

Tulare County
Office of Education
Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news galleryweek

October 15, 2025

Tulare County Red Ribbon Celebration is Saturday, October 25



The annual Tulare County Red Ribbon Celebration is Saturday, October 25 from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. at TCOE's Doe Avenue Complex, located at 7000 West Doe Avenue in Visalia.

The Tulare County Red Ribbon Celebration allows students and families to participate in safe, educational, and fun activities without the use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. In addition, the event will be a showcase of positive choices and opportunities for the youth of the Valley.

During the event, attendees will be treated to performances by the magician Brady Lee, Ballet Folklorico Sierra Linda, Golden West High School and Redwood High School ProYouth afterschool dance teams, solo dancers from Sierra Performing Arts Center, and music from Momentum Broadcasting. There will also be a pumpkin patch, petting zoo, face painting, and more available.

Sixteen booths will be on-site, including United Healthcare, Tulare Police Department, CAL FIRE, Tulare County Fire Department, Visalia Unified School District, Visalia Police Department, TCOE's Migrant Education, Project AWARE, Family HealthCare Network, CSET, Ford Farms, Mending Fences, NCADD, Think Together.org, and Galaxy Theatres.



The SnoMobile, Up in Smoke, ESPES 2 GO, and Don Gummy will also be at the event for those wanting to make food purchases.

The Red Ribbon Celebration is a partnership between the Tulare County Office of Education, the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, and a myriad of other county and city resources.

Social work in-service scheduled for next week

Behavioral Health Services is hosting its Fall Tulare County School Social Work In-service on October 24. School social workers, counselors, and mental health professionals are invited to the free in-service from 1:30 until 4:00 p.m. in the Redwood Conference Center of the TCOE's Mooney Administration Building.

Felipe Mercado, Ed.D., an assistant professor of social work at California State University, Fresno, will be the keynote speaker. Dr. Mercado will present "Rethinking Education Together," a



blueprint for transforming schools into healing spaces. Attendees will learn how to shift from managing challenges to cultivating healing for long-term student success.

Dr. Mercado uses firsthand experience with homelessness, poverty, and violence in his hometown of Sanger to help educators create systems-level solutions that deliver healing, justice, and academic success. Dr. Mercado is a six-time bestselling author and columnist for *Psychology Today*. Dr. Mercado continues to transform policy, practice, and lives — proving that zip codes do not dictate destiny and that strategic compassion can change the world.

Rosie Rincon Hernandez, Ed.D., director of TCOE's Social Work Residency program (PRIMHE), will also speak on empathy.

To register for the training, visit <https://tulare.k12oms.org/146-269214>.

Second year of VOICES project launches with record number of student participants



On Monday, over 200 students and teachers representing eight Tulare County high schools attended the second annual kick off of the VOICES project. VOICES stands for The Valley Opportunity for Inclusive Civic Engagement and Service, and it's a program coordinated by Educational Resource Services to empower students and educators

with strategies for active citizenship. Over the course of the school year, students participating in VOICES will engage in leadership, and develop critical thinking, civic knowledge, and active participation in civic life.

Supporting the work of Tulare County teachers and students is the Civic Education Center, based in Fresno. The center's mission is to empower community service. Staff members from the center attended the kickoff event to engage students in an introductory activity to prepare them for the civic work they are going to do during the year. The center will also be back during VOICES' network meetings to engage with teachers.

Numerous Tulare County community service organizations also attended to connect with students interested in partnering with them in the future.

High school teachers who are still interested in participating in VOICES are encouraged to contact Laura Gunning at laura.gunning@tcoe.org.

A \$1,500 stipend is provided to participating teachers through the California Serves Grant Program.

Around the County

Harmony Magnet Academy alum receives hall of fame award

Judith Gomez, an alumni from Harmony Magnet Academy (Porterville), was honored with the Youth Game-Changer Award by the California Energy Commission's Clean Energy Hall of Fame Awards for her inspiring work advancing California's clean energy future.

Through her leadership with Climate Action Pathways for Schools (CAPS), Gomez helped reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions by 80% for seven local schools, designed high-efficiency lighting for 21 Porterville Unified School District campuses, and contributed to securing a \$5.8 million Department of Energy grant to support energy upgrades for the district.



During her time at Harmony, Gomez participated in both the Sustainability Challenge, as well as Tulare County Academic Decathlon, where she was a state medalist.

Now attending Stanford University, Gomez continues to inspire the next generation of energy innovators and community leaders.

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