
Porterville High School seniors are College Night Scholarship winners

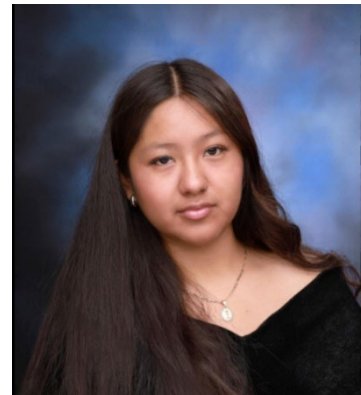
This week, the College Night Scholarship committee announced the two graduating seniors who are receiving its prestigious four-year scholarship. Josue Saucedo Lara and Jasmin De Jesus Esteban – both of Porterville High School – will receive \$1,000 scholarships renewable for up to four years. Saucedo Lara and De Jesus Esteban are the 23rd and 24th scholarship recipients.

Josue Saucedo Lara plans to pursue a degree in economics at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. He has maintained an impressive 4.5 GPA, earning multiple Principal's Awards and recognition as a scholar-athlete while completing a rigorous schedule of AP and dual enrollment courses.



College Night played a key role in preparing Saucedo Lara for college. His participation in the 2025 College Night helped him narrow his choices and gain valuable insight into financial aid, admissions, and opportunities at schools like UC San Diego and UC Berkeley. He credits College Night with strengthening his confidence and readiness for higher education.

Jasmin De Jesus Esteban plans to pursue a degree in biology at the University of California, Los Angeles with the goal of attending medical school and completing a pediatrics residency to become a pediatrician. She has demonstrated strong academic achievement, maintained a high GPA while completing rigorous AP and college-level coursework through the Porterville Academy of Health Sciences.



College Night played an important role in preparing De Jesus Esteban for her future. Attending the event helped her better

understand the college process, financial aid options, and career pathways. As a first-generation student, this experience made college feel more accessible and gave her the confidence to take the next steps toward her goals.

For more about Josue Saucedo Lara and Jasmin De Jesus Esteban, visit the College Night page at <https://tcoe.org/collegenight>.

Central Valley schools share in Slick Rock Student Film Festival prizes



The 22nd Annual Slick Rock Student Film Festival was held Friday at the Visalia Fox Theatre. Students from five Central Valley counties had a good time beginning with a limousine ride to the theater, walk on the red carpet, and an energetic awards show highlighting monsters in cinema. The show was hosted by Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire, and students, Ava Dodson of Redwood High School and David Garcia of Golden West High School. For the first time, the Slick Rock Dancers entertained the crowd with two numbers, including a performance to Michael Jackson's *Thriller*.

Sixteen teams were awarded prizes. Two of the award-winning teams also received Best of Show honors.

BEST OF SHOW FILMS

In the high school category, winning Best of Show for their blockbuster, *Somebody, Somewhere*, was Makenzie Sconce, Miah Phillips, Madeline Townsend, Lysje Van De Wal, Angela Reppas, and Daniel Shepard of Yosemite High School in Oakhurst.

In the middle school category, Sawyer Embry of Heartland Charter School won Best of Show for his blockbuster, *Deserted*.



CATEGORY WINNERS

Opioids/Fentanyl and Marijuana Prevention Public Service Announcement (PSA)
Heartland Charter School (Bakersfield), *Could've Been*

Nutrition and Physical Activity PSA
Sunnyside High School (Fresno), *Healthy Living*

Suicide Prevention PSA
Sanger West High School, *Puzzled*

Middle School General PSA
Kings River Union School (Kingsburg), *Look Up: Phone Addiction*

Middle School General Advertisement
Spring Valley Elementary School (O'Neals), *Coursegold Historic Village*

Middle School Documentary
Woodville Union School, *What the Ground Remembers*

Middle School Blockbuster
Heartland Charter School (Bakersfield), *Deserted*

Sports Highlights
Golden West High School (Visalia), *Trailblazer*

News Broadcast
Madera South High School, *Stallion Station Nov. 12 - Part 2*

High School Documentary
Sunnyside High School (Fresno), *Paj Ntaub*

High School General PSA
Heartland Charter School (Bakersfield), *Put it Down*

High School General Advertisement
Bullard High School (Fresno), *K1 Commercial*

Music Video – Original
Redwood High School (Visalia), *The Siren Song*

Music Video – Cover
Minarets High School (O'Neals), *One Step Closer*

Animation
Hanford West High School, *The Fox and the Rabbit*

High School Blockbuster
Yosemite High School (Oakhurst), *Somebody, Somewhere*

This year, Slick Rock received over 480 films. More than 1,000 students participated, representing 50 Central Valley middle schools and high schools.

