

Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news
galleryweek

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California Friday Night Live Partnership develops statewide survey on attitudes about alcohol

This month, the California Friday Night Live Partnership (CFNLP) is working with its longtime partner, the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), to survey youth and adults on their attitudes concerning alcohol. The brief survey, available at <https://tiny.ucsf.edu/A52Qm2>, asks respondents about why and how minors drink, and about their attitude concerning alcohol availability.



Students, educators, and community members across California are encouraged to take the survey, which closes on February 27, 2026. Once the survey has closed, UCSF will compile the data and share it with the CFNLP, which will make it available to school FNL chapters throughout the state.

Locally, the Redwood High School FNL chapter in Visalia plans to utilize the data to develop educational materials for its underage drinking prevention project. Funds to support Redwood's future efforts were provided through the California Office of Traffic Safety, which annually supports school FNL chapters through a statewide application process.

In Tulare County, administrators interested in developing a Friday Night Live chapter at their school are encouraged to reach out to Brittaney Quinonez, staff development and prevention coordinator at the CHOICES Program. Quinonez can be reached at 559-651-0155, extension 3618 or brittaney.quinonez@tcoe.org. The CHOICES program serves to support all Tulare County FNL chapters.

National History Day - Tulare County sees 47 finalists selected to advance to state



National History Day - Tulare County (NHD) took place Thursday, February 12 at the Tulare County Office of Education. Following the theme "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History," 230 Tulare County students presented over 100 projects showcasing their dedication and creativity. Of those projects, 47 finalists were selected and are eligible to advance to the state competition held May 1-3 in Sacramento.

Students felt a mix of relief and excitement from the competition. Lincoln Graves, a senior from University Preparatory High School (UPHS) in Visalia, said, "It was exhilarating!"

Graves won Best of Event for his project, "Black Tide: How California's Worst Oil Spill Turned Beaches Black and the Nation Green," in the Individual Performance – Senior Division category. As a finalist and Best of Event winner for the fourth year in a row, Graves had a mixed reaction to his final NHD at the county level.

"Sad it's over but I'm glad we'll be going to state again," he said. Three other UPHS students were selected as finalists, with another student's project selected as an alternate.



In the Senior Division for high school students, \$200 scholarships were awarded by the Tulare County Historical Society for one project in each of the 10 categories. Two category scholarships went to students at UPHS and Tulare Union High School, while the other eight went to students from Dinuba High School.

Dinuba High School had a total of 17 finalists at the competition, with two projects also recognized as Best of Event winners. Heaven Gonzalez's "From Silence to Reform: The Transformation of Mental Illness Care" (Individual Documentary) won Best of Event for its insightful look into the history of mental health. Teammates Isaiah Yopez and Jonathan Valadez also won Best of Event for "Smallpox Was" (Group Documentary), which explained the history of smallpox and its impact on modern vaccinations.

Also earning a Best of Event award was Evelyn Meza from Kings River Union Elementary School (Kingsburg). Meza competed in the Individual Performance – Junior Division. Her performance was entitled, "The Revolution, Reaction, and Reform of the Most Notorious Human Traffickers: The Poquianchis Sisters." Meza is one of three Kings River finalists coached by Sophia Perez.



“All three are immaculate, I love working with all three of the students,” said Perez, who has been coaching for two years and is a National History Day alum.

National History Day (NHD) is a theme-based research program that showcases original presentations by students in grades 4-12 pertaining to historical issues, ideas, people, and events.

For a complete list of winners, visit <https://www.tcoe.org/HistoryDay/Results>.

Photo above:

~ University Preparatory High School's Lincoln Graves, top, won Best of Event for his project, “Black Tide: How California's Worst Oil Spill Turned Beaches Black and the Nation Green,” in the Individual Performance – Senior Division category.

~ Students from Dinuba High School, middle, receive scholarships for their work on a Group Podcast and Group Website.

~ Evelyn Meza, bottom, of Kings River Union Elementary School performs, “The Revolution, Reaction, and Reform of the Most Notorious Human Traffickers: The Poquianchis Sisters”, during the Best of Event part of the awards.

Visalia students recognized for Pursuing Victory with Honor in winter sports



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

Below is a list of the Pursuing Victory with Honor award winners along with statements from their coaches, which have been summarized.

