

news galleryweek

August 9, 2023

Employees honored for years of service

Yesterday, employees celebrated service milestones at the second annual TCOE Convocation. Human Resources honored 156 staff members who marked their 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40 years of service to the organization and the children of Tulare County.

“It was great to celebrate together and hear the audience appreciate their coworkers,” said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire. “This year’s honorees have dedicated over 2,500 years as teachers, administrators, and support staff.”

Over 1,400 employees attended the convocation and celebrated their colleagues who reached the following service milestones. The four employees who reached their 35- and 40-year milestones were introduced to the audience by the superintendent who had the following to say:

40 years

Mona Arevalo, Early Childhood Education Program

Mona began her work with the Early Childhood Education Program as a teacher’s aide and then a teacher. She is currently a supervisor in the Child Development Center in Ivanhoe. She is a positive, active leader in the classroom, always guiding staff on what will work better to serve the needs of children and families. Her calm and supportive approach helps the parents of the enrolled children feel accepted and heard. Although Mona seems quiet, she has a delightfully wry sense of humor and is a keen competitor at corn hole! For her many



years of service to the children and families in her centers, Mona has been a tremendous asset in the community she serves.

35 years



Sara Castillo, Special Services, AcCEL Program

Sara Castillo is an instructional assistant for the Special Services AcCEL Program and has worked with a wide variety of age groups. Currently, she is working at the Caldwell Community Based Instruction Classroom, or CBI. Those of you who visit the Redwood Café in the Mooney Building, may recognize her as she helps her students make coffee and serve snacks. She is also very talented at putting art kits together, finding her supplies by thrifting and recycling.

Jodi Fortney, Special Services, AcCEL Program

Jodi Fortney has been a teacher with the Special Services AcCEL Program for 35 years. She started in preschool and has taught every grade, including adults. She is currently at Akers CBI in Visalia, where she teaches job and life skills to her adult students. She is a leader among her peers and a model teacher. During her time with AcCEL, Jodi has won both the Brent Rast Award and the Chinese Cultural Center Educator of the Year Award.

Rosemarie Reyna-Tunin, Special Services, AcCEL Program

Rosemarie Reyna-Tunin has worked as an instructional aide for the AcCEL Program in Tulare. For the last decade, she has served in high school settings, most recently at Tulare Union. Students know that she cares and wants the best for them. Several years

ago, she set-up a phenomenal photo shoot for a student's senior pictures because the family couldn't afford to get them done. This is just one of many stories that show Rosemarie's heart and passion for her work.

Sylvia Walker, Early Childhood Education Program

Sylvia Walker is a supervisor for the Early Childhood Education Program and is known for the impact she makes working with families, children, and staff. She has mentored and guided parents toward their personal goals. She provides staff and parents resources to make life much easier, often working with other community agencies to make those connections happen! Sylvia is compassionate, a good listener, and most of all, caring.

30 Years



Melissa Bachtelle, Early Childhood Education Program, Connections for Quality Care
Angela Benton, Early Childhood Education Program
Susan Campos, Early Childhood Education Program
Elvira Decena, Early Childhood Education Program
Regina Dysart, Early Childhood Education Program
Deanna Martinez-Gonzalez, Early Childhood Education Program
Ronnie Ochoa, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Paul Vivas Jr, Early Childhood Education Program
Katherine Wills, Early Childhood Education Program

25 Years



Stephanie Caldera, Special Services
Todd Canterbury, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Lori Diaz, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Cindy Dinis, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Mike Franco, La Sierra Charter School
Melissa Jensen, Early Childhood Education Program
Francisca Lopez, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Gene Mendes, CHARACTER COUNTS!
Sonia Montemayor, Early Childhood Education Program
Marlene Moreno, Administration
Russell Range, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Maria Rosales, Bright Start Program
Alice Sanders, Early Childhood Education Program
Sandra Tadeo, Early Childhood Education Program
Mee Xiong, Special Services, AcCEL Program

20 Years



Shannon Akers-Cox, Bright Start Program
Margarita Almaraz, Early Childhood Education Program
Nubia Barron, Early Childhood Education Program
Yolanda Bongato, Bright Start Program

