

The Theatre Company's immersive production of Disney's *Moana JR.* opens tomorrow, celebrates Polynesian cultures

Tomorrow evening, the Theatre Company will premiere its production of Disney's *Moana JR.* in TCOE's Redwood Conference Center. The musical is an adaptation of the heartwarming animated film, *Moana*, which is the coming-of age story of a strong-willed young woman and her adventures across the Pacific to save her village and discover the truth about her heritage.

To prepare for the production, *Moana JR.* director Charlotte Garcia Da Rosa and choreographer McKenna Friend-Hoffman consulted with area Polynesian culture teacher Kealoha Sakamoto – lovingly known as “Auntie K.” – to immerse students in the dance, language, and traditions of the islands represented in the production. *Moana* is infused with influences from many Polynesian islands, including Samoa, Tahiti, Hawaii, and Tonga.



“It was incredibly important to us that we did our best to represent the Polynesian culture,” Garcia Da Rosa said. “We knew we would need to bring in experts to help us – not just to tell this story properly from a theatre standpoint, but to educate our students on the culture they are portraying. For an actor, character development means you need to know why your character does what they do. When it comes to characters from different cultures, we must accommodate differences in the way they stand, walk, dress, dance, wear their hair, and more. I am so thankful to Auntie K. for being our cultural mentor and Polynesian choreography advisor.”

To begin, Auntie K., a dance instructor and owner of Island Style Productions based in Fresno, consulted Garcia Da Rosa and Friend-Hoffman on the basics of hula – one of the dances she teaches. “Respect” is a term she uses repeatedly when talking about her work with the directors and students – respect for the language and annunciation, respect for Polynesian traditions, and respect for the movement, dance, and mannerisms.



“Hula is not just a dance,” Auntie K. said. “Hula is something you feel in your heart; you must feel it emotionally.” Teaching and sharing is part of Auntie K.’s spirit – her mother and sister danced and her grandmother was a Hawaiian language and ukulele teacher. At a recent rehearsal, she remarked, “These students have made me so proud. They have come further in a few months than others have in six months.”

Perhaps this success can be attributed to the “spirit of aloha,” which Auntie K. shares in her work. In Hawaiian culture, aloha is more than a greeting; it represents an extension of mutual regard, affection, and caring with no obligation in return. Aloha is the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence – a lesson this cast will use during their performances and in their home and professional lives as adults.

For the production, the Theatre Company also developed a creative set utilizing innovative staging and beautiful digital projections by projection artwork designer Morgan Culbreth to recreate Moana's South Pacific island home and her ocean adventures. Turning the Redwood Conference Center into a performance space was a collaborative effort between Theatre Company staff, Jeff Ramsay and the Maintenance & Operations staff, Conan Palmer and Craig Alameda from the Planetarium & Science Center, and lighting designers and sound technicians.

Evening shows will be offered November 17, 18, and 19 at 7:00 p.m. A 2:00 p.m. matinee show will be held Saturday, November 19. Tickets are \$13.85 for general admission and \$17.85 for early admission seating. To purchase tickets, visit tcoe.org/TheatreCo/CurrentProductions.

Photos above:

~ The Theatre Company's production of Moana JR. stars (clockwise from upper left) Erin McDonnell as Moana, Leo Paez as Maui, Eli Peters as Hei Hei, and Ava Dodson as Pua.

Students build leadership skills at CHOICES Leadership Conference



Today, over 200 students from 26 Tulare County schools attended the annual CHOICES Leadership Training conference. The conference was entitled, "Swing for the Fences." Along with lessons on leadership, students learned about the dangers of vaping, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, and how to create engaging events at school to help build inclusive, caring campus cultures.

Zac Diles, a Tulare Union High School graduate, retired NFL pro football player, and real estate agent kicked off the conference with a keynote presentation, discussing the hard work and sacrifice it often takes to achieve one's dreams.

Following Diles' presentation, students attended breakout sessions on:

- **"Qualities of a Good Teammate" with local athletes Beau Riportella and Alex Ledesma:** focused on qualities leaders need to know that connect with experiences from playing sports including dedication, communication, collaboration, respect, etc.
- **"Leadership Building Blocks" – with Mission Oak High School ASB:** focused on event planning, using social media to promote events/activities on campus, dress-up days, etc.
- **"Rise Above the Influence":** focused on alcohol and drugs, and making healthy choices
- **"The Leadership Challenge":** used social-emotional tools to focus on leadership skills by discussing challenges leaders face and how to overcome them
- **"It's time to BE REAL. On Vaping the Game Show":** focused on facts and misconceptions about vaping and making healthy choices



"This conference is important for our students because it emphasizes vital leadership skills such as teamwork and organization, along with crucial information on drug prevention that they can take back to their campuses to improve school culture," said K.C. Pearce, CHOICES Prevention/Intervention Education manager.

Wednesday's annual CHOICES Leadership Training conference was sponsored by the state's Friday Night Live (FNL) and Tobacco-Use Prevention Education (TUPE) programs.

TCOE's CHOICES Program offers the Leadership Training conference annually to help young people develop as positive leaders at school and in their



communities. For more information about leadership development programs, contact CHOICES at (559) 651-0155.

