

Tulare County  
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news  
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Countywide awards, scholarships presented at Pursuing Victory with Honor banquet



On Tuesday evening, TCOE's Pursuing Victory with Honor (PVWH) Program held its third annual PVWH Athlete Banquet. At the event, this year's Provident-Salierno PVWH Scholarship winners were announced and student-athletes who exhibit great character and sportsmanship on and off the field were honored. PVWH is a part of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Program.

The annual Provident-Salierno PVWH Scholarship program awards four Tulare County seniors a \$500 scholarship for their academic achievements and their exemplary character on and off the field.

The four Tulare County senior student-athletes chosen to receive the scholarships this year were:

**Kate Verhoeven**, Central Valley Christian School. Verhoeven participated in basketball and volleyball and plans to major in marketing or agricultural communications.

**Aiden Duran**, Lindsay High School. Duran participated in basketball, track, and cross country. He plans to attend either University of California, Irvine or University of California, Berkeley and major in engineering.

**Andrea Robles**, Tulare Union High School. Robles participated in soccer, water polo, and swim, and she plans to attend California State University, Fresno to study business administration.

**David Shimer**, Monache High School. Shimer participated in football, basketball, and track and plans to attend San Diego State University majoring in political science.



Later in the evening, 38 students from 19 high schools were recognized as their schools' PVWH Student-Athletes of the Year. Students were nominated for the award by coaches, athletic directors, and community members.



Those students were:

**Hector Luna**, Accelerated Charter High School

**Angell Sanchez**, Accelerated Charter High School

**Carolina Arrieta**, Alpaugh Unified School

**Marcos Ramirez**, Alpaugh Unified School

**Angel Delgado**, Dinuba High School

**Kaylee Rodriguez**, Dinuba High School

**Danelle Benitez**, El Diamante High School

**Jordan Mata**, El Diamante High School

**Agustin Alvarado Chavez**, Exeter Union High School

**Nicole Thompson**, Exeter Union High School

**Jazmine Contreras**, Granite Hills High School

**Giselle Lopez**, Granite Hills High School

**Natalie Sanchez Martinez**, La Sierra Military Academy

**Jazrya Shannon**, La Sierra Military Academy

**Julian Diaz**, Lindsay High School

**Irene Gonzalez**, Lindsay High School

**Ian Henry**, Mission Oak High School

**Mia Moya**, Mission Oak High School

**Shelley Andrade**, Monache High School

**Roberto Baca**, Monache High School

**Ava Ceja**, Mt. Whitney High School

**Matthew Townsend**, Mt. Whitney High School

**Ramiro Garcia**, Orosi High School

**Nayeli Gonzalez Ramirez**, Orosi High School

**Samuel Catalina**, Porterville High School

**Cailin Moody**, Porterville High School

**Lana Alipaz**, Redwood High School

**Kendrick Leung**, Redwood High School

**Isaiah Colunga**, Strathmore High School

**Chelsea Gamboa**, Strathmore High School

**Jenna Andrade**, Summit Collegiate High School

**Shawn Smith**, Summit Collegiate High School

**Beth Vado**, Tulare Union High School

**Gavin Wilson**, Tulare Union High School

**Jimena Martinez**, Tulare Western High School

**Memphis Rocha**, Tulare Western High School

**Eder Ortega**, Woodlake High School

**Mareli Zamora**, Woodlake High School

Photos above:

~ From left to right, Kate Verhoeven, Aiden Duran, and Andrea Robles were recognized as the 2026 Provident-Salierno PVWH Scholarship award winners.

~ David Shimer was the fourth recipient of the 2026 Provident-Salierno PVWH Scholarship.

~ Porterville High School's Cailin Moody and Samuel Catalina were recognized as their school's PVWH student-athlete honorees. A total of 38 PVWH student-athletes received the special honor.

## Palo Verde wins first TCOE Esports League Spring Tournament championship



The inaugural TCOE Esports League Spring Tournament championship goes to: Palo Verde Union School!

Palo Verde was one of seven teams from across the county who went head-to-head in a Brawlhalla 2v2 double-elimination showdown. The Palo Verde team was coached by Anthony Nguyen and made up of Adrian Sanchez and Cristian Bautista.

Bautista said that communication was key to the team's success. The eighth-grader said, "Communication is the big thing with teammates. If you don't communicate, you have no idea what you're doing. You're just doing random things. You might



end up losing your partner and then you die. So communicating is a good thing to have with your partner.”

In the championship round, Palo Verde Union School (Tulare) defeated Carl F. Smith Middle School (Terra Bella) to claim the custom-made first-place trophy. Finishing in third place was Sunnyside Union School (Strathmore) – the winners of the winter tournament.

In addition to the competition space, a “quiet room” was provided where teams could focus, warm up, strategize, and connect with one another. The goal of the room is to create a more complete and supportive tournament experience for all participants.

“This tournament was a way to bring students from across the county together to compete, collaborate, and network with other schools through esports,” said TCOE student event coordinator, Paula Terrill. “As the popularity of esports continues to grow, we’re excited to expand this program and create more opportunities beyond gaming for students to get involved in a meaningful and engaging way.”

