

**Tulare County
Office of Education**

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

**news
galleryweek**

April 30, 2025

**Two El Diamante High School students selected as
College Night Scholarship award recipients**



This week, the College Night Scholarship committee announced the two graduating seniors who are receiving its prestigious four-year scholarship. Diego Medina-Gutierrez and Grace Yates – both of El Diamante High School in Visalia – will receive \$1,000

scholarships renewable for up to four years. Medina-Gutierrez and Yates are the 21st and 22nd scholarship recipients.

Diego Medina-Gutierrez has committed to attend Stanford University in the fall as a public policy major. Medina-Gutierrez's academic record is truly outstanding, earning the title of El Diamante High School Class of 2025 Valedictorian. He has also been recognized as a College Board AP Scholar with Distinction in addition to numerous other honors.

Medina-Gutierrez's journey is marked by extensive leadership and a commitment to serving his community. He has held numerous leadership positions, including ASB president, Visalia Unified Board elected student representative, California Scholastic Federation (CSF) president, and Key Club vice president. He is driven by his background and the desire to uplift his community, aspiring to become an immigration attorney. His experience managing family responsibilities has prepared him to be an efficient leader and a voice for his community.

College Night played a significant role in preparing Medina-Gutierrez for his pursuit of higher education. As a first-generation college student, he initially felt lost regarding the application process and his options after high school. Attending College Night in 2023 helped him envision his life as a college student, understand the steps to create a competitive application, research schools, and learn about financial aid. The resources available at College Night showed him that he was on the right track and academically prepared. His participation in the 2024 College Night further helped him narrow down his choices. He credits College Night with enabling him to gain admission into his dream schools.

Grace Yates will attend California State University, Fresno through the Smittcamp Honors College to study biochemistry. Yates is at the top of her class at El Diamante High School. She aspires to become a physician, aiming to serve the Central Valley community. Yates has received academic honors such as being a College Board AP Scholar with Distinction, a PSAT / NMSQT Commended Scholar, and the recipient of the Visalia Unified Achievement Award in Science.

Yates has served as ASB vice president, CSF treasurer, Key Club vice president, and captain of the El Diamante soccer team. Her commitment to her future career is highlighted by her participation in the UCSF Fresno Summer Biomedical Internship and volunteering at Kaweah Health. Yates characterizes herself as being "scrappy and hungry," using these qualities to overcome challenges and achieve goals both in sports and academics.

College Night was instrumental in shaping Yates' college application journey. As she describes, College Night expanded her college search, introducing her to private institutions like California Lutheran University, which she hadn't previously considered. College Night helped her understand what University of California institutions look for in applicants by explaining the 13 factors of comprehensive review. This knowledge allowed her to tailor her UC application, highlighting relevant experiences and strengths, which she credits with her acceptance to seven of the eight UC campuses she applied to. Yates notes that College Night provided her with invaluable opportunities and advice throughout her college application season.

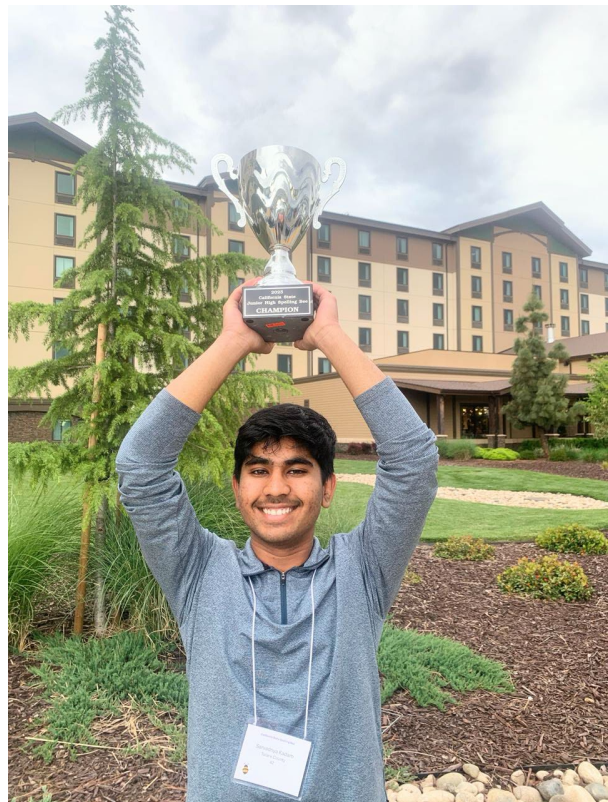
For more information on College Night and the College Night Scholarship, visit tcoe.org/CollegeNight.

Tulare County Spelling Champion Sarvadnya Kadam wins state competition

On Saturday, 89 spelling champions from across the state met in Manteca to determine the winners of the 2025 California State Spelling Bee for both the elementary and junior high divisions.

By late afternoon in the junior high competition, Tulare County's Sarvadnya Kadam had been crowned state champion, beating 43 other seventh- through ninth-grade students. The runners-up were Oliver Halkett, a seventh-grade student from Los Angeles County, and Praneet Aditya Kumaravel, an eighth-grade student from San Joaquin County. Final round spelling words included: *datiscaceae*, *lagniappe*, and *walpurkite*.

Kadam has been the Tulare County Spelling Champion for the past three years. He will compete at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in the Washington, D.C. area May 27-28.



In the state's elementary division (fourth through sixth grade), 45 students competed. The 2025 California State Elementary Spelling Bee champion is Ryan Sekera, a fifth-grade student from Placer County. The runner-up is Akshara Thummala, a fifth-grade student from Contra Costa County. Final round spelling words included: rhizome, tintinnabulation, and wurtzite.