Central Valley Christian High School

Colin Belt – boys soccer: I'm honored to brag about Colin a bit. I've known him since his freshman year of high school and have enjoyed coaching him on varsity ever since. I've watched him face tough challenges in practice and games with a consistently positive attitude, earning the deep respect of teammates and coaches alike. Colin works hard, strives to improve daily, and reflects Christ's love through his actions both on and off the field.

Kate Verhoevan – girls basketball: Kate’s basketball stats are impressive, but her humility and quiet strength as a leader make her truly exceptional. She attentively meets teammates’ needs, serves as an outstanding role model, and leads through responsible actions — cleaning up after practice without prompting, perfecting plays, and mentoring struggling teammates on and off the court. A true scholar-athlete who excels in all her classes, Kate’s leadership makes her the ideal candidate for the Pursuing Victory with Honor award.

Golden West High School

Ceylon De Rijke – boys soccer: For the past four years, I have had the privilege of coaching Ceylon De Rijke on the Golden West boys soccer team, and teaching him in English 1 Honors. Hardworking, intelligent, and mature beyond his years, he leads through relentless effort and determination in practices and games. Admired by teammates and coaches, he maintains unwavering respect for opponents and teammates — never trash-talking, often checking on or helping injured players. Ceylon truly understands that sportsmanship and character outweigh any win.

Sophia Camacho – girls wrestling: Sophia is a first-year wrestler who has quickly excelled in one of the toughest sports through hard work, determination, and strong character. Despite her novice status, she secured a varsity spot, placed at multiple tournaments, and won a championship belt at the Central Valley Invitational — now ranking among the top wrestlers in her weight class. Off the mat, she maintains a stellar 4.83 GPA, reflecting the same discipline and commitment. Sophia truly embodies Pursuing Victory with Honor through excellence, integrity, and dedication.

El Diamante High School

Jayden Mata – girls basketball: As a dedicated basketball student-athlete, Jayden plays with heart, relentless effort, and unwavering integrity. A genuine team player, Jayden consistently prioritizes her teammates and leads by example on and off the court. She remains positive, resilient, and focused through any challenge, giving her all every time. Her big heart, strong character, and commitment make her an inspiring role model and highly deserving recipient.

Rachel Crawford – girls soccer: Rachel earns teammates' admiration through unwavering honesty, reliability, and maximum effort in every game and practice. Polite and considerate toward opponents and officials, she treats everyone with dignity and respect. As co-captain, she leads by example, holds herself accountable, and fosters team unity. Her supportive nature shines in mentoring younger players and engaging in community service, reflecting genuine care for others. Rachel is a true role model for aspiring athletes.

Mt. Whitney High School

Jake Saesee – boys wrestling: Jake Saesee exemplifies excellence in academics and athletics while consistently putting others first. Maintaining a 4.0 GPA, he demonstrates dedication, discipline, and strong character. As a four-year wrestler, Jake shows unwavering commitment, perseverance, and respect for the sport, teammates, and opponents. Trustworthy, respectful, and caring, he leads by example — voluntarily helping teammates, coaching, and handling team tasks like cleaning mats. He embodies hard work, humility, and service, defining what it means to pursue victory with honor.

Jasell Hernandez – girls wrestling: Jasell Hernandez consistently embodies integrity, accountability, and respect, maintaining a 3.0 GPA while excelling athletically. Highly coachable, she welcomes feedback to improve herself and her team. Trustworthy and reliable, Jasell does the right thing, follows expectations, and takes responsibility. A quiet leader by example, she prioritizes teamwork, shows fairness, empathy, and positive sportsmanship toward teammates and opponents alike — truly Pursuing Victory with Honor.

Redwood High School

Enrique Segura – boys wrestling: Enrique is truly an outstanding man of character. As a dual-sport athlete, he leads with unwavering integrity and respect, shaping who he is through his deep commitment to athletics. He serves as an exceptional role model, mentoring underclassmen with unmatched willingness and leading by example — qualities his teammates deeply respect. We are incredibly grateful to have Enrique as part of the Redwood athletics program.

Adriana Soria-Rosales – girls soccer: Adriana exemplifies exceptional leadership and sportsmanship on our soccer team. She consistently prioritizes the team above all else and brings positivity and dedication to every aspect of our program. Off the field, she is a warm, authentic individual who is universally respected and adored by her teammates — particularly the younger players, who view her as a dependable mentor they can always trust. It has been a genuine privilege to coach her.

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