

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

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## **For Immediate Release**

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

## **CHOICES Program Receives Significant Three-Year Grant for Alcohol Abuse Reduction**

Earlier this week, U.S. Congressman Devin Nunes notified the Tulare County Office of Education's CHOICES Prevention Programs that it had been awarded an alcohol reduction grant through the U.S. Department of Education. The grant will be used to expand the already established Reconnecting Youth project to additional Tulare County High Schools. The award will be used to reduce the use and abuse of alcohol by encouraging high school students to make decisions that will bring about a healthier lifestyle. The grant will fund the project for the next three years in the amount of \$428,583 annually.

"Substance abuse is a serious problem that all too often begins at an early age," says Representative Devin Nunes, R-Visalia. "Fortunately, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has developed strategies to address it. This grant is indicative of the shared commitment of the federal government and Tulare County leaders to combat this problem."

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*Reconnecting Youth: A Peer Group Approach to Building Life Skills (RY)* is a national program that includes a research validated curriculum program, staff development, and technical assistance for students and teachers. *RY* targets young people in grades 9–12 who show signs of poor school achievement and potential for high school dropout. Students may also show signs of multiple problem behaviors (such as substance abuse, aggression/depression, or suicide ideation).

*RY* teaches skills to build resiliency with respect to risk factors, and to moderate the early signs of substance abuse and provides students the opportunities to be involved in youth development activities. *Reconnecting Youth* explores adolescent life and ways to overcome challenges.

Students develop interpersonal communication skills, decision-making skills while building self-esteem and personal control.

“*RY* has proven quite successful in our continuation and community schools,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “This grant will enable us to fulfill the requests we’ve had to bring the program to our other high schools. I want to thank U.S. Congressman Devin Nunes for his help in securing this funding.”

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For information about the Tulare County Office of Education, please call the Public Information Office at (559) 733-6606, or visit our website at [www.tcoe.org](http://www.tcoe.org). For additional information about CHOICES, call 651-0155.

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