This tournament wraps up the premier season of the TCOE Esports League. For more information on esports in Tulare County, visit <https://tcoe.org/esports>.

Photos above:

~ Palo Verde Union School won the inaugural TCOE Esports League Spring Tournament championship

~ Adrian Sanchez (left) and Cristian Bautista compete in the Brawlhalla championship match at the spring tournament.

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## California Center on Teaching Careers support Los Angeles County Office of Education with annual recruitment fair

On Saturday, May 16, in partnership with Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the California Center on Teaching Careers (the Center) hosted the fourth annual PK-12 Educational Employment Fair.

The fair was held at the LACOE Center West in Downey as an opportunity to hire credentialed multiple subject teachers, single subject teachers, education specialist teachers, paraprofessionals, substitutes, and classified positions for the 2026-



2027 school year. Over 600 job seekers attended, setting an attendance record since the Center began organizing the event.

Forty-eight agencies attended, representing Los Angeles-area charter schools, school districts, vendors, and universities.

Photo above:

~ (l-r) Jose Covarrubius and Ashley Eastman of the California Center on Teaching Careers await attendees at the fourth annual PK-12 Educational Employment Fair – an event the Center organizes for the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

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## La Sierra graduates first Forestry Pathway class



On Friday, May 15, La Sierra Military Academy honored 17 cadets for completing the school's new Forestry Pathway. Students that completed the pathway earned an Incident Qualification Card (commonly known as a Red Card), allowing them to apply for entry level positions with agencies such as CAL FIRE and the US Forest Service. Graduating seniors Carson Hutton and Angel Hernandez Estrada plan to do just that this summer.

The pathway is a partnership between La Sierra and Reedley College. The program is led by Navy veteran, fire captain, and vocational education instructor Fabian Morales,

who teaches at Reedley College. Founded in October 2025, the five-course certification program prepares students for future career opportunities in either firefighting or forestry.

Parents interested in learning more about La Sierra and its Forestry Pathway are encouraged to attend one of several upcoming information meetings. The information sessions will be held June 8, 15, and 22 at 4:00 p.m. La Sierra Military Academy is located at 1735 E. Houston Ave. in Visalia. For more information, call 559-733-6963.

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## **Ben Gimlin given the Brent Rast Award, Rosemary Caso receives Linda Hess Award**



Ben Gimlin has been a teacher of students with special needs within TCOE's AcCEL Program for nearly 20 years. But his path into the field he loves was not a direct one. With plans to pursue a career in business, Ben earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and finance. While completing his bachelor's degree, Gimlin worked as a substitute teacher aide in his father's special education class in Fresno. Gimlin shared that through these experiences he felt God calling him to serve students with special needs.

Upon completing his bachelor's degree, Gimlin enrolled in a credential program to become a special education teacher. His first assignment with the AcCEL Program was

in 2007 as a teacher at El Diamante High School in Visalia. The high school also had an onsite MOVE (Mobility Opportunities Via Experience) Program, which Ben was able to observe – and fall in love with. MOVE is a program of the Center for Disability Services in Albany, New York, and it has been used in Tulare County for decades. It helps children and young adults who have severe physical disabilities to acquire increased independence in sitting, standing, and walking to gain greater mobility, better health, and enhanced personal dignity.

When the El Diamante MOVE Program teacher, Pat Rankin, retired, Gimlin took her place. In 2016, when an opening at OTP (Occupational Training Program) became available, Gimlin was eager to continue his work serving students through the MOVE Program.

Gimlin points to his parents – a special education teacher and a registered nurse – as another reason he loves working students who often have medical needs. “I love serving them,” he said. “Thanks to our team of instructional aides and nurses working really well together, we’ve been able to support students and keep them safe and learning.”

Last week for his service to students with special needs, Ben Gimlin was presented with Special Services’ highest honor – the Brent Rast Award. The award was given at the annual Community Advisory Committee (CAC) luncheon – an event to recognize educators, administrators, and parents in school districts throughout the county for supporting students with special needs.



The CAC presented a second special award known as the Linda Hess Award. Named for TCOE's first parent liaison, Linda Hess, the award was created in 2007 to recognize an exceptional parent who strongly advocates for their child while working cooperatively with his or her school site. This year's winner is Rosemary Caso, whose daughter attends Mission Oak High School. Caso was recognized for supporting her daughter and making the rest of the student body and staff at Mission Oak feel appreciated for the work that they do.

Photos above:

~ Ben Gimlin is an AcCEL teacher at TCOE's Occupational Training Program and the 2026 recipient of the Brent Rast Award.

~ *Rosemary Caso, poses with Assistant Superintendent of Special Services Tammy Bradford (center) and members of the Community Advisory Committee. Caso received the annual Linda Hess Award.*

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To receive the News Gallery Week, sign up using the [form](#), or contact Jennifer Fisher at [jenniferf@tcoe.org](mailto:jenniferf@tcoe.org) or 559-733-6172.