

Harmony Magnet Academy wins Community Design Challenge for the second year in a row



On Tuesday evening, TCOE's College & Career Readiness (CCR) program hosted the final presentations for the Community Design Challenge, where student teams from architecture and engineering CTE pathways showcased affordable housing project proposals aimed at supporting educators.

Ten teams from five different high schools presented comprehensive plans featuring site layouts, financial analyses, and 3D renderings, all addressing the critical issue of educators being priced out of the communities they serve. The participating schools were Oroshi, Redwood (Visalia), Mission Oak (Tulare), Harmony Magnet Academy (Strathmore), and Lindsay high schools.

In first place, and winning \$1,500, was U-Knighted Designs of Harmony Magnet Academy. This was the second year in a row that Harmony won the challenge. M.O. Homes of Mission Oak placed second and won \$1,000. Finishing third and winning \$500 was Redwood's Blue Zone Construction.

This challenge provided students with valuable real-world experience in design, collaboration, financial planning, and presentation skills, offering a meaningful learning opportunity beyond the classroom. CCR extends a huge thank you to the participating judges from Southern California Edison, Bareng Corporation, Mangini Associates Inc., and architecture students from College of the Sequoias.

Community Advisory Committees honor educators, parents, students at annual awards luncheon



Last week, the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), a countywide organization of educators and parents of children with special needs, held its annual awards luncheon. Educators, administrators, parents, and students in school districts throughout the county were honored. Two special annual awards were also given.

The Brent Rast Award is presented annually to one exceptional teacher of students with profound needs. This year, the award went to Alyson Leos, a teacher in the TCOE

AcCEL special day class at Pioneer Middle School in Porterville. Leos was surprised as her administrator Jon Zaino called her up to the podium.

Introducing her to the audience, Zaino praised her for creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. “This is evident in her personalized approaches to teaching as she adapts lessons and provides targeted interventions that meet the unique strengths and challenges of each student,” he said. “One of her most outstanding qualities is her collaboration with parents, colleagues, and administrators to create a comprehensive support system for students. She is proactive in identifying challenges and finding creative solutions, ensuring that students with exceptional needs thrive both academically and socially.”

In discussing her teaching philosophy, Leos said, “I approach teaching with the mindset that every student in my care is like one of my children. I worry about them, I advocate for them, and I want nothing but the best for their future.” She added, “When challenges arise, whether academic or social, I get together with my team of colleagues, parents, staff, and the student to find a solution. A student who feels loved and supported begins to set high expectations for themselves and begins to believe in their potential.”

Leos freely shared her recognition with the instructional aides (IA) that work in her classroom – Lisa Conrad, Mayra Herrera, and Teri Martinez. “My IAs are my equal partners in the classroom. They work tirelessly to help keep our kids engaged, on track, and surrounded by consistent support,” she said.



The second special award given at the CAC luncheon was the Linda Hess Award, which recognizes an exceptional parent of a child with exceptional needs. The award was created in 2007. This year's honoree was Gloria Zamora, a parent in the Earlimart School District. Gloria was honored for her commitment to supporting her child's education and her active involvement at school.

Photos above:

~ Alyson Leos is pictured in her classroom at Pioneer Middle School in Porterville. She is a teacher in the AcCEL Program and the recipient of the 2025 Brent Rast Award.

~ Gloria Zamora is pictured receiving the 2025 Linda Hess Award, which is given annually to one outstanding parent of a child with exceptional needs.

Tulare County high schools take half of Slick Rock Student Film Festival Awards



Of the 18 awards given Friday night to the participants in the Slick Rock Student Film Festival, filmmakers from El Diamante, Monache, and Redwood high schools won eight category awards and the Best of Show award. Filmmakers from Fresno County won six category awards and the Best of Show Award for middle school, while students from Madera County and Kings County won one category award each.

In this year's festival, students from 47 Central Valley schools submitted over 400 films.

BEST OF SHOW

Middle School Best of Show

Clark Intermediate School (Clovis), "Captain Anti-Drugs"

High School Best of Show

Redwood High School (Visalia), "The Orbit"

CATEGORY WINNERS

Opioids/Fentanyl and Marijuana Prevention Public Service Announcement (PSA)

Clark Intermediate School (Clovis), "Captain Anti-Drugs"

Nutrition and Physical Activity PSA

Reyburn Intermediate School (Clovis), "Health and Nutrition"

Suicide Prevention PSA

Monache High School (Porterville), "Help a Friend"

Middle School General PSA

Hillside Elementary School (Madera), "Our Generation"

Middle School General Advertisement

Fairmount K-8 School (Sanger), "Longhorn Feed Commercial"

