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Bill Cirone op ed column

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Teacher Appreciation Month

By Bill Cirone, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

Public education has always been the glue that binds our citizens together and forms the foundation for our democracy.

As 19th-century educational reformer Horace Mann once said, “Public education is more than the greatest single idea of the republic; it is the bedrock on which our democracy has to stand.”

Our nation was created on the premise of free public education for all. Our founding fathers believed it was the duty of all adults in a community to provide an education for the children.

The premise was that a community is healthiest when its children are well educated so that they can carry on the community’s responsibilities when they are adults. That is every bit the case today as well.

In fact, a secular, non-ideological public education system — available to all — is what separates free nations from others.

May, which is [Teacher Appreciation Month](#), is a perfect time to remind ourselves why public education is so very vital. It is also a time to celebrate and thank the teachers and educators who strive to make every classroom an exciting environment where productive learning can take place and each student is encouraged to grow and develop.

Our teachers, who are our community’s true unsung heroes and heroines, personify our society’s belief that universal public education is key to meeting the challenges of a changing world.

As part of our tribute to teachers, this month the [Santa Barbara County Education Office](#) also announced the 2018 Santa Barbara County Teacher of the Year, Jennifer Cline, a first grade teacher at Oak Valley Elementary School in Buellton.

Cline’s skill, creativity, passion and compassion make her a perfect representative for all the outstanding teachers in Santa Barbara County who foster the well-being of our 67,000 public school students, regardless of ability, social or economic background, race, ethnic origin, or religion.

Her teaching approach is also inspiring. In her own words, “Our classroom community is one where students feel safe to make a mistake, celebrate an accomplishment no matter how small, ask for help, and discuss issues with each other. Students in my classroom know that making mistakes is a huge part of learning. In this classroom mistakes are expected, inspected, and respected.”

Teachers in classrooms throughout the county share Jennifer’s humbleness, passion for the profession, and empathy for students. They deserve to be celebrated and honored.

Later this month, educators from around the county will do just that. At our annual May Education Celebration, an enlightened business community invests in teacher excellence by awarding grants to teachers for innovative curriculum projects. Our business partners recognize that an investment in teachers today pays dividends down the road for our children.

Teacher Appreciation Month is a wonderful time to remember that without teachers there would be no other professions. It’s also a great time to say “thank you” to a teacher. Thank you for all you do on behalf of our children and by extension the future well-being of our nation. You are our heroes.

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