

**Tulare County Office of  
Education  
CHARACTER COUNTS! Week 2021**



**Student Name:** Felix Javier Juarez  
**School:** Ducor Union School, Ducor

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Vanessa Ramos

Felix has been an amazing student, from virtual to in person. He always stays on task and is ready to learn. Felix comes to class prepared to learn and help others. After he completes homework assistance, he asks me if there is any other work to be completed or if he can assist any students who need extra help. He loves the activities Choices has to offer and puts thought into making them, as he often gives them to his mom, the site lead, or staff. He respects the classroom by picking up after himself. Felix also respects his classmates and treats others the way he would want to be treated.

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# **Tulare County Office of Education**

## **CHARACTER COUNTS! Week 2021**



**Student Name:** Jorge Giron-Arevalo  
**School:** AcCel Exeter Community Based  
Instruction, Exeter

**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Susan Wendt

Jorge Giron-Arevalo is a 21-year-old student who attends school at the Exeter CBI AcCEL class. He has been a student in our classroom for 4 years. Jorge is a young man who has shown so much growth, both in academics and in character, over these last two years. Jorge is originally from El Salvador. English is a second language for him. He has, for years, done the best he can do in school to learn English. I know this has been very hard and frustrating for him. He has shown his frustration at times by not acting, as he should especially at home with his family.

But! At his last Parent/Teacher meeting, mom stated how much better he is doing at home. She has been very happy with him improved behavior and how much he has been learning. He has started to take an on-line English class that is offered in his community and speaks often about how he wants to work towards having a job.

Jorge has always been a Person of Character in our classroom. He is always willing to help and shows respect to those around him. It has only been recently that he has really worked on showing that Character Counts Everywhere, All the Time. Not just in the classroom, but at home and in his community.

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**Student Name:** Marisa Deniz  
**School:** Exeter Union High School, Exeter

**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Karissa Rios

Marisa works very hard for not only herself, but also her community. She is involved in her high school's cheerleading and the agriculture program. Marisa just finished showing her pig at the Tulare County Fair. She has good grades and is always willing to help her peers during class. Her extra time is spent teaching the Exeter Monarch peewee cheerleading team. She exemplifies commitment to her community by continually making an effort to do better and help others do the same. Marisa comes to school with a positive attitude and pride every day. She is very proud of her family who also work hard to support the community by volunteering and using their time to help with extracurricular activities.

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**Student Name:** Mellanie Betancourt  
**School:** Lincoln Elementary School, Exeter

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** Dona Johnson

Mellanie is a student that reveals empathy, compassion, and caring attributes to anybody, she encounters. Whether it is merely her sweet kindred spirited smile, a hello, or empathetically assisting her peers, Mellanie is always seeking happiness for others. She assists other students on a regular basis rather than focusing on her personal success. Her selfless demeanor is demonstrated when others are in need of disparity. Regardless if Mellanie is within a classroom, on campus, or with her family, her warm spirited heart is clearly on display that model's humanity with the highest of standards. Mellanie makes an incredible difference within our classroom and community at school. She can truly change the culture with a smile on her face.

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**Student Name:** Nijaiel Zaragoza  
**School:** Rocky Hill Elementary School, Exeter

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Whitney Pollock

I would like to nominate my student, Nijaiel Zaragoza, for the Character Counts! Pillar of Responsibility. Nijaiel and I started our journey together four years ago. I was a first-year teacher, and it was his first year joining the AcCel program here at Rocky Hill Elementary. To say that we both had our fair share of challenges would definitely be an understatement. Nijaiel had a difficult time adjusting to all the sudden changes and was confused about what could possibly lie ahead here in our classroom; it was an unfamiliar environment with unfamiliar people. At first, I felt as though I was on the phone with Nijaiel's mother daily, as we both tried to navigate what was best for Nijaiel's success. Our team here at the AcCel program, worked hard to determine the most appropriate intervention strategies to support Nijaiel throughout his instructional day. Together, with Nijaiel's hard work, we all established a daily routine that soon would become the golden ticket for Nijaiel's success.

Fast forward to four years later, Nijaiel is my classroom leader. He volunteers to be the classroom helper, he encourages his peers, he is the first to line up during a transition, and most importantly, he comes to school with a positive attitude and is ready to work. I am beyond proud of Nijaiel and all that he has accomplished. I have seen this young man grow into such a true leader. Nijaiel has a heart that matches his ear-to-ear smile and I could not be more honored to nominate him for this Character Counts! award that he not only deserves but has earned.

Congratulations Nijaiel, you did it!