Photo above:

~ Sarvadnya Kadam poses with his parents after winning the California State Spelling Bee for the middle school division. Kadam is Tulare County's spelling champion. He will compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in the Washington, D.C. area later next month.

New Friday Night Live Club Live chapter making a difference at Los Tules Middle School



The Friday Night Live (FNL) Club Live chapter at Los Tules Middle School in Tulare has been hard at work this year leading a vaping prevention campaign through their

CHOICES After School Program (CASP). Students have created an informative and visually engaging poster highlighting vaping statistics pulled from the California Healthy Kids Survey.

The posters, which are displayed around campus, aim to educate students and promote healthy, smoke-free lifestyles. With facts, statistics, cessation resources, and student-created slogans, the campaign is helping to spread awareness and spark conversations among students. The students felt it was important to bring to light the perception that although it may seem like everyone is vaping, that's not the case.

Friday Night Live chapters are seeing a resurgence in Tulare County. Club Live (CL) is an extension of the Friday Night Live program and is aimed at middle school-age students. CL fosters resiliency through the development of action-oriented chapters that create student-led initiatives. The Los Tules project is part of FNL's statewide effort to empower youth as leaders and positive role models.

If you are interested in starting a Friday Night Live (high school) or Club Live (middle school) chapter at your school site, please reach out to Brittaney Quinonez at brittaney.quinonez@tcoe.org.

Photo above:

~ Members of the FNL Club Live program at Los Tules Middle School in Tulare created vaping awareness campaign for their campus. The campaign was designed to address the perception that vaping is more widespread than it is and to encourage students to live healthier lives without vapes.

Reading Revolution crowns elementary champions

On Tuesday, nearly 200 elementary students competed in the annual Reading Revolution event. The students comprised 42 teams from 27 elementary schools throughout the county. The competition was divided into a morning session and an afternoon session.

Students prepared by reading from the same core list of 12 book titles, given to them in August. Teams of up to four answered questions in a variety of formats and with varying levels of difficulty.

Overall winners in the 2025 Reading Revolution competition for elementary schools were:



MORNING COMPETITION

First Place Team: The Reading Rizzlers

Denton Elementary School, Visalia

Second Place Team: The Rockin' Readers

Denton Elementary School, Visalia

Third Place Team: Reading Avengers

Heritage Elementary School, Tulare



AFTERNOON COMPETITION

First Place Team: Word Wizards

George McCann Memorial Catholic School of Visalia

Second Place Team: Read or Walk the Plank

Garden Elementary School, Tulare

Third Place Team: United Readers

Sundale Union Elementary School, Tulare

Reading Revolution is a fun competition designed to promote literacy and the joy of reading for students in grades 4-8, regardless of their abilities. The goal of the event is for students to experience a variety of quality literature and nonfiction, while increasing reading comprehension, collaboration, and teamwork.

For complete results, visit tcoe.org/ReadingRevolution/Results.

A Reading Revolution competition for middle school students will be held May 9.

Weekend rain doesn't stop young scientists at annual Science Olympiad



The rain didn't dampen the enthusiasm of hundreds of young scientists competing in the annual Science Olympiad for elementary students.

Students launched rockets and hot air balloons, floated paddle boats, tested the strength of bridges made from pasta noodles, and catapulted gummy bears. In addition, they completed tests on subjects related to architecture, astronomy, biology, geology, and the environment!

In the 2025 Science Olympiad Division A (grades 3-6), the winners were:

1st Place: Oak Grove Elementary School, Visalia (Team 17)

2nd Place: Annie R. Mitchell Elementary School, Visalia (Team 4)

3rd Place: Sundale Union School, Tulare (Team 20)

4th Place: Oak Grove Elementary School, Visalia (Team 14)

5th Place: Hurley Elementary School, Visalia (Team 2)

Migrant Education Program students visit Washington, D.C.



Fifteen migratory students from school districts across Tulare and Kings counties participated in a five-day educational trip to Washington, D.C., in collaboration with Close Up, a civic education program based in D.C.

Students were accompanied by Migrant Education's Student Recruiter Jennifer Esparza and Student Resource Specialist Evelyn Arciniega Leppke.

A major highlight of the trip was participating in a meeting with a representative from the office of Congressman Vince Fong, who serves California's 20th District. During the visit, students engaged in meaningful discussions on agriculture, farmworker rights, education, school safety, and immigration. Many students shared that they felt empowered and proud to represent their homes, cultures, and families in the heart of the nation's capital.

Students also participated in mock trials addressing social issues such as food insecurity, homelessness, immigration, health care, and climate change. They represented the Central Valley with pride and thoughtful insight during this activity. In addition, the trip offered a unique cultural exchange, as students connected with peers from Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. Through these interactions, they were exposed to a wide range of cultures and traditions.

This trip was not only a chance to explore Washington, D.C. and its landmarks and monuments, but also an opportunity for students to grow as informed, confident, and civically engaged young leaders.

Photo above:

~ Migratory students from Tulare and Kings counties pose in front of the U.S. Capitol on their recent visit to Washington, D.C. Students were able to meet with a representative from Congressman Vince Fong's office and engage in civic learning around numerous social issues.

Editor: [Robert Herman](#), Communications Director

Contributors: Nayirah Dosu, Jennifer Fisher, Jaime Burnitzki, Paula Terrill, Juliana Davidian, Brook Killingsworth, Brittaney Quinonez, Anabel González

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