Photos above:

~ Over 200 Tulare County students came together Wednesday for the annual CHOICES Leadership Training, where they learned about leadership along with the dangers of vaping, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, and how to create engaging events at school to help build inclusive, caring campus cultures.

Pat Hillman to retire from Tulare County Board of Education



At the November meeting of the Tulare County Board of Education last week, trustees and staff expressed their appreciation for Pat Hillman (Trustee Area 7), who retires next month. Hillman has served on the Tulare County Board of Education for 25 years. Prior to her election to the Tulare County Board of Education, she served on the Tulare City School District Board of Education for 25 years.

Hillman remarked that she had, “been involved in education in some form for 90 years – first as a student, a parent, a teacher, and later on boards of education.”

At the reception, Hillman was joined by family members and two former superintendents – former Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak and former Tulare City School District Superintendent Bill Postlewaite.

“Pat leaves quite a legacy,” said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire. “On behalf of all the children who are now adults, giving back just the way that Pat has – so selflessly to our community – we are so much better because of her example.”

A champion for the La Sierra Charter School, Hillman and her family established a scholarship for a graduating senior. Hillman is also a supporter of music education, helping to form the Tulare County Symphony (now the Sequoia Symphony Orchestra) and the long-running Young People’s Concerts, which was coordinated by the Tulare County Office of Education.

Tony Rodriguez, a long-time Tulare County educator and former superintendent of the Tulare Joint Union High School District, will fill Hillman’s position on the Tulare County Board of Education. Rodriguez will be sworn-in as a trustee at the board meeting December 12.

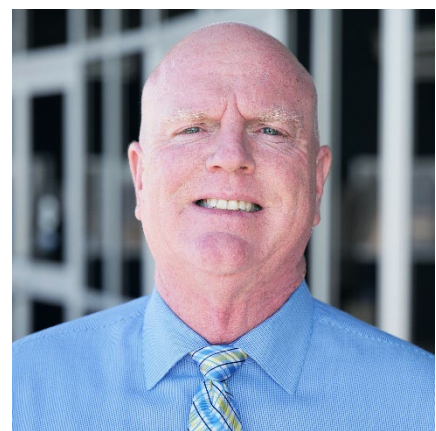
Photo above:

Tulare County Board of Education trustee Pat Hillman poses with superintendents past and present - former Tulare City School District Superintendent Bill Postlewaite (left), former Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak (second from left) and Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire (right).

Bill Davis joins TCOE’s College and Career

Today, TCOE welcomed Bill Davis as the new administrator for the College and Career department. Davis most recently served as the principal of Visalia Technical Early College High School and has extensive experience in the college and career field.

Davis has worked in College and Career Readiness and Career Technical Education (CTE) for over 27 years. He has served as an agriculture teacher, FFA advisor, site assistant principal, principal, and director of Career Technical Education for Visalia Unified School District. He participated in, and helped direct, the work of the original Tulare Kings Linked Learning Consortium and was instrumental in the development of the new Tulare Kings College and Career Collaborative. He has experience at both the secondary and post-secondary levels and



has worked throughout the county and state promoting CTE, work-based learning, and early college transitions and initiatives.

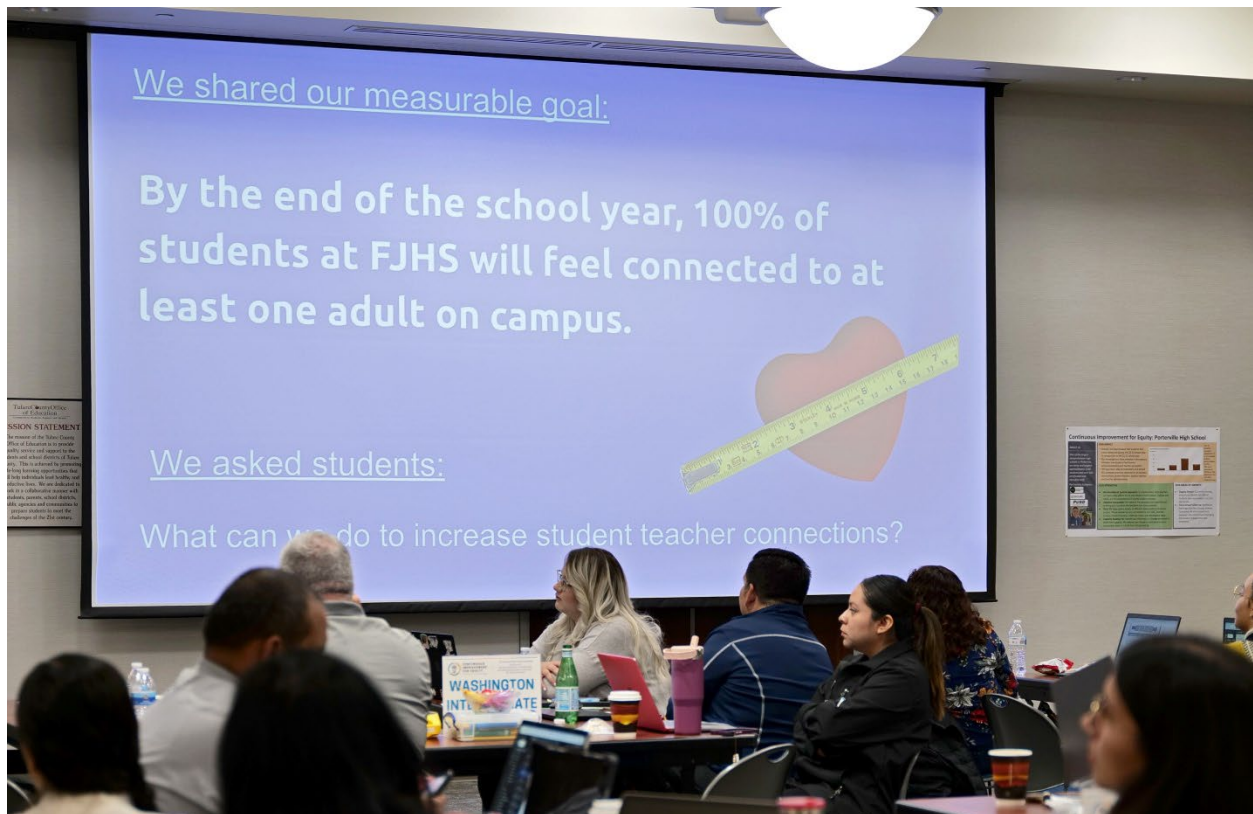
For more information about College and Career and their upcoming events, visit tcoe.org/CollegeandCareer.