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**Student Name:** Bella Boutthavong  
**School:** Sierra View Junior Academy, Exeter

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** Carol Bovee

Sierra View Jr. Academy is happy to nominate Bella Boutthavong for one of the Character Counts! Pillar. Bella's character is one that exemplifies all the pillars, but we have chosen respect. Bella's trustworthiness has earned her respect by everyone. Her responsibility to her schoolwork and family has earned her respect at school and home. Being a fair and caring citizen, sister, daughter, classmate, and friend has given her respect by teachers, friends, family, and anyone around her. Bella also shows respect to her surroundings by going out of her way to help others and doing it with a willing and loving heart. Bella is truly a sincere young lady with a heart of gold.

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**Student Name:** Gardenia Navarro  
**School:** Wilson Middle School, Exeter

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Richard Bodily

The Pillar of Character Gardenia consistently displays is responsibility. She arrives at school ready to learn, puts her backpack away and then greets the other students with a smile. She sits at her desk or in small groups and participates in all lessons, completing her assignments, doing her best. She knows the class rules and reminds her peers to make good choices when she sees them acting before they think. When she asks to do something, she does what she says she is going to do. If her peers are not making good choices, she demonstrates responsibility by reminding them to think before they act. Gardenia is a role model of responsibility to her classmates and students she interacts with on campus.



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**Student Name:** Amias Gutierrez  
**School:** Deep Creek Academy, Farmersville

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** Sylvia Lopez

Amias Gutierrez is a student that I would like to be recognized for the pillar of respect. Amias is such a respectful young man that is always so polite and always has a smile for you. Whenever there is any interaction with him, he never fails to greet you with a caring and respectful attitude. He is such a pleasure to have as a student and I believe a role model for others. I wish for Amias to be recognized for his respectfulness and wonderful personality that he shares every day with staff and his peers. It is so amazing to see a young male with such wonderful attributes.



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**Student Name:** Raul Capetillo  
**School:** Farmersville High School, Farmersville

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** David Perry

Raul is the consummate gentleman. He shows he cares every day by making sure my classroom is in order by plugging in any loose computers and straightening out the folder drawer without being told to do so. He also shows he cares about me by always paying attention and modeling that behavior for other students. This outstanding student is a pleasure and a joy to have in class. He always does the right thing without being asked. He will be a caring and responsible citizen when he graduates high school.

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**Student Name:** Kevin Arias  
**School:** Freedom Elem. School, Farmersville

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** Socorro Lozano

Kevin Arias came to my 4th grade class last year. (2020 -2021) In spite of all the challenges, which COVID brought to students and teachers, Kevin managed to get through all the bumps. As a virtual learner, Kevin was always present and attentive. Even with his learning challenges, Kevin stuck it out. As soon as students were allowed to return to school in December of 2020, with a limit of only fourteen students, Kevin was one of the students who chose to come to school.

Kevin was the young respectful student I had met through distance learning. Right away we connected. He came to school every day with something new to share with the class. Always polite with students and staff. This year Kevin is in the fifth grade, but comes by every day to say hello. Although I always told Kevin how proud I was of him, I felt like he needed extra recognition. I think this is one of the best ways to recognize this young man.

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**Student Name:** Deaney Castro  
**School:** George L. Snowden School,  
Farmersville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Nancy Delgado

I would like to nominate Deaney Castro for the Kids of Character Award. Deaney is an outstanding student that demonstrates what it means to be responsible. She keeps her desk nice and organized, turns in her homework on time, completes her classwork, returns her library books on time, and takes full responsibility for her own actions. In addition, Deaney is always happy to help her classmates that sit next to her. She is kind and generous with anyone that crosses her path. The other day, she noticed that someone had taken her beautiful pink water bottle from the playground. She was not upset. On the contrary, she stayed calm & positive and went about her day. The next day, she was happy to show me her new water bottle with her name on it. Her positivity and kind heart shines through her every day she comes to school. I am so happy to have such a great role model in my class.

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**Student Name:** Karen Meza  
**School:** JE Hester School, Farmersville

**Pillar:** Trustworthiness

**Nominator(s):** Brandi Finch

Karen is trustworthy because she always lines up where she should and does not move when my back is turned. She is responsible with her materials and I can trust her to take care of her things.

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**Student Name:** Brenda Cruz Hernandez  
**School:** Lincoln Elementary School, Lindsay

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Donna Wareham

Brenda is a very kind and caring learner in our classroom environment. She knows the operations of the classroom and is able to help her friends be successful in following them. She also completes all of the work assigned to her and does it with excellence.

Brenda is an excellent choice for the Character Counts Award at Lincoln Elementary School in Lindsay.