Slick Rock is supported by Tulare County Suicide Prevention Task Force, ABC30, EECU, Tulare County HHS Programs (Operation Prevention; Tobacco-Free Coalition; and the Alcohol & Other Drug Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services), Tulare County Film Commission, TCOE's Project AWARE, CalFresh, and TCOE's Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention program.

Visit <http://tcoe.org/SlickRock/Winners> to see the winning films.

**Educators of the Year selected for 30th Annual
Confucius' Birthday Celebration**

On Friday, May 8, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire and Wendy Jay, a member of the Central California Chinese Cultural Center’s Board of Directors, surprised three teachers, announcing that they were winners in the 30th Annual Educators of the Year program.

The Central California Chinese Cultural Center has partnered with the Tulare County Office of Education to honor one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school teacher as part of the Confucius’ Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards. Chinese people around the world often 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 center in Visalia for the honorees, their colleagues, and family members.

“We greatly appreciate that we have been able to celebrate great teachers for three decades in partnership with the Chinese Cultural Center,” said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools. “This year’s honorees are not only exceptional teachers but leaders in in the field of education.”

The winners of the 2026 Educators of the Year Awards are:

ELEMENTARY EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR



Guadalupe Acosta

First- and Second-Grade Teacher, Saucelito School, Terra Bella

Guadalupe “Lupe” Acosta is a dedicated elementary educator with nine years of teaching experience at Saucelito School, where she currently serves as a combination first/second-grade teacher. Known for her caring approach and instructional skill, Acosta designs and delivers engaging, standards-based lessons across multiple subject areas while thoughtfully differentiating instruction to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of her students.

Throughout her career, Acosta has demonstrated exceptional versatility, successfully teaching combination classes at various grade levels, including second/third and fifth/sixth. Beyond the classroom, Acosta is a trusted leader within her school community. She has served as the site lead for the summer school program and supported students countywide as a migrant education teacher. In addition, she mentors new educators as a teacher induction program and IMPACT Intern program mentor.

MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR



Maria Pacheco Sixth-Grade Math and History Teacher, Rockford School, Porterville

Maria Pacheco is a dedicated middle school educator with nine years of teaching experience at Rockford School, where she serves as a sixth-grade math and history teacher. Pacheco has successfully implemented a “thinking classroom” instructional model, engaging students in mathematical discourse and problem-solving through collaboration and multiple solution pathways. This approach not only strengthens

conceptual understanding but also builds confidence, communication skills, and perseverance.

She brings the same level of energy to her history instruction, making learning relevant and engaging for her students. A passionate advocate for English learners, Pacheco invests significant time designing lessons that support language development. Beyond instructional excellence, Pacheco is a respected colleague and leader whose professionalism, collaboration, and enthusiasm contribute to a positive school culture.

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR



Jeremy Blackwell

History Teacher/Coach, Harmony Magnet Academy, Strathmore

Jeremy Blackwell has more than 26 years of teaching experience in the Porterville Unified School District. He currently serves at Harmony Magnet Academy, where he teaches U.S. history, world history, A.P. U.S. history, and weight training to students in grades 9–12. As social science department chair, Blackwell provides instructional leadership, recently guiding the adoption of a modern curriculum that supports 21st-century learning and critical thinking skills.

He consistently helps students achieve high levels of academic success, including strong AP pass rates. Beyond the classroom, Blackwell has made an extraordinary impact as a varsity football and track coach. Over his coaching career, he has led teams to multiple league, valley, regional, and state championships, fostering discipline,

teamwork, and perseverance in student-athletes. Blackwell has also served the community by mentoring new teachers, supporting student teachers, and establishing a youth football program.

AWARDS EVENT

A dinner celebrating the 2026 Educators of the Year will be held at the Central California Chinese Cultural Center in September. For a list of past honorees, visit <https://www.tcoe.org/EOTY>.

