

Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news
galleryweek

March 4, 2026

Circle J-Norris Ranch to host annual Biodiversity Festival March 14



The public is invited to attend and participate in fun, hands-on outdoor activities at the annual Circle J-Norris Ranch Biodiversity Festival on Saturday, March 14. The free event includes guided nature walks, bird watching, native plant investigations, BioBlitz, and aquatic exploration.

The Biodiversity Festival is open 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. with nature walks and hikes in the morning, followed by native plant and pollinator exploration in the afternoon. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own lunches.

A program of the SCICON school of outdoor education, Circle J-Norris Ranch is located at 41893 Yokohl Valley Road in Springville. Circle J offers all grade levels a wide variety of field study experiences.

For more information on the Biodiversity Festival, contact Amanda Driver at circlej@tcoe.org or (559) 539-2263.

Central Valley Christian wins inaugural Tulare County Academic Pentathlon



On Monday, TCOE hosted its inaugural Academic Pentathlon and crowned Central Valley Christian (CVC) Middle School the first-ever champion.

Carissa Bryant and Ella Becerra covered their mouths in shock and excitement as they heard their names and the rest of CVC's Team 5 called to receive the championship trophy and medals. Becerra, who was also the top-scoring pentathlete in the scholastic division, had no idea that she would be walking away with so many accolades that day.

"I was surprised because I specifically told my mom not to come because I didn't think I would be getting awarded because everybody here is like super smart," Becerra said.

Central Valley Christian Team 5's winning team is comprised of Becerra, Bryant, Holly Byma, Myer Kamper, Mateo Narciso, Emily Said, and Jaxon Sisemore. They won with a score of 15,141 points.

“They did it as a big group of friends so they could encourage each other and study together, and just enjoy the whole process,” CVC coach Erin Largoza said about the students’ work throughout the overall competition.

All Academic Pentathlon teams are comprised of two to three students in each of three grade divisions: Honors (3.85–4.00), Scholastic (3.30–3.84), and Varsity (3.29 and below).

Becerra was the Top Scholastic winner, while CVC’s Lizzy Maatman won Top Honors. La Joya Middle School’s Adan Pineda Ramirez was the Top Varsity winner and part of the La Joya team that won the Super Quiz competition.



The top-scoring students in each category were:

Fine Arts – Chloe Cooper, La Joya Middle School

Literature – Lizzy Maatman, Central Valley Christian Middle School

Math – Ella Becerra, Central Valley Christian Middle School AND Melody Gonzalez, La Joya Middle School

Science – Joe Perez, La Joya Middle School

Social Science – Myer Kamper, Central Valley Christian Middle School AND Melody Gonzalez, La Joya Middle School

All three schools that participated – Central Valley Christian (Visalia), La Joya (Visalia), and Washington Intermediate (Dinuba) – will be presented to the California Pentathlon Directors for consideration to represent the state at the United States Academic Pentathlon competition. The state will decide which teams advance on April 15.



Academic Pentathlon is a five-event academic competition that challenges middle school participants to excel across multiple subject areas rather than focusing on just one. Modeled after the United States Academic Decathlon, Pentathlon includes science, literature, fine arts, social science, and mathematics, all centered around an annual theme. This year's theme was The Roaring Twenties, which unified the standards-based Academic Pentathlon curriculum students were provided. Students compete both individually and as teams, developing not only subject knowledge but also critical thinking, writing, and collaboration skills.

For more on Pentathlon, visit <https://tcoe.org/pentathlon>.

Photos above:

~ Central Valley Christian Middle School won the first-ever Tulare County Academic Pentathlon.

~ The top-scoring pentathletes, from left to right, were Adan Pineda Ramirez of La Joya Middle School (Varsity), Central Valley Christian's Ella Becerra (Scholastic), and Central Valley Christian's Lizzy Maatman (Honors).

~ La Joya Middle School won the Super Quiz competition.

Tulare student-athletes competing in winter sports honored for their good sportsmanship



In partnership with the Kiwanis Club of Greater Tulare, TCOE's CHARACTER COUNTS! Program recognized this winter's Pursuing Victory with Honor (PVWH) student-athletes at a breakfast on Tuesday morning.