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**Student Name:** Alice Gonzalez  
**School:** Lindsay High School, Lindsay

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Roger Gonzales

I have been impressed with Alice's work ethic and attention to detail since the beginning of the school year. She is always at school, on time, and ready to work. In this pandemic-ridden school environment, it is refreshing to have a learner such as Alice, who is dedicated to her education and does not look for excuses not to do things. Rather she has made the decision to make the most of her opportunities in the classroom. She has a quiet confidence in herself, which sets her apart from the rest of her classmates.

# **Tulare County Office of Education**

## **CHARACTER COUNTS! Week 2021**



**Student Name:** Joshua Peterson  
**School:** Loma Vista Charter, Lindsay

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** Misty Villarreal

Joshua exemplifies all the Pillars of Character. Joshua is always willing to help his peers and support them academically. Joshua is a leader in my learning environment and has been since the first day of school. He is usually the first one to complete his work and then offers to help his peers. He demonstrates compassion and empathy towards others and always finds a way to help others. His peers look up to him and know that they can count on him as a caring friend. I have witnessed Joshua leading a group activity and answering questions from his peers. He comes to school with a great attitude, and I know that I can count on him to always be willing to help and assist others. He represents the Character Counts! pillar of caring in many ways.



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**Student Name:** Juanantonio Delgado

**School:** Reagan Elementary School  
Lindsay

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Shanna Lemus

Juanantonio Delgado is a learner who in the month of January 2020 demonstrated to be a Lifelong Learner in the following spheres: personal, relationship, and learning. On a personal level, Juanantonio has cared for his sister and mother during various health obstacles. However, while caring for his family in the mornings he managed to still be present and participate in Zoom meetings. That did not stop Juanantonio from continuing to attend to his own educational and personal responsibilities during this time. He is a learner that understands the importance of participating during our meetings and I truly appreciate that about him. He works hard every day and dedicates extra time to his learning, such as staying after our zoom meetings to make sure that his work is complete. He never leaves our Zoom meeting without saying goodbye to me.

We are extremely proud of this learner and I know he will continue to do amazing. Thank you Juanantonio for being a FANTASTIC learner.

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**Student Name:** Juan Arroyo  
**School:** Roosevelt Elementary School, Lindsay

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** Ana Medrano

Juan Arroyo is a great role model in the classroom. He consistently helps his peers stay on-task and will make sure they are doing what they should be doing so that they do not get in trouble. Others look up to him and look to him for advice, academic support and most importantly, they acknowledge him for being helpful, kind and generous. I have first handedly watched these interactions and it is such a joy to see that this student is highly liked and inspirational to others. Every time I see him interact with others, I smile because he has this mature genuine care and concern for others. I hear him tell others, "come on you got this", "just try and do your best". He oozes kindness so much he inspires me. His willingness to ensure that those around him feel cared for is amazing. Juan definitely stands out, in the classroom he is an outstanding, sweet, helpful, and generous young man.

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**Student Name:** Greyson Baxter  
**School:** Pleasant View Elem. School, Poplar

**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Tashima Irving

This year has been an adjustment for many. Students are learning how to adapt in the classroom after going through a rough previous year. However, I have noticed a student who has risen above all others in the area of citizenship. Greyson Baxter is an amazingly compassionate, caring, responsible and serving young man. This is his first year in our school's SQUAD club and he is always willing to help on campus and in our community. Greyson was one of the first to raise his hand when help was needed with our recycling contest and book fair. He is reliable and I know I can count on him to do what is right when no one is looking. Greyson is a leader who is not swayed by peer pressure. He knows how to choose right from wrong on his own. I spoke to his teacher and she said he is so compassionate and fair with other students in the classroom. He is definitely one of a kind. If I could pick him for each of the Six Pillars I would.

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**Student Name:** Guadalupe Mendez  
**School:** Alta Vista School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** Michelle Hatcher

Guadalupe Mendez has always been an outstanding student. I tutored her when she was in K-2 and I had her as a student in third grade. She is now an eighth grader. Guadalupe was recently elected as the Student Council President. She is involved in sports and always shows true sportsmanship on the court.

She is the type of student who never gets in trouble and is always respectful to her peers and the staff. She always goes out of her way to help others. Guadalupe's goal in life is to become a surgeon and she definitely has the drive to accomplish this. She is a model student, and I am lucky to have taught her and to know her.

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**Student Name:** Rayman Pierce  
**School:** Bartlett Middle School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Candace Castillo

Rayman is an outstanding citizen. He demonstrates responsibility in many ways. He picks up the breakfast in the classroom each day before school and delivers it early so students can eat at the start of school. He is always prepared and willing to learn. He completes all of his work and puts forth a great amount of effort when learning. Rayman knows it is his responsibility to take charge of his education!

