

Tulare County Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

October 24, 2019

Media Advisory

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25th annual *Excellence in Education* winners to be honored at breakfast event Tuesday, October 29

WHAT: Winners, finalists and nominees in the annual *Excellence in Education Awards* program will be honored at an invitation-only breakfast event in the Visalia Convention Center Exhibit Hall. Over **350** friends, family members and colleagues are expected to attend. This year, a total of 30 nominees were chosen to participate in the competition. The nominees were submitted by Tulare County school districts and the Tulare County Office of Education in three categories – Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year, and School Employee of the Year. A committee of Tulare County business and educational leaders individually reviewed and scored each nominee to determine the winners, which were announced in May.

WINNERS:

Administrator/Manager of the Year

Dr. Clare Gist

Superintendent, Tulare City School District (retired)

Dr. Clare Gist supported the Tulare district for over 29 years before retiring this summer. Her roles included teacher, principal, director, assistant superintendent of Business Services, and superintendent. Dr. Gist holds a Doctorate of Education from University of the Pacific and a Masters in Educational Administration from California State University, Bakersfield. She was praised by her nominators as a hands-on superintendent, wholly dedicated to learning every aspect of district operations. She was also praised for her leadership in promoting programs that support the whole child, the whole school, and the whole community.

Teacher of the Year

Dr. Tabby Grabowski

English Teacher/Literacy Coach, Tulare Union High School

Tabby Grabowski is an English teacher and literacy coach at Tulare Union High School. Dr. Grabowski teaches Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum, dual enrollment college English, and is the district's literacy coach. In addition, she is an adjunct instructor in English Language

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Arts at College of the Sequoias. Her teaching career includes 19 years of experience, with 11 years at the Tulare Joint Union High School District. Dr. Grabowski holds a Doctorate of Education from Northeastern University in Boston and a Masters in Language Arts from California State University, Fresno. Her colleagues wrote that she has an extraordinary ability to connect with each student, making learning fun and inspirational.

School Employee of the Year

Taurie Thayer

Receptionist, Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE)

American poet Maya Angelou said, “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Taurie Thayer, TCOE’s receptionist at the administration building, uses these words to inspire herself in her day-to-day interactions with staff and visitors. Warm, funny, caring, and serving, she calms nervous job applicants, assuring them that they will “ace the interview,” and helps presenters using the conference center with an assortment of last minute items. Ms. Thayer, who has worked for TCOE since 2016, also manages the TCOE room reservation system, working with event coordinators and maintenance and operations staff on dozens of meetings held in the Redwood Conference Center every week.

FINALISTS:

Administrator/Manager of the Year

Michelle Nunley, Ed.D., Principal, Tulare Union High School, Tulare Joint Union School District
Joy Soares, College and Career Director, Tulare County Office of Education

Teacher of the Year

Betsy Bentley, Fourth-Grade Teacher, Lincoln Elementary, Exeter Unified School District
Barbara Gaffrey, Second-Grade Teacher, Summit Charter Academy Lombardi, Burton School District (Porterville)

School Employee of the Year

Johanna Ayon, Attendance Clerk, Mission Oak High School, Tulare Joint Union High School District
Ryan Mazon, School Custodian, Alpine Vista School, Tulare City School District

WHEN: Tuesday, October 29, 2019
7:30 – 9:15 a.m.

WHERE: Visalia Convention Center Exhibit Hall
303 East Acequia, Visalia, CA

For more information on the event, including a list of the winners, finalists and nominees, visit www.tcoe.org/ExcellenceInEducation. The Excellence in Education program is a partnership between the Tulare County Office of Education and EECU. To see a video highlighting the three winners, visit tcoe.org/ExcellenceInEducation beginning November 1.

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TCOE

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