of the Year

**Glenda Landin, Reading Intervention Specialist**

Hope School, Porterville

Glenda Landin is a reading intervention specialist at Hope School in Porterville. Melanie Matta, Hope School’s superintendent credits her for transforming the way teachers engage with reading across all grades. The beloved former first-grade teacher now works directly with students identified as



needing reading intervention, painstakingly selecting books that satisfy their curiosities and ensure that reading becomes a journey of exploration and delight. This personal touch has sparked a newfound passion for reading among students, helping some struggling students advance several grade levels in one year.

Through her mentorship, Landin has empowered teachers and paraprofessionals with innovative strategies and insights into fostering literacy. Her workshops and one-on-one coaching sessions have spread her effective methodologies throughout our staff. This has led to Hope School rising from one of the poorest performing districts in the county to one of the top.

**Middle School Educator of the Year**  
**Anthony Nguyen, Sixth-Grade Teacher**  
Palo Verde Union School, Tulare

Anthony Nguyen's journey toward a career in education began at UCLA, where he discovered his love for teaching while working in an after-school program. Today, he is a



sixth-grade teacher at Palo Verde Union School, west of Tulare. He serves on the school's leadership team, provides photography and coordinates the annual yearbook, and coaches Palo Verde's spelling championship participants and the Anti-Tobacco & Marijuana Challenge Bowl team, which achieved remarkable success in both 2023 and 2024 county competitions. Nguyen also continually looks for ways to expand students' access to technology, incorporating 3D printers into his classroom.

Palo Verde administrators say that his greatest strength is his ability to connect with students on a personal level. As a bilingual communicator, he effortlessly translates for others and kindly mentors students facing challenges in behavior, relationships, and academics. Nguyen embodies the essence of an educator who goes beyond the classroom, leaving an indelible mark on all the lives he touches.

**High School Educator of the Year**  
**Jacob Avila, Business Teacher and FBLA Advisor**  
Redwood High School, Visalia

Jacob Avila teaches business courses within the Business Management Pathway program at Redwood High School in Visalia. He is also the school's Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)



advisor. Brandon Gridiron, Ed.D., principal at Redwood High School, praised Avila for his natural ability to connect with people and to lead students to their highest level of achievement, whether it is through his program or in other academic settings.

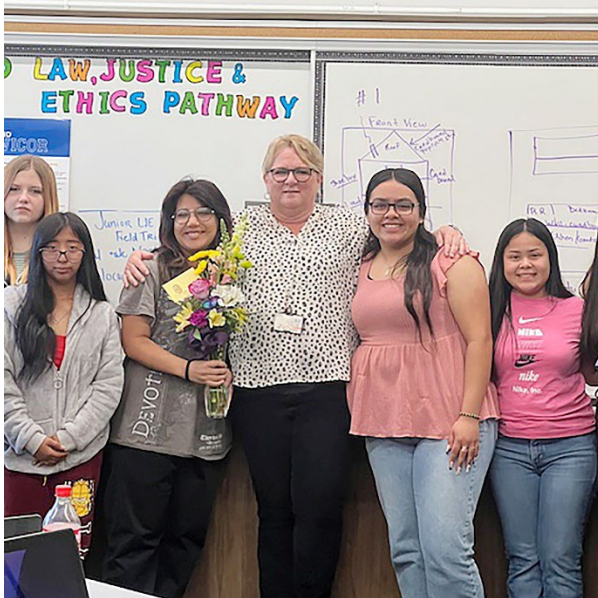
As Redwood's FBLA advisor, Avila runs a nationally notarized and award-winning program, building strategic partnerships with local organizations to complete the club's annual community service project. He also facilitates connections with the business community for his students, utilizing his creativity and solutions development skills for the benefit of the program and those he serves.

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## ***Around the County***

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### **Granite Hills High School wins state Civic Learning Award Honorable Mention**



Last week, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond announced 21 California schools had been named recipients of the 2024 Civic Learning Awards, an honor that recognizes measurable schoolwide achievements in civics. The awards program, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, is co-sponsored by Thurmond and California Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero.

“We know that when young people activate their voices, they can be among the strongest change agents in our

communities,” said Thurmond. “Education is the cornerstone of realizing our democratic ideals, and these schools have made extraordinary contributions to building the leaders of tomorrow.”

“I find these award applications inspiring; they all deserve our recognition,” said Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero. “They tell the important stories of dedicated educators who, despite the challenges, are creating room for students to fully understand and practice civics.”

Three top honorees received the Civic Learning Award of Excellence, with another three honorees receiving the Civic Learning Award of Distinction. Four California schools received the Civic Learning Award of Merit, while 11 schools, including Granite Hills High School in Porterville, received the Civic Learning Award Honorable Mention.

The Civic Learning Awards began in 2013 and are part of the Chief Justice's Civic Learning Initiative, which is led by the Power of Democracy Steering Committee and includes other programs such as Judges in the Classroom. Since their inception, the awards have been presented 519 times to traditional, charter, magnet schools, community schools, and continuation schools. Applications are reviewed and scored by a panel of judges that comprises representatives from the California courts and the California Department of Education (CDE). For more information, visit [www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/civiclearningaward.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/civiclearningaward.asp).

Photo above:

~ Granite Hills High School Jane Kisling poses with students in the school's Law, Justice & Ethics Pathway. The school's work in civic learning was recognized by the California Department of Education as part of their annual Civic Learning Awards.

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## Crookham, Herman honored by the Tulare County Farm Bureau



Last week at an annual meeting of the Tulare County Farm Bureau, two members of the local education community were honored.

Dan Crookham, a 35-year agriculture teacher at Exeter Union High School, received the prestigious Sandi Gist-Langiano Ag Education Award. Crookham, who was the state Outstanding Ag Teacher in 2020 and is an adjunct professor at College of the Sequoias, built the Exeter ag program to include the largest school-based citrus farm in the western U.S. – a farm that is part of the Sunkist growers network. The Exeter ag department also includes a robust ag mechanics program, which has produced championship FFA teams.

Robert Herman, the Tulare County Office of Education communications director, received the Friend of the Farm Bureau Award. For over 20 years, Herman has promoted the Farm Bureau's many education programs through the office of education's publications and – more recently – social media. Herman was also commended for coordinating the Farm Bureau's annual Student Art Calendar – a calendar full of student-created art, ag production facts, and nutrition facts that is shared with teachers throughout the county.

Photo above:

~ Robert Herman (left), communications director for the Tulare County Office of Education, and Dan Crookham (right), agriculture teacher at Exeter Union High School, pose with Tricia Stever Blattler, Tulare County Farm Bureau executive director. Herman and Crookham were honored with awards at the organization's annual dinner last week.

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