Continuous Improvement for Equity Network wraps up fall series



On November 10, eight Tulare County school sites gathered for a final celebration of improvement stories as part of their participation in the Continuous Improvement for Equity (CIE) Network. The CIE Network learning community includes teams from Earlimart School District, Alta Vista School District, Washington Intermediate and Sierra Vista Alternative Education High School from Dinuba Unified School District, Farmersville Junior High School and Deep Creek Academy from Farmersville Unified School District, and Monache High School and Porterville High School from Porterville Unified School District.

In the four-session series, district and site leaders engaged in continuous-improvement learning grounded in social emotional learning, multi-tiered systems of support, and equity. School teams were encouraged to include student voice in their improvement methods through student interviews, check-ins, surveys, and focus groups.



During the fall series, participating teams were led by facilitators and coaches from the Tulare County Office of Education. Participants explored improvement science methodology that included building inquiry tools such as empathy interviews and teacher rounding. They drafted theories for improvement that were grounded in baseline data complete with a measurable aim/goal for improved student outcomes. Teams engaged in learning cycles as they planned a small change idea to implement and conducted that change in their school sites. Participants also learned data visualization skills that helped their teams tell their stories to others on the final day.

There were celebrations shared that included an increase in student connectedness to school, increased participation of staff as integral team members of school site climate improvement, increased student attendance, and a reduction of behavior incidents.

Continuous Improvement for Equity will be returning in February for a five-session series as part of the technical assistance offerings from the Tulare County Office of Education and Leadership Support Services department. For more information in joining this opportunity, please contact Lisa Lemus at lisa.lemus@tcoe.org, Jennifer Patterson at jennifer.patterson@tcoe.org, or Justin Paredes at justin.paredes@tcoe.org.

Photos above:

~ On November 10, eight Tulare County school sites came together and shared their results and celebrations of improvement stories as part of their participation in the Continuous Improvement for Equity (CIE) Network

California Friday Night Live Partnership convenes annual Youth Summit with 1,000 in attendance



Earlier this month, the California Friday Night Live Partnership and the California Youth Council hosted the annual Friday Night Live Youth Summit in Anaheim. Over 1,000 youth and their adult allies, representing Friday Night Live (FNL) and Club Live (CL) chapters from 31 counties across the state, attended the conference.

The theme, *INFLUENCE the Future*, was carried through four general sessions and 28 different workshop offerings. The jam-packed agenda featured presentations by Truth Initiative, California Highway Patrol, youth from several FNL chapters, Impact Teen Drivers, and more. Attendees learned about networking and branding; town hall meeting implementation; mental health awareness; alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs prevention; PSA creation; and merchant education.

During Leadership Day, a pre-conference training on Friday, November 4, 250 participants sharpened their skills in public speaking, running chapter meetings, and using social media as a tool to engage local communities.

On Sunday, participants networked and gathered resources from over a dozen exhibitors. Lastly, attendees were given the opportunity to use their newfound knowledge and skills to work with their chapters during planning sessions. Youth spent this time creating plans for project implementation throughout the school year.

“The California Friday Night Live Partnership believes in the power and passion of our youth to positively influence the future,” said Lynne Goodwin, CFNLP administrator.

“This annual conference is a beginning for young people in FNL and CL programs across California, encouraging them to be active leaders and resources in their communities.”

For more information about the California Friday Night Live Partnership, visit: fridaynightlive.org

Watch the recap video here:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/40hvms2xruzsldo/FNL%20Closing%20Video_003%20Final.mp4?dl=0

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