



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent of Schools

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PRESS RELEASE

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Crystal Apple Educator Award recipients

The Santa Barbara County Education Office will recognize a number of outstanding educators at the annual Education Celebration on May 23. This includes honoring the 2019 Santa Barbara Teachers Federal Credit Union Crystal Apple Educator Award recipients. Crystal Apple winners are chosen for their dedication, instructional and motivational skills, ability to challenge and inspire students, and their ability to interact with students, staff, and community members.

“The Santa Barbara Teachers Federal Credit Union is proud to acknowledge the exceptional accomplishments of this year’s Crystal Apple honorees,” said Roy McLaughlin, CEO for the credit union. “This award allows us to highlight the best of the best. It is also an opportunity for us to express our gratitude for our outstanding local educators who nurture, coach, and encourage our students in their personal growth and educational journey,” he said.

“It is truly a privilege to recognize the meaningful contributions of our Crystal Apple award winners,” said Superintendent Susan Salcido. “These special individuals have inspired and motivated students throughout Santa Barbara County and it is our honor to celebrate their exceptional service in our school communities.”

This year’s award winners are listed below along with a highlight from the nominations.

Certificated Support Providers Category

David Ibsen is an adaptive physical education specialist in the Buellton Union School District. He is a “compassionate educator who really cares for all students. Our students always look forward to PE time with him. He has high expectations for his students yet teaches with a sense of humor. He always keeps all needs of his students in mind and differentiates for student success.”

Shauna Juarez is a teacher on special assignment (TOSA) in the Santa Maria-Bonita School District. “‘Extraordinary’ is her middle name! Ms. Juarez is known for her tireless support of over 91 Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers in the district. She believes in what is possible before even seeing it.”

Elementary Teacher Category

Mary Cullen is a fourth-grade and extended day program teacher at Robert Bruce Elementary School in the Santa Maria-Bonita School District. One student remarked, “Ms. Cullen has taught us how to be kind, strong, supportive, and affectionate. She also taught us that if you look at something negative from another perspective, it could be positive. We will never forget our incredible teacher, the experiences we learned from, and the example she set for us.”

Becki Gonzales is a third-grade teacher at Cold Spring School in the Cold Spring School District. According to her colleagues, her genuine desire is to ensure all children not only meet the required standards but exceed the standards. One teacher said, “Her unbending ‘I can do’ attitude, determination, and commitment make it possible for all of her students to excel. She has a tenacity to empower and strengthen every student that is unsurpassed by any teacher I have observed throughout my child’s education.”

Secondary Teacher Category

Elise Unruh teaches a variety of theater arts and music classes at both Carpinteria High and Junior High schools in the Carpinteria Unified School District. A former student noted, “The arts are an outlet to learn and practice emotional intelligence and explore humanity, a factor at the core of this teacher’s approach. This real-world practitioner did what we should all aspire to and shared her knowledge and love of the arts to nurture useful creativity. She is a true gem.”

Peggy Kelly teaches a variety of Grade 12 English and Introduction to Education classes at Santa Ynez Valley Union High School in the Santa Ynez Valley Union High School District. Her nominator, a former student said, “She always pushed us to our full potential and made writing fun and easy to learn. Throughout my high school experience, I haven’t found a teacher as understanding, inclusive, and loving.”

Classified Employee Category

Theresa Bruhn of Santa Ynez School in the College School District wears many hats as a first-grade classroom aide, yard duty aide, office aide, Spanish interpreter, ELD instructional aide. One teacher noted, “She is truly a ‘Jill of all Trades.’ I have seen her assist our first-grade teacher as an aide, co-secretary the office, help with lunch duty, and work as a Spanish interpreter, every single day, always with a smile on her face. Her attitude is contagious, and it isn’t possible to have a bad day around her.”

Naomi Sanchez is a Teaching Assistant at Los Robles High School at the Los Prietos Boys Camp. One student’s comments really sum up her impact. He said, “How do you thank a person who is giving you a future? ... Many of us have quit caring and are masters at getting kicked out of class, but she never gives up on us, no matter how difficult we can be ... She cares and really listens to our concerns. Then slowly we begin to try. Then we begin to learn and a new world opens up. You start to feel smart. Then we begin to believe, a little and then ... high school graduation. I am the first one in my family to achieve this ... She is our unsung hero!”

Administrator Category

Hans Rheinschild is the principal of two schools — Oak Valley Elementary and Jonata Middle schools in the Buellton Union School District. A parent commented on Mr. Rheinschild's response after the devastating fires and mudslides closed school. She said, "When we were able to return back to school during our morning announcements, this is what filled the school airways ... *Here Comes The Sun by The Beatles!* ... What proceeded after the song was this man uplifting his students, telling them that he understands what they have been through, and that together we will all get through it."

Dr. Margaret Saleh is the Deputy Superintendent, Pupil Services for the Goleta Union School District. Following a tragic community event, one colleague said, "She was continuously on-call, attended to those in need (despite her own needs), reached out to the community, and helped employees get to work ... she has coordinated memorials for students, attended celebrations of life, and has served as a great comfort to families and employees. With her guidance and visible compassion for children, as a district, we not only felt confident following Dr. Saleh's lead during a time of crisis, but also thankful for her leadership and care."

All of the award recipients will be honored at the Santa Barbara County Education Celebration on May 23 from 5-7 p.m. at the Santa Ynez Valley Marriott in Buellton.

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