Middle School Documentary

Fairmount K-8 School (Sanger), "We Feed the World"

Middle School Blockbuster

Clark Intermediate School (Clovis), "Mind Games"

Sports Highlights

Redwood High School (Visalia), "Redwood Friday Night Lights"

News Broadcast

Redwood High School (Visalia), "Tony's Strength"

High School Documentary

El Diamante High School (Visalia), "Field Workers Fight"

High School General PSA

Redwood High School (Visalia), "Visit Visalia PSA"

High School General Advertisement

El Diamante High School (Visalia), "VTEC"

Music Video – Original

Redwood High School (Visalia), “Melody Gone Wrong”

Music Video – Cover

Central High School (Fresno), “Lejos De Ti”

Animation

Hanford West High School, “Sleepless”

High School Blockbuster

Redwood High School (Visalia), “The Orbit”

Winning films in all categories will be posted to tcoe.org/SlickRock by Friday, May 16.

Slick Rock is generously supported by the Tulare County Suicide Prevention Task Force, ABC30, EECU, Tulare County HHSA Mental Health – Alcohol & Other Drugs Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services (Operation Prevention – Tulare County Prevention Coalition), TCOE’s Project AWARE, TCOE’s Planetarium and Science Center, TCOE’s Theatre Company, and TCOE’s Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Program.

Photos above:

~ Pictured is the team from Redwood High School that created the High School Best of Show film, The Orbit. Members included Jesus Rivera Lopez, Hannah Johnson, Lily Seargeant, Sef Feierbach, and Omar Juarez Panama.

~ Michael Walker of Clark Intermediate School in Clovis created the winning Middle School Best of Show film, Captain Anti-Drugs.

Student-athletes honored at Spring PVWH Downtown Visalia Kiwanis Awards

In partnership with the Downtown Visalia Kiwanis, TCOE’s CHARACTER COUNTS! Program celebrated this spring’s Pursuing Victory with Honor (PVWH) student-athletes yesterday.

The Downtown Visalia Kiwanis recognizes student-athletes, nominated by their coaches, each season for their sportsmanship. The awards included a certificate, patch, and lawn sign that reads "An Athlete of Character Lives Here."



Below is a list of the Pursuing Victory with Honor award winners.

Central Valley Christian High School

Rowyn Atherton – Junior

Rowyn Atherton is a captain on our track team, competing in sprints and relays. She is a determined athlete who always strives to improve. This season, she has made great progress, setting personal records in both the 100m and 200m. Beyond her own achievements, Rowyn consistently puts the team first. When we needed someone for the 4x400 relay — an event outside her comfort zone — she stepped up without hesitation. Rowyn leads by example and is deeply respected by her teammates.

Levi Alvarado – Junior

Levi Alvarado competes in sprints and relays for our track team and was part of our school record-setting 4x400 relay team last season. This year, he serves as a team captain. Despite facing a challenging season where he hasn't achieved the times he hoped for, Levi has remained positive and supportive. He continues to attend practices and meets, encouraging his teammates and leading by example. His perseverance through adversity and his commitment to leadership and sportsmanship have been truly impressive.

El Diamante High School

Ayaan Kendall – Senior

Ayaan Kendall has consistently demonstrated strong leadership throughout her athletic

career. Always among the first to arrive and the last to leave, Ayaan sets the standard for dedication and commitment. She treats her teammates on the track team with kindness and respect, offering encouragement and assistance wherever needed. Her positive attitude, work ethic, and interactions with others make her a standout role model and leader.

Jaden Castillo – Senior

Jaden Castillo has shown tremendous growth both as an athlete and student during his time at El Diamante. He has matured into a respectful, kind, and dedicated young man. At the EYL Championships, his sportsmanship was on full display as he supported and celebrated fellow divers, especially the younger ones. Jaden's enthusiasm for others' successes and his genuine encouragement highlight the character of a true role model. He proves that perseverance and hard work lead to success.

Golden West High School

Hannah Ipsen – Junior

A great swimmer is more than just talented — they are also a great teammate. Hannah Ipsen exemplifies this ideal. She consistently supports and uplifts those around her, inspiring the team with her dedication and positivity. Hannah shares advice with less experienced swimmers and fosters a collaborative, encouraging environment. Her ability to communicate, listen, and help build trust among her teammates makes her an invaluable part of our team.

Ethan Sannar – Junior

Ethan Sannar has grown both emotionally and physically through swimming. He continues to build strength, endurance, and technique through consistent training. At the same time, he develops patience, discipline, and resilience in the face of success and setbacks. Ethan's confidence has grown and he supports his teammates with a positive mindset. His journey in the pool reflects growth not just as an athlete, but as a person who pushes his limits and believes in himself.