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**Student Name:** Alexis Garcia  
**School:** Belleview Elementary School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Trustworthiness

**Nominator(s):** Jennifer Andrade

Alexis is a hard worker and can be counted on to tell the truth, even in hard situations. She is always willing to lend a hand and works well with others. She is the helper of our room because she can be trusted with the duty.

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**Student Name:** Kamryn Hunt

**School:** Burton Elementary School, Porterville

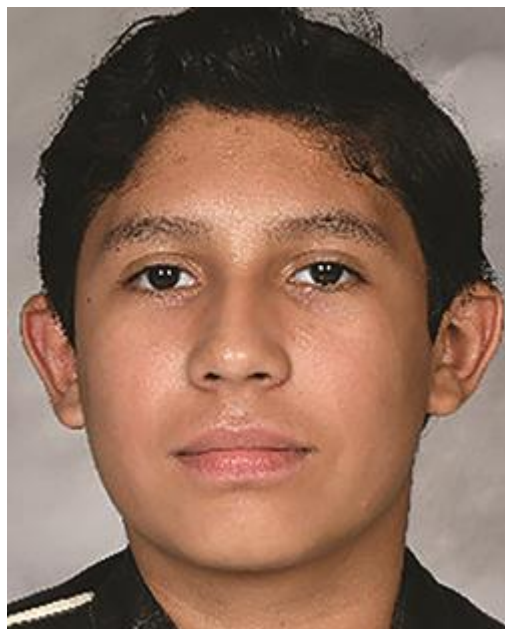
**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Ashley McMillan

I would like to nominate Kamryn Hunt for the Pillar of Citizenship. In the three weeks, I have had Kamryn in my class; I can tell that she is a natural leader. Not only does she work hard in class, but also she is always willing to lend a helping hand. She has stepped in to lead "good news" in the morning and taken on the leadership role of keeping others on task. She loves school and always has great insight to bring to our discussions. She is a lovely artist and a great friend. Kamryn is a model student all around, and I am so lucky to be her teacher this year!



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**Student Name:** Andre Morillon  
**School:** Burton Middle School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Ashlyn Kausen

Andre realized an assignment was missing and right away, even on the weekend, found a way to get it to me. We use Canvas as our learning management system, and it would not allow him to turn the assignment in due to it being marked as an assignment that should be turned in in-person. However, Andre wanted to get it to me ASAP, so he sent messages and linked the assignment in the comments to make sure it got to me. That is taking care of business and responsibility in my mind!

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**Student Name:** Nicholas Mosqueda  
**School:** Butterfield Charter School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Jeanne Fedel

Nicholas has maturely handled the disappointment of being told by the City of Porterville that he was not permitted to run his own landscaping business without possessing a business license, nor could he have a business license until he turned eighteen. Although Nicholas also has plans to work in his father's construction company to learn the art of flipping houses, he has conceded that he must abide by the city regulations. In the meantime, has made the decision to work as a cashier saving up for expenses he knows he will incur later (to buy tools, save for the costs involved in owning/maintaining a vehicle, etc.). Nicholas' respect for our City's and County's laws and regulations prompts me to nominate him for the Character Counts! Citizenship Award.

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**Student Name:** Melanie Tree

**School:** Granite Hills High School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Ryan Gibson

The responsibility that Melanie shows earns merit recognition of the Kids of Character Award by being a lead student within the LJE Pathway. For instance, when the LJE Courthouse had its grand ceremony, Melanie took it upon herself to provide a tour of the building to the various attendees at the grand ceremony. Through this tour, she was able to provide the attendees in- depth details regarding what the LJE Pathway implements within their courses. Her ability to discuss in a professional manner, with individuals that are leaders within our community, is a significant responsibility in displaying our pathway to the community.

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**Student Name:** Sadie Jimenez  
**School:** Hope School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Flor Martinez

It never fails, but when a student walks into my class at the beginning of the year, they are very excited but nervous at the same time. As a math teacher, sometimes I see their nervousness get the best of them. One particular student really stood out to me this year because she was so eager to learn and do her best but was very nervous to let herself down. Although she said math was not one of her strengths, she has proven to be an extraordinary mathematician. She has worked very hard and is beginning to see that not only can she learn math but also she can learn math at high levels. We all know that the best part of teaching is when you hear all of those “aha moments” and Sadie has already had several this year. I am very proud of her motivation and hard work. Her willingness to try new things and take on challenges deserves to be recognized. “Sadie, you are an incredible student. Not only are you learning but also you are teaching me how to be a better teacher. I am very proud of you.”