Laura Campos, Early Childhood Education Program
Maria Cazarez, Early Childhood Education Program, Connections for Quality Care
Irma Ceja, Early Childhood Education Program
Donna Dillard, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Dewayla Glover, Early Childhood Education Program, Connections for Quality Care
Maria Lara, Internal Business Services
Tambara Lomonaco, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Katherine Lopez, Bright Start Program
Marvin Lopez, California Center on Teaching Careers
Esther Mendez, Early Childhood Education Program
Joe Menezes Jr, Court/Community Schools
Patricia Palomera, Early Childhood Education Program
Macaria Rodriguez, Early Childhood Education Program
Jesse Ruiz, Special Services, Assistive Technology Center
Khamphoui Sriphaseuth, Early Childhood Education Program
Raul Valdez, Early Childhood Education Program
Rohn Wittwer, Court/Community Schools
Ly Yang, Information Systems
Evelia Zavala-Otero, Early Childhood Education Program

15 Years



Mirna Acosta, Early Childhood Education Program
Cynthia Adelman, Early Childhood Education Program
Joe Arevalo, Early Childhood Education Program
Mary Baltazar, Human Resources
Guadalupe Becerra, Early Childhood Education Program
Debbie Betita, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Mindy Bishop, Special Services, Speech & Language Services
Nidia Branson, Early Childhood Education Program, Connections for Quality Care
Jayson Camaquin-Vigil, Special Services, Mild/Moderate Program
Carla Carrillo, Early Childhood Education Program
Maria De Jesus Chavarin, Early Childhood Education Program
Rhonda Day, Early Childhood Education Program

Gema Figueroa, Early Childhood Education Program, Connections for Quality Care
Erin Fox, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Carrie Hampton, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Rhonda Hash, La Sierra Charter School
Megan Hatherley, Special Services
Janet Hernandez, Bright Start Program
Brooke Ikuta-Bennett, Special Services, Mild/Moderate Program
Barbara Leal, New Teacher & Leadership Development
Alyson Leos, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Angelina Magana, Early Childhood Education Program
Maricruz Mendez, Early Childhood Education Program
Janice Negron, Special Services
Guadalupe Ortega, Early Childhood Education Program
Cynthia Ramirez, Early Childhood Education Program
Teresa Rivera, Early Childhood Education Program
Jill Santivanez, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Ramiro Serna, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Cheryl Simmons, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Lilia Tapia, Early Childhood Education Program
Elizabeth Vargas, Bright Start Program
Ana Velasquez, Early Childhood Education Program
Olivia Velasquez, Educational Resource Services
Adelaida (Lila) Villa, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Guadalupe Villa, Special Services, Mild/Moderate Program
Maria Zamora, Special Services, AcCEL Program

10 Years



Maricruz Acevedo, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Guadalupe Aguayo, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Rafael Alvarez, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Alicia Andrade Bedolla, Early Childhood Education Program
Lynea Arreola, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Amber Arriola-Mattson, Special Services, AcCEL Program
David Barrios, Information Systems
Annette Bermudez, SEE & Co.
Maria Cabello, Early Childhood Education Program
Andrea Carney, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Claudia Carter, Early Childhood Education Program
Fabiola Castillo, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Jessica Cervantes, Behavioral Health Services
Nathan Clift, CHOICES After School Program
Michelle Coelho, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Lori Crouse, Behavioral Health Services
Melissa Dimaggio, Special Services, Psychological Services
Michelle Duran, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Diamantina Edwards, Early Childhood Education Program
Sheila Fagundes, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Gloria Garcia, Migrant Education Program
Luz Godinez, Early Childhood Education Program
Justine Gomes, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Matthew Griffiths, Special Services, Mild/Moderate Program
Yolanda Gutierrez De Diaz, Early Childhood Education Program
Alyssa Harlow, Special Services, Speech & Language Services
Jennifer Harris, University Preparatory High School
Sabin Henderson, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Sheila Hernandez, Early Childhood Education Program
Nicole Hirni, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Jose Iniguez, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Christina Jauregui, Behavioral Health Services
Gloria Jennings, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Terran Jones, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Brook Killingsworth, Instructional Services
Norma Lacey, CHOICES After School Program
Donna Landis, Special Services, Mild/Moderate Program
Maria Lemus, Early Childhood Education Program
Patricia Maciel, Early Childhood Education Program
Leticia Maravilla Paniagua, Early Childhood Education Program
Jared Marr, Educational Resource Services
Anita Mendoza, Early Childhood Education Program
Abraham Munoz, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Angelica Navarro, Court/Community Schools
Jamie Nieto, Special Services, AcCEL Program

