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December 11, 2023



Fresno Unified School District

WE ARE FRESNO UNIFIED *ACHIEVING our GREATEST Potential!*
A Publication of the Fresno Unified School District



Photo of the Week



Kobie Da Wiz Storytelling Assembly at Pyle Elementary School (See more great Fresno Unified photos on our [Flickr](#))

Dates to Know

December 13 at 5:30 p.m.

[Board of Education](#)

December 18-January 5

Winter Break

Video of the Week



[Adult Transition Program/Fresno City College Showcase](#)

Greetings!

Welcome to Community Zone, an e-newsletter from the Fresno Unified School District featuring news of the district and schools. [Sign up](#) to receive this newsletter every two weeks. Questions? Contact Communications@fresnounified.org.

Celebrating Our Employees, Schools and Students

Teacher and Administrator are Among Top in County

Our two finalists for Fresno County Educator of the Year Awards both took home honors from the ceremony November 30 at the Saroyan Theatre. Emmelin Herrera, a teacher at Herrera Elementary School, was named Teacher of the Year and Tumani Heights, a manager who oversees Project ACCESS, won the Barnett Award for service to the community. Emmelin and Tumani were Fresno Unified Excellence in Education winners for 2023.

Parent University Honored with Golden Bell Award

A huge congratulations to Parent University on clinching the California School Boards Association (CSBA) Golden Bell Award in the Family/Student/Community Engagement category. They were honored at the CSBA conference in San Francisco on November 30.

Kings Canyon Music Teacher Performs with Band Directors Band

Claudia Andrea Tarvin (Sosa) from Kings Canyon Middle School was selected to perform with the [Band Directors Marching Band](#) in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York. The band, which included more than 400 band directors, was created to recognize the dedication and accomplishments of band directors and music educators from across the country.

Latest Edition of 'Faces of Fresno Unified' Magazine is Here

Have you checked out the fall edition of the ["Faces of Fresno Unified"](#) digital magazine? The latest edition features interesting and exemplary students, staff and alumni of Fresno Unified and highlights the Every Child is a Reader initiative. In this edition, read about:

- Tamika Tatum, a first-grade teacher who is helping shape a new literacy plan designed to ensure all students are reading by the end of first grade.
- Broadway star Audra McDonald, who credits Roosevelt High School with helping launch her fabulous career.

- Fresno Adult School counselor Cornell Cotton, who learned from his own circuitous educational path what it takes to help adult learners find their purpose.
- Germán Cervantes, who arrived at Fresno High School not knowing English, but graduated as a valedictorian, earned multiple degrees and honors from Fresno State and is now a college instructor.
- Amelie Brittsan, a student at Roosevelt High School taking full advantage of the variety of music classes and opportunities the arts-focused campus offers.

Check out the Latest Edition of the "Faces of Fresno Unified" Magazine [Here](#)

McLane Hmong Dancers Perform at State Conference

McLane High School's Hmong Dance Club, led by home school liaison Ka Yang, performed November 30 at the California School Boards Association conference in San Francisco. They got to meet Tony Thurmond, state superintendent of public instruction.

Vang Pao and Cooper Students Recognize Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

Kindergarten and transitional kindergarten students at Vang Pao Elementary School celebrated [Ruby Bridges Walk To School Day](#) on November 14. Students were challenged to learn about this significant event through shared research and dialogue and then honored the historic steps Ruby Bridges took in 1960 and celebrated her bravery attending an all-white school.

Students at Cooper Academy also honored Ruby Bridges with a walk around their school and nearby Wilson Elementary School on November 14.

[Vang Pao Ruby Bridges Walk Video](#)

[Ruby Bridges Walk at Cooper Video](#)

Roosevelt Region School Psychologists Honor Students

During the recent National School Psychologist Week, Roosevelt region school psychologists wanted to do something to highlight students. They collectively chose to recognize students within their region for the Student POWER Awards, sponsored by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The Student POWER Award program seeks to highlight those students who, through their own efforts and with the support of others in the school community, make an exceptional difference in their own lives by achieving personal goals. The Student POWER Award program is part of NASP's ongoing effort to help school psychologists promote children's success in school and life, to help colleagues and parents redefine student success and to highlight students' exceptional efforts and individual achievements. It is grounded in the belief that emphasizing the positive, even in the face of adversity, is essential to achieving one's best in school and life.

