

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

June 3, 2009

## **For Immediate Release**

Contact: Robert Herman  
Public Information Officer  
(559) 733-6606 – office  
(559) 303-8568 – cell

### **Tulare County Office of Education Announces: Countywide *Excellence in Education* Winners Announced Teacher of the Year, School Employee of the Year and Administrator/Manager of the Year Named**

A selection committee of 15 Tulare County business 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 2009. The *Excellence in Education* Awards recognition program, now celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> year, honors “the best of the best” in three educational categories - administrator/manager, teacher and school employee. A total of 33 nominations were received this year from Tulare County school districts and the office of education. Each nomination is reviewed and scored individually by every member of the selection committee.

“The winners are people who work collaboratively to ensure every student’s success academically and socially,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “Their dedication extends to the student’s family and the community.”

The Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak is pleased to announce the following *Excellence in Education* Award winners:

- more -

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

Page 2

## *Administrator of the Year*

### **Dave Tonini, Principal, Green Acres Middle School, Visalia Unified School District**

Dave Tonini's mantra is "Work hard, get involved and do the right thing." These words describe his personal and professional core values. As principal of Green Acres Middle School in Visalia, Dave promotes a safe, effective learning environment where students can belong and be actively involved in all aspects of learning. Under his leadership, the school has the highest Academic Performance Index of any middle school in the county. He says, "Leadership is never about *me* getting it done, it is about *we* getting it done. The work we do is all about student success, character development and academic achievement."

## *Teacher of the Year*

### **Michael Young, Teacher, Tulare Western High School, Tulare Joint Union High School District**

Michael Young is an engaging science teacher at Tulare Western High School whose enthusiasm for his subject is contagious. He further devotes himself to the students at Tulare Western through coaching cross-country and track. Mr. Young has found that his position as an athletic coach is invaluable to his classroom teaching. He believes that some of the most important lessons are not just the wonders of biology or how to run a fast mile, but that working hard to achieve a goal can be the most rewarding thing one can ever do. An alumni of Tulare Western who benefited from Mr. Young's superior teaching and coaching skills described him as having the outstanding ability to connect with virtually everyone.

- more -

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

Page 3

## *School Employee of the Year*

### **Maria Magallan, Office Manager, Freedom Elementary, Farmersville Unified School District**

Maria Magallan is the office manager for Freedom Elementary School in Farmersville. She maintains an organized and stable environment for students, parents and staff. Her effective communication skills and mild temperament ensure a rational atmosphere in the school office. She is also a California Based English Tutoring instructor, who works to teach English to Spanish-speaking parents. On her own time, she not only teaches parents English, but helps them understand how schools work and the importance of education for them and for their children. She takes every opportunity to impact the lives of students, colleagues, teachers and parents in a positive way.

## **Awards Program**

Award recipients, finalists and nominees will be honored at a recognition breakfast beginning at 7:30 a.m. on October 7, 2009, at the Visalia Convention Center. Event attendees will enjoy a video portraying the work of the overall winners. Special recognition will also be given to the two finalists in each category, including:

### Administrator of the Year

Dr. Larry Dutto, Dean, Academic Services, College of the Sequoias

Michael Henson, Principal, Harmony Magnet Academy (Strathmore), Porterville Unified School District

- more -

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

Page 4

## Teacher of the Year

Diane Cahill, SCICON Lead Teacher, Tulare County Office of Education

Lawrence Owens, Professor, College of the Sequoias

## School Employee of the Year

Barbara Hayes, Account Clerk, Burton School District

Virginia Snyder, Library Assistant, Dinuba Unified School District

“We greatly appreciate the support of our partners in this event – the Educational Employees Credit Union, its President/CEO Beth Dooley, and board of directors,” says Jim Vidak. “Together, we have the privilege of recognizing the many talented men and women who devote their lives to educating children and young adults in Tulare County.”

For more information, contact Christine Antilla, Administrative Assistant, at (559) 733-6302.

# TCOE #

Rel. 40/08