

# 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: Tom Byars Named Program Manager for CHOICES**

*Visalia:* Tom Byars, former superintendent of Sunnyside Union Elementary School District in Strathmore, has been named program manager for CHOICES, the prevention and youth development program in the Instructional Services Division of the Tulare County Office of Education. CHOICES is home to programs such as Friday Night Live!, Reconnecting Youth, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities, Tobacco Use Prevention Education and the Region Seven After-School Programs. “We are delighted to have Tom join our team,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “As a school teacher and administrator, he has both benefited from and helped shape several of the prevention programs offered by CHOICES.” Mr. Byars served as superintendent of Sunnyside Union Elementary since 1994. In 1998, he was involved in the formation of the Gang Reduction Intervention Program (GRIP) for his district. The program, administered by the CHOICES program in several school districts, was funded by the California Department of Education for two years.

Mr. Byars holds degrees in education, criminology and correctional work administration. “I have always been interested in the type of work that the CHOICES program does,” he says. “Even as a teacher, my focus has been on helping young people make the best choices for a productive life.”

Byars adds: “The CHOICES program is a valuable resource not only for teachers, but for our

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communities as well,” he concludes. “My goal is to see that our schools are taking full advantage of our services and that Tulare County students have the life skills needed to become healthy adults.”

For more information, contact Robert Herman at 559/733-6606.

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