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**Student Name:** Julian Bedolla

**School:** John J Doyle Elem. School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Susana Arteaga

Julian Bedolla has been an asset to the functionality of this class. He voluntarily brings the wagon filled with breakfast to the classroom. He hauls the bundle of water bottles to the serving station where he opens the package and separates the bottles for students to have easy access. He is a true gentleman when it comes to helping out other students and helping the classroom run smoother.

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**Student Name:** Dylan Ramos  
**School:** Los Robles Elementary School,  
Porterville

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** Priscilla Sustaita-Clark

Dylan is one of the first students to greet me every morning. He will ask me how he can help me if he sees me carrying books, and I will see him helping his classmates. When a classmate took a cherished item from him, Dylan explained to the student how it made him feel. He asked that the student remember that in the future so he would never make anyone feel hurt again. He told the student he forgave them and that they would have to work to become friends again because he did not want to end the friendship. I am in awe of his kind and generous spirit!

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**Student Name:** Denise Fuertes  
**School:** Monache High School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Gregg Snyder

Denise Fuertes is a student aid for Mr. Reneau's Biology class, at Monache High School. On August 16, at Monache High School we had over 19 teachers out of school for various reasons. As the teacher who was subbing for Mr. Reneau, Denise Fuentes started the class and presented the lesson to the entire class. Someone walking into the classroom would have assumed Denise was the teacher, not the student aide. She had the respect and attention of each student as she was presenting the Biology unit/lesson, answering questions and drawing examples. Denise used all the pillars of Character Counts on this day.



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**Student Name:** Hunter Belliston  
**School:** Monarch River Academy, Porterville

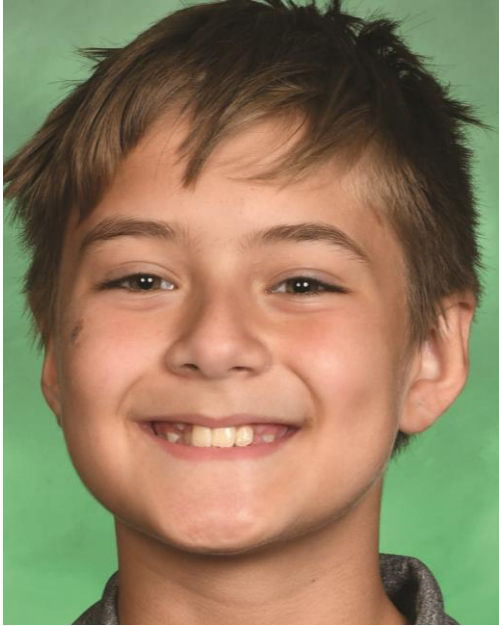
**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Lindsay Tharp

Hunter is a boy that shows leadership and responsibility qualities in his family as well as his schoolwork. From the first time that I met Hunter, in September 2020, he struck me as a very poised and positive young man. He is dedicated to completing his school lessons with true effort and pride. He has grown consistently from First to Second Grade in Language Arts and Mathematics.

Hunter supports his younger sisters during Homeschool lessons and during independent play times. Hunter is a very creative kid. He is a role model to his younger sisters and they love to emulate him, his creations and even the activities he enjoys.

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**Student Name:** Jayden Arellano  
**School:** Monte Vista Elem. School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Crystal Adney

Jayden is an outstanding student of character. He is kind and polite. He does incredible work in school and on projects. He has incredible ideas that challenge his classmates to think outside the box. Jayden excels and any task he takes on and will go the extra mile to show his skills. He is organized, focused and driven!

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**Student Name:** Melody Oneal

**School:** Oak Grove Elem. School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** Emily Ruffa

Melody has one of the kindest hearts I have seen in a student. She is always prepared to help a friend in need and is not shy about giving up her things to make sure that another student does not go without. She is one of the first to offer help and to make sure that all students feel included in the classroom and on the playground. When we had a new student, Melody was the first to welcome him, showed him around the school, and made sure he had someone to play with so that he did not feel alone. She loves to show her appreciation for her friends and staff at school. She loves to give pictures to show how much she cares and appreciates those around her. Melody has a little sister on campus who she never turns away. She makes sure that her sister is taken care of and always stops to make sure that she is having a great day. I am so thankful to have Melody as a leader in our classroom.