For 16 years, the Kiwanis Club of Greater Tulare has recognized student-athletes, nominated by their coaches, each season for their sportsmanship. The awards included a certificate, a PVWH patch, a PVWH t-shirt, and a lawn sign that read "An Athlete of Character Lives Here."

The Tulare student-athletes receiving PVWH awards for their participation in winter sports include:

Mission Oak High School

Miranda Loza Nunez, girls soccer - Miranda represents Mission Oak High School's soccer program with excellence, genuine sportsmanship, and relentless energy. She is a trustworthy captain her teammates rely on. She demonstrates responsible preparation and accountability. She is fair in competition and always respectful to opponents. Miranda is the ultimate teammate and I am honored to have coached her for three years.

Austin Cardoza, boys soccer - Austin leads by example in all facets of the Six Pillars of Character. As a student-athlete, he is a role model not only on the field but in the classroom. We appreciate the time he commits to his sport, his classes, and our school by serving on the MOHS student-athlete leadership team, always showing up ready to support others.

Tulare Union High School

Ariana Espinoza Gonzalez, girls wrestling - I selected Ariana for this recognition because she shows great fairness toward the sport, her teammates, and her opponents. She is caring to her teammates, and after every match she displays strong sportsmanship toward her opponent and the referees. I can count on Ariana to show up for practice and give her full effort the entire time without complaining. She is simply an all-around great teammate, athlete, and person.

Jose Romero, boys basketball - Jose is a true Tulare success story. He is the glue of our team and can be counted on for his quality of play and how he conducts himself on the court, in the classroom, and in the community. He works weekly officiating for our local middle school program and has built a reputation as a respectful leader in our sport. He is a great role model for the younger basketball student-athletes.

Tulare Western High School

Amira Salcedo, girls soccer - I have coached Amira not only in our school soccer program but also at the club level. Her character has remained consistent. Amira exemplifies all Six Pillars of Character, but two stand out immediately. She is especially caring and fair. She treats everyone around her with kindness and respect. Her teammates would agree that she is a quiet leader who stays calm in the toughest competitions. She supports her team and knows how to engage all players to help build our program to be the best it can be.

Brayden Wosley, boys soccer - Brayden is a young man who exemplifies integrity, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion. Whether he is in the classroom or on the field, he remains a consistent person of character and a role model for younger athletes who watch him play. I know this personally, as my son is one of his biggest fans. We are fortunate to have Brayden take on this role-model responsibility without hesitation. He leads by example and consistently demonstrates these qualities.

County Science Olympiad winners headed for state competition



On Saturday, over 20 middle and high school teams competed in the annual Science Olympiad for a chance to advance to the NorCal Science Olympiad competition in April.

Teams participated in over 20 tests and events representing the scientific spectrum – from astronomy and chemistry to geology and physics. While some of the tests were written, others involved measuring the success of projects built in advance by the competitors, including trusses, helicopters, electric vehicles, and robots.

This year, the top middle schools were: Oak Grove Elementary School, Visalia (1st place); Green Acres Middle School, Visalia (2nd place); St. Paul's School, Visalia (3rd place); and Oak Valley Union School, Tulare (4th place). These schools are eligible to advance to the NorCal Science Olympiad.



The top high schools were: Redwood High School, Visalia (1st place); University Preparatory High School (UPHS), Visalia (2nd and 3rd places); and Golden West High School, Visalia (4th place). Joining these schools at the NorCal competition is the team from Exeter Union High School since UPHS can enter only one team in the state competition.

For a complete list of results, visit <https://tcoe.org/ScienceOlympiad/Results>.

Photo above:

~ (top photo) The Science Olympiad team from Redwood High School was the top team in the high school category.

~ (lower photo) Oak Grove Elementary placed first in the middle school category.

Student chefs delight VIPs with culinary creations



Last week, the first Taste of Tulare-Kings was held during the TCOE Foundation donor appreciation dinner event. Eight teams of students from culinary pathway programs in Tulare and Kings county high schools entered their best hot and best cold hors

d'oeuvres for the guests to sample and vote on. The competition, created by Tulare-Kings College + Career Collaborative (TKCCC), is envisioned as an annual event.

To help with its development, TKCCC applied to the TCOE Foundation for a grant that, in turn, provided each team with a stipend they used for food supplies.

