Tulare County Office of Education
Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools
news gallery week
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CHARACTER COUNTS! Week continues this week



This week is CHARACTER COUNTS! Week! The Tulare County CHARACTER COUNTS! office reports that over 4,400 students from 162 schools will be honored. Teachers, parents, and other community members nominated the students to be recognized in the program's 31st annual celebration.

"We are proud to celebrate the remarkable participation of 162 Tulare County schools in CHARACTER COUNTS! Week," said Zoty Briceño, CHARACTER COUNTS! coordinator. "Sustaining this event for thirty-one years has been deeply rewarding, particularly as school participation continues to reach new heights."

The CHARACTER COUNTS! Program reviewed nominations and selected a top honoree and six finalists for each of the Pillars of Character to be profiled in the Visalia Times-Delta/Tulare Advance-Register this week. A story about the students who best represent the Pillars of Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship is featured in the newspaper each day.

These top honorees and finalists will also be celebrated at the annual Provident/Salierno Family Foundation Awards ceremony on November 3.

For ideas on how to celebrate on CHARACTER COUNTS! Week (October 18-25), visit https://charactercounts.org/character-counts-week.

Photo above:

~ The 2026 top honoree for Trustworthiness is Jonathan Eversull of Kohn Elementary School in Tulare.

Visalia student-athletes honored for good sportsmanship



Yesterday, in partnership with the Downtown Visalia Kiwanis, the CHARACTER COUNTS! Program celebrated this fall's Pursuing Victory with Honor (PVWH) student-athletes.

The Downtown Visalia Kiwanis recognizes student-athletes, nominated by their coaches, each season for their sportsmanship. The awards are given to a pair of students from each of Visalia Unified School District's four comprehensive high schools and Central Valley Christian High School. Each athlete receives a certificate, patch, and lawn sign that reads "An Athlete of Character Lives Here."

Below is a list of the students recognized, their sports, and a statement provided by their coaches.

Central Valley Christian High School

Marie Van Ryn

Girls Tennis

Coach Chris Haworth says, "Marie is an easy choice for a student-athlete who displays true character. Marie has played tennis at CVC for the past four years. She always displays a hard work ethic, striking an excellent balance between athletics, academics, music, family, and social life. She is a dedicated, disciplined athlete who is willing to put in extra work to achieve success on and off the court."

Payton Byma

Boys Cross Country

Coach Ally Kornelis says, "Payton is a strong leader and supporter on his cross country team and always puts others before himself. He consistently puts his heart into all that he does whether it's his academics or his sports. Not only does he perform to his full potential, he also does so without complaining. He sets an example for his teammates that others want to follow."

El Diamante High School

Arianna Gerrero

Girls Golf

Coach Brandon Guzman says, "Arianna is currently our No. 1 golfer and is having her best season ever. She is sitting in sixth place in individual scoring in the EYL. Arianna is a first-year captain and represents our school in the best way possible. Going from our

No. 5 to our No. 1 is a big jump and she has shown the willingness to do whatever the team needs to be successful."

Troy Ralls

Boys Cross Country

Coach Kym Tucker says, "Troy is the type of student who can do it all, president of Link Crew, captain of cross country, leader at his church, and our 2026 homecoming king. He does all of these things while demonstrating admirable character, always doing what is right, and advocating when he feels something is unjust. Troy is truly an example of Pursuing Victory with Honor."

Golden West High School

Tatiyana Valencia

Girls Flag Football

Coach Daniel Dominguez says, "Tati has been an exceptional student-athlete. As a freshman, she showed key skills that made her captain. She is very upbeat and positive. She never misses practice and always wants to compete and learn new things. Not only is she a great student, but she is also involved in a lot of school activities besides girls flag football."

Priscila Ortiz

Girls Tennis

Coach Jeff Housman says, "Priscila has grown a lot in our time together. She is the best player on an average team, which means she faces the other school's best players each time. Priscila embraces that task and fully shoulders that responsibility. Even when the task is too much, she meets the challenge with relentlessness, effort, and grace that makes me proud."

Mt. Whitney High School

Rodrigo Prator

Boys Cross Country

Coach Isaac Gonzales says, "Rodrigo Prator is an exceptional student-athlete with a 3.67 GPA and unlimited potential. Remarkably smart and mature beyond his years, he pairs deep wisdom with an incredible work ethic and fierce determination in every workout and race. Rodrigo's positive attitude consistently encourages and lifts his

teammates. Though currently undecided on his future, his dedication and character ensure he can achieve anything he sets his mind to."

Jillian Morris

Girls Volleyball

Coach Casey Norman says, "I would like to recognize Jillian Morris for this award for her hard work, dedication, and outstanding character. She strives for excellence academically while balancing extracurriculars. As an invaluable volleyball team member, Jillian demonstrates strong leadership, organization, and encouragement. Kind, thoughtful, and respectful, her commitment to helping others makes her a wonderful role model and deserving candidate for this award."

Redwood High School

Jack Arreola

Boys Cross Country

Coach Gabby Satterlee-Sugg says, "Jack is a dream leader for any coach. Beyond his athletic ability, he leads by example with integrity, respect, and care. Quick to offer encouragement, Jack excels academically while staying active in youth group. Always honest and fair, he wishes competitors luck, uplifts teammates after tough races, and passes traditions of excellence to new freshmen. Our team is better and brighter thanks to his servant leadership."

Emma Hernandez

Girls Golf

Coach Ryan Cochran says, "Emma is our team captain this year and No. 1 player. We have seven freshmen on the roster. She has not only welcomed them but has mentored them and even given them golf advice. She is a one-time EYL champion and So Cal State regional participant. No matter what level she is playing, she treats competitors with respect and compliments good play. That is what separates golf from other sports. Emma displays this every day."

Students across the state conduct Roadwatch driver survey



Last week, students across California conducted the annual Friday Night Live (FNL) Roadwatch survey. At intersections near high schools around the state, they observed over 4,000 instances of distracted driving in just one hour.

Over half of the instances of distracted driving came from passenger distractions, use of hand-held devices, eating or drinking, and extremely dark tinted windows.

In Tulare County, Redwood High School students observed over 700 cars and 77 instances of distracted driving – a decline in the number of distracted drivers in the area. Last year at the same intersection, 22% of drivers were distracted. This year, that number decreased to 11% of drivers. Numbers suggest an increase of safe behaviors behind the wheel in the county.

Coordinated by the California Friday Night Live Partnership, Roadwatch provides young people the opportunity to gain experience in collecting data to guide community change efforts locally and statewide. FNL chapters can use Roadwatch data to

continue educating the public and promoting traffic safety among adult and teenage drivers, in an ongoing effort to create safer, healthier communities.

Photo above:

~ Redwood High School students and members of the California Friday Night Live Partnership pose for a photo during their Roadwatch survey.

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To receive the *News Gallery Week*, sign up using the form, or contact Jennifer Fisher at jenniferf@tcoe.org or 559-733-6172.