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**Student Name:** Airam Pena-Alcantar  
**School:** Olive Street Elem. School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Stephanie Blair

Airam is a wonderful student that embodies all of the pillars of good character. She is very responsible and always does her work. She is very trustworthy and always does the right thing even when nobody is looking. She is a very caring student who cares about everyone and wants to make sure everybody is okay. Airam always plays fair and never insists that she must go first. She asks her friends what they think and what they want to do. I have never witnessed her being mean or disrespectful to anyone. She treats everybody respectfully. Airam is a hard worker; she cares about her work, her education, her friends and her family, and is a wonderful citizen in our class and school.

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**Student Name:** Ricardo Gutierrez  
**School:** Pioneer Middle School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Mayra Ruiz, Mariella Jaramillo

Ricardo Gutierrez is an excellent student who does what he is supposed to do and goes above and beyond. Not only is he an excellent student but he is also involved in many extra-curricular activities such as robotics and MESA. He has done a great job in managing his time and meeting expectations in everything that he does. He gets along great with all his peers, all his teachers, and all adults on campus. He shows great respect in class by listening attentively, answering politely when called on, always coming into class respectfully. Ricardo is a great example for 7th Grade.

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**Student Name:** Obed Melendez Casillas  
**School:** Porterville High School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Faviola Zamora Hobbs

Obed is an AVID student who goes above and beyond to do well, show that he is responsible, and determined to meet his goals. He joined Porterville High School during virtual learning and did all he could to excel in all his classes and continues that during in-person learning. He assists his AVID classmates and is the go to person to check with if someone is absent because of his organization. He is quiet and meek, but is always kind to all those who speak with him. He is always friendly and greets his classmates and teachers.

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**Student Name:** Christopher Plumlee Hagler  
**School:** Roche Avenue Elem. School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Cassie Rapp

Christopher is always focused on the task at hand. He works hard during class, and is always ready to lend a helping hand to his fellow group members, and classmates. He treats his teacher and his classmates with the utmost respect at all times by following directions the first time they are given, and participating in group and class activities with enthusiasm. Christopher recently served as the classroom assistant for two weeks and did his job very well. In addition, he recently brought a stack of Accelerated Reading books to class to donate to our classroom library. He was excited to add to our library, which allows our entire class to grow as readers. Christopher understands that being respectful ensures that all students are able to focus on learning and to do their best. We are very lucky to have him as a student in our classroom, and at Roche Elementary School!



# **Tulare County Office of Education**

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**Student Name:** Ayden Andrade

**School:** Santa Fe Elementary School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Fairness

**Nominator(s):** Joseph McIntire

From the first day of school, Ayden has stood apart from his peers as someone who is equity-minded. As opposed to focusing his energy on what is “fair” and “even,” Ayden is more concerned with what is equitable. During intervention groups, Ayden is known for monitoring struggling students and helping to provide them with additional support/tools they need to be successful. This is not to be confused with simply giving others the correct answer, but helping his struggling peers to recognize familiar patterns and to remember helpful tools in problem solving. This level of maturity and selflessness in the 4th grade is something to be celebrated.

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**Student Name:** Mikala Surprenant

**School:** St. Anne's, Porterville

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** Sylvia Herrera

Mikala Surprenant is a kind, quiet student. She has her own home life struggles and yet is selfless. She has taken new students under her wing and has become their friend. In particular, there is a student with uncontrollable behavioral disabilities and Mikala will help him do his work. She keeps him on task without being asked while using a whisper voice so he calms down. She has taken the role of helping those less fortunate academically or socially. Mikala has been an angel for these kids and is so appreciated for all the extra work and love she is pouring out. We need more humans like Mikala who selflessly cares for everyone's well-being.

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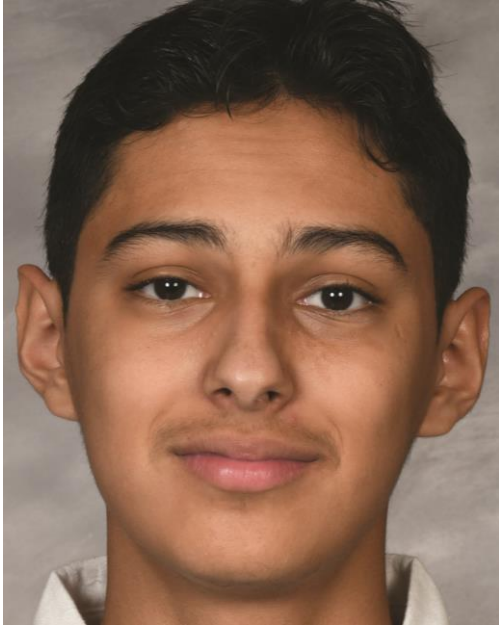
**Student Name:** Ivan Krase  
**School:** Summit Charter Academy Mathew  
Campus, Porterville

**Pillar:** Fairness

**Nominator(s):** Lissette Banuelos

Ivan demonstrates the pillar of fairness in and out of the classroom. He often makes sure that his classmates have the opportunity to be included in whatever games and activities we are doing in class. He also makes sure that everyone gets the chance to play with the equipment during recess when it is his turn to take it outside. He does not mind waiting his turn and he understands how important it is to play fair. I know that I can count on Ivan to be fair with everyone and I am so grateful for that.

