

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces: 2004 *Excellence in Education Award* Winners Announced

*Tulare County Administrator/Manager of the Year Tulare County Teacher of the Year
Tulare County School Employee of the Year*

A selection committee of 15 Tulare County business, community and educational leaders met recently to choose the Tulare County Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year and School Employee of the Year for 2004. The *Excellence in Education Awards*, now in celebrating its tenth year, recognizes “the best of the best” in the three categories.

“I look forward to this program every year,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “There is considerable competition in each category, which confirms for me and the rest of the selection committee the quality of administrators, teachers and school employees we have throughout the county,” concludes Vidak. The Tulare County Office of Education and County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak are pleased to announce the following *Excellence in Education Award* winners:

- more -

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Page 2

Tulare County Administrator/Manager of the Year – Robert Perez

The Tulare County Administrator/Manager Award for 2004 goes to Robert “Bob” Perez, director of the Porterville Adult School. A graduate of the Porterville school system and a thirty-year veteran with the Porterville Unified School District, Bob Perez was honored for his work in gang awareness, counseling, vocational education and community relations. Colleagues note that Mr. Perez works from the conviction that the public school system is inseparable from the community. He was praised for working closely with parents and other community organizations, even making daily home visits regarding students who may be headed toward gang membership.

Porterville Unified’s Superintendent John Snavely, Ed.D. says of Perez: “Bob is one of those special individuals who has unlimited compassion for every student and will not give up on a student...until they have succeed to their fullest potential.” Mr. Perez has been recognized as the California Career Conference Innovator of the Year and was the recipient of the Leigh Robinson Vocational Education Award for his creation of the Career Center at Porterville High School. Perez was also named Adult Ed Administrator of the Year in 1997 by the Tulare County Region XI Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and Man of the Year in 1990 by the Porterville Chamber of Commerce.

- more -

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

page 3

2004 Tulare County Teacher of the Year – Nancy Machado

Eighth-grade language arts teacher Nancy Machado from Mulcahy Middle School in Tulare has been chosen 2004 Tulare County Teacher of the Year. Ms. Machado is also Mulcahy's Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program Coordinator.

As AVID Instructor, she encourages students to pursue their dreams through a college preparatory program built upon three components: rigorous academic instruction, tutorial support, and motivational activities. Nominators acknowledged that through her efforts Mulcahy Middle School received recognition from the national AVID program as a school "Certified with Distinction" in February 2004. Her participation and success in the AVID program made her a natural selection to the leadership team formed when Mulcahy received the California State GEAR UP Grant (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) – a grant designed to create a college-going culture in the school community. Elaine Sotiropulos, Regional Consultant for Central Valley AVID adds, "The AVID program advocates access for all students to most rigorous curriculum. Nancy Machado has not only supported her AVID students in this effort, but through her leadership, she has raised the bar for all of her students."

2004 School Employee of the Year – Belen Gomez

For 24 years, School Employee of the Year Belen Gomez has served the students, teachers and

- more -

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Page 4

administrators of Woodlake Valley Middle School as an Attendance/Health Clerk. Nominators admired her extraordinary dedication to the school district, where she has worked for 36 years, and to the Woodlake community. Ms. Gomez is responsible for attendance accounting, School Attendance Review Board (SARB) referrals, Independent Study contracts, health referrals and coordination of school health with the district nurse. Prior to her work as Attendance/Health Clerk, she worked as a Migrant Education tutor and a classroom aide.

Nominators praised Gomez for her compassion, citing many examples of her initiative to drop off homework at absent students' houses, or to make a home visit explaining services that students may need when parents don't have telephones. She also helped coordinate a dental clinic, contacting underinsured parents to explain the importance of the service and to help with paperwork. She routinely serves as a Spanish/English translator during parent/teacher conferences. Woodlake Valley Middle School Principal David East reports, "Often when talking about Woodlake Schools with alumni, former students will ask, "How is Mrs. Gomez?" She is fondly remembered and seen as a pillar of the school's staff."

Belen is also an active member of the Woodlake community. She currently serves on the City Council and has served as a fundraiser for the YMCA and the March of Dimes.

- more -

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Page 5

Summary

“We wish to thank our longstanding partners in the Excellence in Education employee recognition program, the Educational Employee Credit Union, its President/CEO Bruce Barnett, and board of directors,” says Jim Vidak. “I’m proud that for ten years we have been able to bring some recognition to the talented men and women who devote their lives to educating children and young adults in Tulare County.”

Award recipients and finalists will be honored at a recognition breakfast beginning at 7:30 am on October 13, 2004 at the Visalia Convention Center. For more information, contact Darlynn Billingsley at 733-6302 or visit our website at www.tcoe.org.

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