Grecia Nunez, Early Childhood Education Program
Hugo Orosco, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Deidra Owens, Special Services, Speech & Language Services
Dawn Padilla, Behavioral Health Services
Osualdo Padilla, Migrant Education Program
Shantall Porchia, Migrant Education Program
Elaine Ramirez, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Annabell Robles, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Maria Robles De Mares, Early Childhood Education Program
Mercedes Ruiz, Early Childhood Education Program
Gregory Salcedo, Behavioral Health Services
Sandra Sanchez, Early Childhood Education Program
Jessica Sandoval, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Elizabeth Simpson, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Lisa Thomas, Intervention Resource Classrooms
Sofia Vicente, Early Childhood Education Program
Juanita Villarreal, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Deborah Watts, Internal Business Services
Kim Webb, Educational Resource Services
Zeny Yang Xiong, Bright Start Program
Jonathan Zaino, Special Services, AcCEL Program
Irene Zavala, Special Services, Visually Impaired Services

Note: Not all employees honored are pictured.

Educators encouraged to register to participate in annual Step Up Youth Challenge

The annual Step Up Youth Challenge kicks off next month with an advisor training on September 5 beginning at 4:30 p.m. at the Tulare County Office Education in Visalia. Advisors are encouraged to register for the mandatory training by visiting <http://tulare.k12oms.org/1530-238901>. Details on the Youth Summit, the project development and submission process, and the Red Carpet Awards ceremony will be shared at the advisor training.



Continuing on September 27 and 28, advisors and their student team members will come together for a full-day Youth Summit, which is designed to motivate and inspire them on their journeys to create impactful projects. Middle school teams will attend the September 27 training; high school teams will attend the training on September 28.

Since the 2012-13 school year, the Step Up Youth Challenge has been a vehicle for students to create projects that benefit their schools and communities. Often working alongside community agencies, dozens of middle and high school teams have participated over the years to develop projects that address a wide range of issues – from hunger, bullying, and depression to literacy, fitness, and community beautification.

Through the yearlong process of developing their projects, students learn how to identify community needs, develop a project plan, and implement it in partnership with others. Along the way, they gain real insight into the process of community change. Participating middle and high school teams will compete for grants totaling \$13,000.

The Step Up Youth Challenge is coordinated on behalf of the County of Tulare by TCOE's CHARACTER COUNTS! program. For more information, contact Kelley Petty, program coordinator, at (559) 740-4303 or kelleyp@tcoe.org.

Photo above:

Last year, students from Pleasant View School in Porterville shared their campus project with evaluators – a project which included a toy drive for children in the community.

Chris Meyer promoted to assistant superintendent of District Support Services

Chris Meyer, director of Human Resources and Risk Management, has been named assistant superintendent of District Support Services. Meyer joined the Tulare County Office of Education last year, having previously served as the superintendent of Monson-Sultana Joint Union School District since 2015.

The District Support Services branch includes six departments, primarily serving Tulare County school districts – College and Career Readiness, Educational Resource Services, Leadership Support Services (which includes Services for Education & Employment), Migrant Education, New Teacher & Leadership Development, and Student *Future Ready* Events.



“Chris brings the right balance of elementary and secondary district-level leadership to continue advancing our support of the schools in Tulare County,” said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools.

The 28-year veteran in education has also served as a principal at Dinuba High School and Jefferson Elementary School in Dinuba. At Jefferson, he was also a learning director and academic coach. Meyer began his career in education as a teacher with Lincoln Elementary School in Dinuba.

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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.