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**Student Name:** Diego Gutierrez  
**School:** Summit Charter Collegiate Academy,  
Porterville

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** Sharon Turner

I would like to recommend Diego Gutierrez of Summit High School of Porterville as a student of Character.

I have known Diego for four years; Diego is a patient caring person/student and has always done a stellar job in any role he has taken on. He is currently my TA in CS Essentials class. Diego does not only show up every day ready to work, he asks questions and asks how he can help every time he steps into the classroom, always ready to make a difference.

I have known Diego since 7th grade and he is currently a Junior at Summit High School. I first had Diego as a student in my Art Concepts class where he drew an amazing rose metamorphosis image that started out as shapes then formed into a rose. Diego has a big heart, he shared a very personal story with me about his uncle that had brain cancer and because of that fact, and he wants to become a surgeon to help people like his uncle to help save lives. Such a powerful statement from such a young man and he will do it! He has focus and drive.

Diego is organized, efficient, extremely competent, and has an excellent rapport with people of all ages. His communication skills, both written and verbal, are excellent.

I highly recommend Diego as a stellar student of character. He deserves to be recognized based on his maturity, passion and drive to help others.

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**Student Name:** Danika Sanchez

**School:** Summit Charter Intermediate Academy,  
Porterville

**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Jenifer Sanders

I am honored to nominate Danika Sanchez, an 8th grade student at Summit Charter Intermediate Academy in Porterville. Danika possesses all of the Character Counts Pillars and this is consistently demonstrated through her outstanding citizenship. Danika is the first to help someone in need, she sets an amazing example for her peers, and will always be seen on task demonstrating her outstanding character both in and out of the classroom. Danika is the student that every teacher enjoys teaching. She is a true inquirer, a thinker and she cares deeply about others, her family, her school, and her world. Danika's outstanding citizenship shines brightly!

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**Student Name:** Rico Christman

**School:** Vandalia Elementary School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Trustworthiness

**Nominator(s):** Amanda Fischer

Rico is a very trustworthy student that I know I can count on. So many students are afraid to be honest, but Rico always rises above. There has not been a time this year that he has not kept his word. At times, the fifth grade gets hard, and he is always honest with himself and asks questions if he does not understand something. I can always count on Rico to tell me how the class was when I was gone or how a lesson went. He is such a great kid, and it is an honor to have him in my class.

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**Student Name:** David Pompa Ayon  
**School:** West Putnam Elem. School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Mae Saechao

David is hardworking and always completes assignments on time. He puts forth his best effort in completing all his work. I can always count on him to come to class on time and prepared every day to learn. I can see by his actions that he takes pride in learning and doing his best. He actively participates and contributes to group and class discussions. He is a wonderful role model for his classmates.



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**Student Name:** Tarik Al Shugaa

**School:** Westfield Elementary School, Porterville

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** Juan Andrade

Tarik has shown respect to his peers, school staff, and his teacher all throughout the school year. He is polite with everyone around him and treats everyone with respect at all times. He is a role model for his peers to follow. Keep up the great work Tarik.

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**Student Name:** Rolando Valadez  
**School:** William R. Buckley Elem. School,  
Porterville

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** Melinda Stone

In our classroom, students challenge themselves to be caring friends to one another. One student in particular, Rolando, goes above and beyond to demonstrate this pillar of being caring. Rolando shows others he cares for them by his words. His words are kind and thoughtful not only to his classmates, but to me (his teacher) as well. Rolando also shows how caring he is by his actions. One day after school, the class was lined up at the pick-up area. Rolando had already left, but he returned with another student's lunch box that he had found on his way to go home. He cared enough to think of another and to go out of his way to be kind and helpful towards them. These types of thoughtful behaviors characterize Rolando. He is an encouragement to all of those around him.

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**Student Name:** Kyra Winton

**School:** Springville Union School, Springville

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** Ashley Ray

Kyra always treats others with respect and is so kind and loving. No matter what she is doing, she gives it 110%. Kyra is always ready with a kind word and encouragement. She is the epitome of the pillars of character. If I could nominate her for all of the pillars, I would.

