Gala event to honor Teachers of the Year

Local educators and community leaders will applaud the professional excellence of Santa Clara County’s 31 Teachers of the Year later this month at the 42nd annual Teacher Recognition Celebration.

The group will be honored at 7 p.m. Sept. 27 at the Heritage Theatre in Campbell.

This year’s recipients of the most prestigious local teaching award include public school teachers of nearly every grade and subject matter. School districts selected their honorees based on each teacher’s dedication to students, classroom skill and commitment to life-long learning.

Presented by the Santa Clara County Office of Education, the recognition ceremony is the oldest and largest of its kind in California. County Superintendent of Schools Charles Weis, Ph.D. and Jessica Aguirre, NBC Bay Area News anchor, will co-host the gala celebration.

The event is sponsored by various community partners, including National Semiconductor and the Santa Clara County Federal Credit Union.

Visit the Teacher Recognition Celebration website to learn more about the tradition’s history, as well as to view video and photographs of past ceremonies.

County students excel statewide

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From the desk of Charles Weis, Ph.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

Later this month, I will have the honor of participating in one of my favorite events of the year: the Santa Clara County Teacher Recognition Celebration, a 42-year tradition of honoring the region’s very best teachers.

The theme of this year’s event -- using a phrase we’re borrowing from Pauline Lowe, who was instrumental in originating our Teacher Recognition tradition -- is “putting teachers on a pedestal.”

For reasons that are hard to fathom, our society does not value teachers as much as some others. Take, for example, the country of Finland. With one of the best educational systems in the world, its students consistently outperform their peers in the
developed world. I believe that a primary reason for this is that its people respect teachers.

That respect gives Finnish teachers a tremendous amount of professional autonomy. They can do a good job because society has faith in their abilities.

The U.S. educational system however has replaced autonomy with accountability. Our society doesn't trust that teachers have enough skill, passion and personal responsibility to do their jobs. Instead, we watch over a teacher's shoulder and try to tally, list and quantify their work.

We can help our teachers keep the faith by offering support, encouragement and respect. We can give them the tools and resources they need to keep working hard. We can have faith in our teachers' abilities, and faith that their work will pay off.

So please join me, whenever you have the chance, in thanking our teachers for their hard work ... and conveying your faith in them.

Conference helps parents of children with special needs

Parents will learn how to celebrate their children's unique needs and find community resources in the latest session in the COE’s Region V Parent Engagement Conference Series.

With a focus on Special Education, the Oct. 29 conference will feature a variety of workshops with topics ranging from social-emotional health for students to legal advocacy for children with special needs.

Santa Clara County schools have maintained their reputation as top achievers in the state, according to a COE analysis of the 2011 Accountability Progress Report released late last month.

Read the full COE staff analysis here.

Thirteen of the top 25 elementary schools in the state were from Santa Clara County. In fact, two county elementary schools tied for top statewide ranking. Also, half of the top 10 middle schools are in Santa Clara County, as are two of the top 10 high schools.

"We have a lot of reason to be proud of our schools and students," Dr. Weis said. "Our top schools are the envy of California. Everyone associated with those schools should be proud, because it takes an entire community -- students, parents, teachers, administrators, everyone -- for this kind of achievement."

The report also reflects remarkable achievement over time in programs supporting English learners, students with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

Late last month, the state also released 2010-11 California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) results. A COE analysis of those figures showed signs the achievement gap is beginning to narrow, but significant work remains ahead.

September celebrates Hispanic heritage

Sept. 15 marked the beginning of National Hispanic Heritage Month, which recognizes the contributions of Hispanic people, such as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, to American life.

Earlier this month, the Santa Clara County Board of Education approved a resolution in support of the observation, saying Hispanics "have played an important role in the shaping of our nation throughout history. Hispanic Americans can be found at all levels of leadership in this country, from the Supreme Court to the hardworking teachers in our classrooms."

Hispanic students make up the largest segment of students in Santa Clara County public schools. More than 35 percent of the county's approximately quarter-million students are Hispanic.

Their prominent and growing place in schools and the community have been a strong motivating force behind SJ2020, the
The free conference will be held from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the COE, 1290 Ridder Park Drive in San Jose.

Register online by Oct. 21.

Limited childcare is available with prior arrangements; call (408) 453-6542 for more information about child care.

Links of Interest

Pertussis immunization requirements

This online resource guide can help parents, teachers and school districts understand legislation that requires all students entering seventh through 12th grade this coming school year to be immunized against pertussis, an illness more commonly known as whooping cough.

Board recognizes employee, teachers

Here's a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education's actions at its September 7 and 21 meetings:

- Recognized Kirsten Sarginger as the September Employee of the Month
- Honored Paul Myrvold as the County Office's Teacher of the Year, and Lisa Stone as Teacher of the Year for charter schools sponsored by the County Board of Education
- Granted approval to issue a request for proposals from firms to assist in the search for a new county superintendent of schools.

The Board of Education is the elected governing body of the COE. Its seven members serve four-year terms and are elected by different regions of the county. Learn more about the members, and view their meeting schedule, agendas and minutes.

Event aims to spur youth interest in college

Santa Clara County residents are encouraged to share their "Education Journey" with children on Sept. 30, designated as College Day San Jose.

A regional event supported by the COE, the San Jose Mayor's Office, San Jose Unified School District, and other educational and community groups, College Day San Jose 2011 aims to celebrate, inspire and promote college aspirations among local youth.

By sharing personal stories and experiences, adults can help children consider their educational goals, clarify the realities of college, and begin seeing higher learning as a real possibility.

Here are some examples of topics adults might consider sharing: the best and most challenging parts of their education journey; why they did or did not go to college; their current aspirations for ongoing learning; and why it's important for young people to go to college.

Health fair covers bullying, new legislation

Learn how to battle bullying, receive health and dental screenings, and much more at an upcoming San Jose health and safety fair organized by two local elected officials.
Assemblyman Jim Beall and Congressman Mike Honda will also provide updates on new state and federal legislation at the Oct. 2 Health and Safety Fair.

Stop by the First Congregational Church of San Jose at 1980 Hamilton Ave. from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. to get fire safety information and identity theft prevention tips, and view exhibits from local health organizations.

Call (408) 282-8920 to RSVP for the event.

Since 1852, the Santa Clara County Office of Education has provided vital services and resources to the county's 31 K-12 public school districts and more than 250,000 students. The COE strives to provide: advocacy and leadership on education issues, student programs that are models of excellence, and indispensable services to schools and community partners. The COE takes pride in being a premier employer and a champion for children, schools, and community.

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