Teams competed in three categories – Best Hot Appetizer, Best Cold Appetizer, and Best Presentation. The team with the most points in all three categories received the Best Overall perpetual trophy.

Winning Best Hot Appetizer for their “Smoked Pork Belly Burnt Ends” and Best Cold Appetizer for their “Fiesta Corn Dip” was the Aztec Empire team from Farmersville High School. The Best Presentation award went to Mt. Whitney’s Permian Heat team. The Farmersville team also took home the Best Overall perpetual trophy.

The participating teams were:

Dinuba High School’s Emperor Restaurant Row

Farmersville High School’s Aztec Empire

Hanford West High School’s The CHOMP-ions!

Lemoore High School’s LHS Culinary Arts

Lindsay High School’s Cardinal Café

Mt. Whitney High School’s Permian Heat

Summit Charter High School’s SCHS Culinary

Tulare Union High School’s Tribe’s HEART



Schools looking for support for their programs or events are welcome to apply for a grant from the Tulare County Office of Education Foundation. For more information on the process, visit tcoe.org/Foundation.

~ (top photo) The Aztec Empire team of Farmersville took home the Best Overall trophy in the first Taste of Tulare-Kings student event.

~ (lower photo). Permian Heat from Mt. Whitney High School served Texas-style appetizers and took home the Best Presentation prize.

Around the County

El Diamante wins girls soccer Central Section Championship title



El Diamante High School (Visalia) girls soccer defeated Tulare Western 4-1 in the CIF Central Section Division II championship game on February 25. The win advanced El Diamante to the CIF State Division III Championship tournament where they were seeded fifth and fell to No. 4 Quartz Hill.

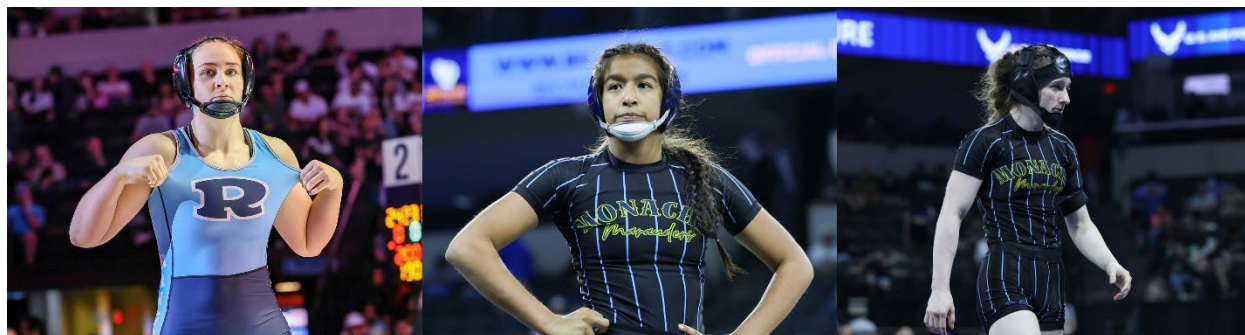
In the Central Section championship game, freshman Poppy Cheney scored three goals and junior Lilah Martinez scored the go-ahead goal.

El Diamante finished the season with an 18-8-1 overall record and as the school's first-ever Central Section soccer champion.

Photo above:

~ El Diamante High School girls soccer pose for a photo after winning the CIF Central Section Division II championship. Photo courtesy of CIF Central Section Facebook

Three Tulare County wrestlers place at state championships



Tulare County had three wrestlers place at the CIF State Wrestling championship on February 28 in Bakersfield.

Taking home the highest medal for the county was Emily Carvalho from Redwood High School (Visalia). Carvalho won her first four matches to reach the 190-lb championship match. She lost in a 10-3 decision to Estefany Caballero (Orange) and claimed a silver medal.

Monache High School (Porterville) saw two girls wrestlers earn a spot on the championship podium, with AlexAndrea Corona (125 lbs) placing fourth and Bailey Hoard (100 lbs) placing sixth.

For complete results, visit https://www.cifstate.org/sports/wrestling/2026_recap.

Photos above:

~ From left to right, Emily Carvalho (Redwood High School), AlexAndrea Corona (Monache High School), and Bailey Hoard (Monache) placed at the CIF State Wrestling. Photos courtesy of Manny Santoyo

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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.