[Roosevelt Region Letter Recognizing Students](#)

Aynesworth Hosts Family Literacy Night

Aynesworth Elementary School hosted family literacy night on November 14, with teachers hosting stations for parents. Participants learned about how to choose the right book, high-frequency words, Wonders and Wonders online, AR and ELD.

McLane Cadets Visit Army National Guard, Volunteer over the Break

During their Thanksgiving break, the McLane High School Junior ROTC cadets visited the Army National Guard 1106th TASMG Aviation Unit. The cadets learned about the operational aspects of the unit, including the diverse roles instrumental in the functioning of aircraft and the overall aviation operations. Their JROTC teacher is Jeronimo Valdez Jr.

The cadets also demonstrated their commitment to community service by volunteering for the Walk of Honor event at the Fresno Veterans Administration hospital on November 18. Their responsibilities included arranging chairs and tables and helping to serve meals to veterans and guests.

Duncan Teacher Creates Soft Skills Workbook

Duncan Polytechnical High School biology teacher Kati Begen has created a soft skills workbook for underachieving freshmen and says students completing the workbook have increased their GPAs. Kati is using the workbook, "The Freshman Survival Guide," as part of her doctoral dissertation, "Analyzing the effectiveness of soft skill development for underachieving high school freshmen."

CART Students Create Project to Help Youth in Foster Care

A team of students from the [Center for Advanced Research and Technology](#) is working on a Kare4kids project to increase awareness of the financial support for higher education available to foster youth. The students, from the Law & Policy pathway at CART, have created an infographic with startling statistics about how many foster youth graduate and pursue higher education and a QR code to scholarships, grants and resources for foster youth. The team's goal is to increase opportunities for foster youth and decrease the number who become homeless or incarcerated. CART is a half-day program for students from the Fresno and Clovis school districts.

[Kare4kids Info Graphic](#)

Hoover High School Counselor is a Published Author

Greg Boden, a high school counselor at Hoover High School and a former English teacher at McLane High School, has published his first book, "[Stormbringer: The Predator's Stone](#)," through Bushel & Peck Books. Congrats, Greg! Greg spoke at a meeting of the district's teacher librarians and library technicians, and he held a book signing at the American Library Association Conference in Chicago in June.

Webster and Herrera Teachers Recognized as Educators of the Week

Lourdes Gonzalez, a fifth-grade teacher at Webster Elementary School, and Dolores Ayala, a first-grade teacher at Herrera Elementary School, were recognized recently as KSEE's Educators of the Week. They were surprised in their classrooms with \$124 checks for GW School Supply and will be recognized with other winners at the end of the school year. Congrats, Lourdes and Dolores!

[Lourdes Gonzalez Educator of Week Segment](#)

[Educator of the Week Segment Featuring Dolores Ayala](#)

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist Honored by Fresno State

Amber Haydock, a deaf and hard of hearing teacher at Powers-Ginsburg Elementary School,

was honored as a [Health and Human Services Hero](#) by Fresno State's [College of Health and Human Services](#). Amber was among eight alumni to be recognized November 16 for their contributions to the community.

Students Get Packs of Books for Home Libraries

To support reading over the holiday vacations and help students expand their home libraries, the district and partner Scholastic provided more than 280,000 books to students in pre-school through eighth grade. The latest book giveaway was announced November 17 at Balderas Elementary School. The book distribution also supports the district's new comprehensive literacy plan, Every Child is a Reader. Through the Scholastic book giveaways, more than a million books have been added to students' home libraries. This is the sixth Scholastic book giveaway.

Students receive a pack of five grade-level appropriate, culturally diverse books that are available in English and Spanish. The pack comes with a student literacy skills journal and a "Family Guide to Literacy" to help parents support reading at home.

[Balderas Scholastic Event Video](#)

Golden Heart Customer Service Awards for First Quarter

We have wrapped up our first quarter for the **Superintendent's Golden Heart Customer Service** event. A total of 18 out of 25 schools qualified for the award by receiving more than 100 survey responses with qualifying positivity rate.