Mt. Whitney High School

Miley Banks – Senior

Miley Banks has been a strong leader for our track team over the past two seasons. As a senior, she upholds and reinforces the standards of our program. Miley frequently leads small groups, guiding teammates on conduct, behavior, and expectations. Her leadership has positively impacted many of her peers, and her presence will be greatly missed as she moves on to pursue her bright future.

Noah Sanchez – Junior

Noah Sanchez is one of the kindest and most caring individuals on our track team. He is always positive and eager to help wherever needed. At meets and practices, he consistently cheers for his teammates and even encourages athletes from other schools. He's the one giving fist bumps to every finisher and picking up trash around

the stadium without being asked. Noah's actions reflect his character, and we are fortunate to have him for another season.

Redwood High School

Reagan King – Senior

Reagan King is more than just a standout athlete — she exemplifies sportsmanship, integrity, and character. As a senior and four-year varsity softball player, Reagan leads with heart and determination. She consistently upholds the values of CHARACTER COUNTS! on and off the field. Pitching is one of the most demanding positions, but Reagan handles wins and losses with grace. It has been a privilege to coach her and witness her growth. Reagan will continue her softball career at Dickinson State University in North Dakota, where she is sure to remain a pillar of character both on and off the field.

Jaxon Griffiths – Senior

It is an honor to recognize Jaxon Griffiths as one of Redwood High School's finest student-athletes. With a 3.71 GPA, Jaxon excels academically while also leading on the baseball field. As a two-time team captain, he exemplifies leadership through hard work, determination, and quiet confidence. His integrity, sportsmanship, and commitment to doing things the right way make him a role model for others. Jaxon is not only an outstanding athlete — he is an exceptional young man.

Twenty-five Tulare County seniors awarded scholarships

The Tulare County Office of Education has assisted the Tulare County School Boards Association (TCSBA) with its annual scholarship program for more than 20 years. Each year, the



association offers scholarships to seniors from Tulare County high schools, including comprehensive, charter, and continuation settings. Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire's office coordinates the distribution of information to Tulare County high schools and the screening process with TCSBA board members. This year, the association was pleased to provide 25 scholarships of \$350 to the following students.

Felipe Arambula
Woodlake Union High School

Ava Arias
Dinuba High School

Jazelle Castillo
J.J. Cairns Continuation High School

Paulina Dominguez-Vela
El Diamante High School

Camila Espinoza
University Preparatory High School

Emily Espinoza
Golden West High School

Abil Gaitan Morales
Visalia Charter Independent Study

Soleil Garay
Porterville High School

Jusselyn German
Summit Collegiate High School

Judith Gomez
Harmony Magnet Academy

Carlos Lara Villa
Granite Hills High School

Garrett Kiester
VTEC High School

Diego Mata
Orosi High School

Devin Miguel
Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning
Center

Bellajah Nunley
Tulare Union High School

Nayeli Prado
Strathmore High School

Seriah Reyna
Exeter Union High School

Iririana Rojas-Galindo
La Sierra Military Academy

Abcde Sanchez
Lindsay High School

Chloe Seals
Redwood High School

Seanna Stirling
Monache High School

Jozaleen Valencia-Haro
Farmersville High School

Julia Van Scyoc
Tulare Western High School

Marea Vidak
Mt. Whitney High School

Katherine Wilson
Mission Oak High School

La Sierra holds Change of Command ceremony for new student leadership



Last week, the staff and students at La Sierra Military Academy (LSMA) conducted a Change of Command ceremony for its cadet commanding officer.

In the formal ceremony, the La Sierra Military Academy Battalion Commander position transitioned from Cadet Second Lieutenant Valeria Correa to Cadet Captain Turner Olsen. Correa will graduate this year and enter the United States Air Force. Olsen will serve as the school's highest-ranking student for the 2025-26 year.

In preparation for the 2025-26 school year, La Sierra will continue holding a series of information meetings for parents and students interested in enrolling. Next week, an information meeting will be held May 19 at 5:00 p.m. Beginning June 2 and continuing through July 7, the staff will hold information meetings each Monday at 4:00 p.m. La Sierra is located at 1735 East Houston Avenue in Visalia.

An enrollment application can be picked up in person or can be accessed on the school website at www.tcoe.org/LaSierra.

For more information, call (559) 733-6963.

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

Contributors: Nayirah Dosu, Jennifer Fisher, Jaime Burnitzki, Grecia Pacheco, Kathleen Green-Martins, Kelley Petty, Dr. Jose Bedolla

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