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**Student Name:** Fatima Alarcon

**School:** Harmony Magnet Academy, Strathmore

**Pillar:** Caring

**Nominator(s):** Jeromy Blackwell, Benjamin Gonzalez

Fatima Alarcon is a great example of someone who cares for her schoolmates. She looks after her teammates on the track team, like a Big sister, she volunteers as the water-girl for the football team, she takes great pride in her work, she understands her priorities, and she handles the classroom with great effort. Fatima pays attention to detail, in all aspects of her life. She cares for the job she does as much as she cares for her fellow man. Fatima is a leader in my AP Biology class as well as a bastion of school spirit. She is a responsible young lady who is very organized, and is able to compartmentalize her duties while taking on a sizable workload with an AP course her sophomore year here at Harmony Magnet Academy.

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**Student Name:** Edwin Calderon  
**School:** Strathmore Elem. School, Strathmore

**Pillar:** Citizenship

**Nominator(s):** Amy Burkhart

There are so many good things that I can say about Edwin! He embodies all of the pillars of character. He is kind to his classmates on the playground and in class. He gets involved in all of our class discussions and completes every single assignment, in fact, he's usually the first one finished. Even with the masks on, I can tell he is smiling and he brightens the room every day! He is helpful and caring towards everyone. He is the type of person who gives me so much hope for the future of our country!

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**Student Name:** Estrella Martinez  
**School:** Strathmore High School, Strathmore

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** John Lujan

Estrella Martinez is a junior at Strathmore High School, where she is actively involved in her learning and in her community. I met her when she was in my Math class her freshman year. She is actively involved in our Key Club on campus and is always willing to help others in our community. Last year during the pandemic, our club met virtually and were able to raise money and supplies for the families who were displaced by our local fires. Estrella was also instrumental in raising funds for food and supplies for the women's rescue mission in Porterville. In addition, she contributed personal supplies for women.

Estrella is a prime example of a student who exemplifies all six pillars of character. I am nominating her for Respect. She follows the Golden Rule and treats others the way she would like to be treated. She is accepting of all people and goes out of her way to help those in need.

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**Student Name:** Josiah Ruiz

**School:** Strathmore Middle School, Strathmore

**Pillar:** Responsibility

**Nominator(s):** Tasha Boehme

Josiah is not a student in my class, but he has stood out to me on campus this year as one who always does the right thing. I have students in my class who have tried to distract Josiah from getting in his line, and encourage him to enter my classroom, to cause a distraction in my room. Josiah never hesitates to remind his friends in my class that they should not be doing that and ignores their request, staying focused on what he is set out to do. I met him a few years ago when he was sent to my classroom after making a few not so good choices in fifth grade. Now in 7th grade, he assured me he is making great choices now, keeping his grades up and staying out of trouble. Sure enough, he has great grades and I have seen him make good choices right outside of my classroom on a weekly basis. I appreciate him very much and believe he deserves to be recognized for this. These may seem like small things, but I know, as he gets older he will continue to make good choices and have a positive impact on the world.



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**Student Name:** Matteo Lemus Ceballos  
**School:** Sunnyside Union School, Strathmore

**Pillar:** Fairness

**Nominator(s):** Lori Dieterle

Matteo Lemus Ceballos has displayed the pillar of fairness. In my classroom, Matteo was named captain, and with this title his job is to release tables for recess, lunch, and P.E. The captain must make sure that tables are clean, chairs are in place, and no trash is under students' desks. Matteo did not cater to friends; rather, he impressed me with his leadership qualities of fairness and discernment in releasing tables according to conditions. He even extended the role by reminding kids to stay in line and walk quietly through the halls. He set a fine example of what it means to be a fair and just captain.

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**Student Name:** Jacqueline Duran  
**School:** Saucelito School, Terra Bella

**Pillar:** Respect

**Nominator(s):** Courtney Castle

When I think about respect and what it represents there is one student that comes to mind for me; Jacqueline Duran. Jackie is one of our 8th grade students and has the heart of a servant leader. Not only is she the oldest sibling and cares for her two brothers, she is respected by all students at Saucelito. Jackie treats everyone with compassion and understanding. She actively listens to others and is genuinely concerned about what they have to say. Jackie has a personality that our youngest students gravitate towards. Each week, she actively participates in Book Buddies with our Kindergarten students. Jackie holds a leadership position on campus and is admired by others for her kindness, patience and positive attitude. The saying "actions speak louder than words" could not be truer with Jackie. You will not find another student that gives and gets as much respect as Jackie.