Twenty-three Tulare County seniors awarded TCSBA scholarships

The Tulare County Office of Education has assisted the Tulare County School Boards Association (TCSBA) with its annual scholarship program for more than 20 years. Each year, the association offers scholarships to seniors from Tulare County high schools, including comprehensive, charter, and continuation settings. The county office coordinates the distribution of information to Tulare County high schools and the screening process with TCSBA board members. This year, the association was pleased to provide 23 scholarships of \$350 to the following students.



Kimberly N. Elias	Alpaugh High School
Zoie L. Wagster	Summit Collegiate High School
Marli J. Venegas	Exeter Union High School
Evelyn Saldivar	Farmersville High School
Estrella Martinez-Lira	J.J. Cairns Continuation High School
Liliana Velasco	Lindsay High School
Alexandro Alonzo Arredondo	Loma Vista Charter School
Daisy R. Serrano	Granite Hills High School
Gianna R. Rohrbach	Harmony Magnet Academy
Jocelyn Carranza	Monache High School
Ma Christina D. Miranda	Porterville High School
Evelyn Fernandez	Strathmore High School
Alexa G. Daniels	Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center
Daisy A. Rodriguez	La Sierra Military Academy
Cameron A. DeFevere	Mission Oak High School
Evan M. Watson	Tulare Union High School

Lauren M. Starr	Tulare Western High School
Sophia G. Benevento	El Diamante High School
Gerardo Guerra	Golden West High School
Dolores J. Carter	Mt. Whitney High School
Anne P. Wu	Redwood High School
Giselle A. Gomez	Visalia Technical Early College High School
Anna S. Villavicencio	Woodlake Union High School

Student-athletes honored at Spring PVWH Downtown Visalia Kiwanis Awards



In partnership with the Downtown Visalia Kiwanis, TCOE's CHARACTER COUNTS! Program celebrated this spring's Pursuing Victory with Honor (PVWH) student-athletes yesterday.

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 students recognized, their sport, grade, and who nominated them.

Central Valley Christian High School

Cody Roark – junior, track and field, Coach Mike Bosma

Elle Bothof – junior, track and field, Coach Mike Bosma

Golden West High School

Raegan Garland – senior, track and field, coach Travis Anderson

Nasiir McGaugh – senior, track and field, coach Travis Anderson

El Diamante High School

Melia Carlton – senior, cheer and STUNT, cheer and STUNT staff

Lily Ruiz – senior, swim, coach Kristen Ruby

Mt. Whitney High School

Noah Sanchez – senior, track and field, coach Kim Moshier

Dolores Carter – senior, track and field, coach Kim Moshier

Redwood High School

Lainey Rowe – senior, track and field, coach Isaac Leppke

Zackahrie Vargas – senior, track and field, coach Kim Leppke

TCOE's Paula Terrill receives prestigious Liberty Bell Award



On May 8, in front of many of Tulare County's judges, attorneys, and students, Paula Terrill, student event coordinator with TCOE's Student Future Ready Events department, was honored with an award at the Tulare County Law Day Celebration. She received the prestigious Liberty Bell Award, a national recognition presented to a non-attorney who demonstrates outstanding commitment to promoting legal education and community engagement.

Terrill was selected for this honor due to her exceptional leadership and long-standing dedication to the Tulare County Mock Trial program for nearly 20 years. Through her work, Terrill partners with attorneys and judges to provide students with meaningful, hands-on learning experiences. Her tireless coordination, mentorship, and passion for civic education have strengthened community engagement and inspired countless students to explore careers in law.

Terrill's efforts reflect the true spirit of the Liberty Bell Award, advancing public understanding of the legal system while helping cultivate the next generation of informed and engaged citizens.

After accepting her award, Terrill shared that her goal is not only to develop valuable student skills such as public speaking, collaboration, and problem-solving, but also to offer a more balanced perspective of the justice system. Through Mock Trial, students have the opportunity to work directly with legal professionals, helping to replace negative perceptions often portrayed in media with a deeper understanding of how the legal system protects individual rights.

In addition to the Liberty Bell Award, Paula was also recognized by the offices of Congressman Vince Fong and Senator Shannon Grove.

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