Sequoia Middle School had the highest positivity rating out of all 25 schools and will receive the coveted Golden Heart plaque, lunch for the front office staff and will hold the Customer Service Trophy until next quarter's winner is announced.

Golden Heart Awards

The following schools qualified for the Golden Heart Award by receiving 100 or more surveys with a qualifying positivity rating. These schools will be awarded the coveted Golden Heart plaque to be proudly displayed in their office and they will also receive a lunch for their front office staff.

Anthony	Ayer	Birney
Del Mar	Fort Miller	Gibson
Hamilton	Heaton	Holland
Lowell	Malloch	McCardle
Olmos	Rowell	Sequoia
Storey	Tatarian	Vang Pao

Storey Elementary "Soars to Success" with Good Character

Storey Elementary School held their annual Character Counts rally on November 9, with the

theme "Soaring to Success with Good Character." They were lucky enough to have special guest speaker Jodi Jo Mizer from Kiss Country, as well as the Fresno Radio Modelers. Every student received a shirt on behalf of their wonderful PFC. A police helicopter even flew over with a shout-out!

Superintendent Board Remarks from December 6, 2023

- Superintendent Nelson started his remarks celebrating Emmelin Herrera, a teacher at Herrera Elementary, and Tumani Heights, who leads our Project ACCESS department for our homeless and foster care students. He said these two members of our Fresno Unified family were among just three finalists in their categories at the Fresno County Educator of the Year awards on November 30. Emmelin and Tumani were in competition with educators from throughout the county. Emmelin won Teacher of the Year, and Tumani took home the Barnett Award for service to her community.

- Superintendent continued his remarks by sharing his appreciation and gave several shoutouts:

- Congratulations to Parent University for clinching the CSBA Golden Bell Award in the Family/Student/Community Engagement category. We commended their dedication to fostering community connections.

- During Giving Tuesday, our high school regions had a friendly fundraising competition for scholarships. The Foundation for Fresno Unified Schools led this effort, raising \$13,000. Edison was the big winner among the regions.

- Returning to normal these last few weeks since reaching an agreement with our labor partners in the FTA has been a pure joy.

- Our annual coat drive for our students in homeless and foster care situations was a big success. This is led by our Communications and Project ACCESS teams. We had a record year – 13 departments collected 590 sweatshirts. Special Education won the Golden Stapler award for the most coats – 206. For the second time, we also awarded a Golden Paper Clip award to the department with the most creative collection box. Again, Special Education took home the trophy.

- Thank you for all the food and clothing collecting going on at our schools, which is teaching our students about caring for their community – Eaton, Gibson, Kirk and Slater are just a few of our schools that have projects going to help others.

- Next, Superintendent announced this Saturday, Fresno Unified's 11th FUEl tournament kicks off at 8 a.m. at Sunnyside High School. Twenty-three high school and 23 middle school teams will be competing.

- Superintendent also announced Saturday, December 16, the Fresno State women's basketball team is offering free admission for Fresno Unified staff and up to three family members to their

game against Sacramento State. Tipoff is at 2 p.m. at the Save Mart Center.

- Superintendent requested a moment to address an issue that has come up regarding our health insurance coverage. Over the last few years, Fresno Unified has transitioned to a new insurance carrier for both active employees and retirees. In the last month we have received reports to our Benefits Office of issues involving coverage by doctors' offices and hospitals even though these services are in fact covered by our plan. We are actively working with Aetna, our new provider, to address these issues in live time, but if you experience any problems or have any questions about your coverage, please call our Benefits Office at 457-3520.

- Superintendent closed by reminding everyone to follow our social media platforms, where they will find highlights including Slater Elementary, Addams Elementary and our [McLane Hmong Dance Club](#), which performed in front of 3,500 education leaders at the California School Boards Association in San Francisco last week. Also, our fall edition of our digital magazine, "[Faces of Fresno Unified](#)," is online and full of great reads about our staff and students.

[View Full Board Meeting Recap](#)

News from our District

Take the Academic Calendar Survey

The 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic calendar survey is available through December 19 on our district homepage with two options from which to vote. Thank you for your calendar feedback!

[Take the Calendar Survey in English](#)

[Take the Calendar Survey in Spanish](#)

[Take the Calendar Survey in Hmong](#)

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