

Madera County
Excellence in Education
Awards Ceremony
Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence



September 24, 2026
Madera County Superintendent of Schools
Conference Center



Madera County

Excellence in Education

Proudly sponsored by:

Elizabeth J. Dooley

President & CEO

Educational Employees Credit Union

and

Tricia Protzman

Madera County

Superintendent of Schools



Tricia Protzman

Madera County Superintendent of Schools

Welcome to the twentieth annual Excellence in Education celebration. Tonight we honor the educators, administrators, and staff whose commitment and skill have shaped the lives of the children and families in our schools. These are the people who don't just show up and do the job, they bring heart, creativity, and

persistence to it, raising the bar for everyone around them. This year's honorees represent the best of what it means to serve students well. Many of them do their most important work quietly, without recognition, yet the impact they leave behind lasts for years. Tonight, we celebrate their achievements, the inspiration they spark in their students, and the everyday difference they make in classrooms, offices, and hallways across our county.

We're deeply grateful to the Educational Employees Credit Union Board of Directors, President Beth Dooley, and the entire EECU staff for their continued partnership in making this celebration possible. As the sole sponsor of this event, EECU's generosity and commitment to education allow us to gather each year and honor the people who give so much to our students and families.



Elizabeth J. Dooley

President & CEO

Educational Employees Credit Union

It is an honor for EECU to sponsor the prestigious Madera County Excellence in Education Awards program, an annual celebration of the educators and school employees who inspire, guide, and shape the future every day.

Their commitment to excellence deserves our deepest appreciation and we are proud to partner with the Madera County Superintendent of Schools on this special celebration in their honor.

We extend our sincere congratulations to this year's nominees, finalists and winners, whose unwavering dedication to education will make a lasting difference in the lives of their students.

Program

Welcome

Dr. Cecilia A. Massetti
Master of Ceremonies

Flag Salute

National Anthem
Priscilla Huerta

Presentation of Honorees

2025 Honorees
2026 Nominees and Finalists

Greetings

Tricia Protzman
Madera County
Superintendent of Schools

Elizabeth J. Dooley
EECU President & CEO

Presentation of Awards
Dr. Cecilia A. Massetti

School Employee of the Year



Ronda Vaughn
Safety Officer Lead
Madera Unified School District

Ronda dedicated 39 years to public service in education, retiring in June of 2026, as the Safety Officer Lead at Madera South High School. She was a vital part of the campus. Her daily responsibilities ranged from assembling the Evolv metal detector and coordinating officer schedules, to monitoring the district's anonymous StopIt reporting system. She also assisted with student investigations. Beyond standard security procedures, Ronda was highly celebrated for her proactive approach to safety through relationship-building, operating on the core belief that students cannot learn if they do not first feel safe, seen, and valued. To support this vision, Ronda acted as a "Stallion Mentor" for students navigating social-emotional challenges, frequently helping them de-escalate and guiding them back to a productive mindset. She went above and beyond by keeping a fully stocked kitchen area for hungry students and staff and served as the advisor for the Black Student Union (BSU).

She was considered an essential and synergetic leader who seamlessly balanced the firm requirements of school safety with the compassionate touch of a mentor. Whether she was responding to a campus emergency or providing a quiet space for a troubled student, Ronda's unwavering commitment to student success made her a cornerstone of the Madera South campus culture and the whole of Madera Unified.

School Employee Nominees



*Ashly Bragdon
Library Technician
Yosemite Unified
School District*



*Maria Cachu
Operational
Specialist II/Janitor
Bass Lake Joint Union
Elementary School District*



*Mariana Encinias
Student Advocate
Golden Valley Unified
School District*



*Norma Ibarra
Lead Custodian
Chawanakee Unified
School District*

School Employee Nominees



*Yajaira Yaya Jimenez
Lead Campus &
Community Liaison
Chowchilla Union High
School District*



*Claudia Rocha
Fiscal Analyst
Madera County
Superintendent
of Schools*



*Serina Ulrick
Secretary
Chowchilla Elementary
School District*

Administrator of the Year



Catherine Williams
Principal
Bass Lake Joint Union
Elementary School District

Catherine, also known as Cat, brings 26 years of educational experience to her role as Principal of Oakhurst Elementary School (OES). Overseeing a TK-5 campus that hosts the district's foundational Transitional Kindergarten and Special Day Classes (SDC), she embraces the profound opportunity to support a highly vulnerable student population and disrupt generational poverty. She operates on the core belief that wellness and rigor are synergistic, and that a child's cognitive capacity is only fully unlocked when their nervous system is calm and basic needs are met. To realize this vision, Cat has embedded trauma-informed care into daily instruction, transformed traditional discipline into restorative practices, and fiercely protected educator bandwidth to ensure her staff feels equally supported.

Colleagues describe her as a strategic, empathetic "leader of leaders" who approaches challenges with self-reflection and views mistakes as "vital data" for growth. Her unwavering work ethic is evident in everything she does, whether she is advocating at the district level, engaging with parents, or stepping in to cover classrooms. Ultimately, Cat's visionary leadership has transformed OES into a vibrant, inclusive sanctuary where every student feels safe enough to take academic risks and reach their full potential.

Administrator Nominees



Filiberto Camacho
Technology Director
Chawanakee Unified
School District



Melissa Esquivel
Principal
Chowchilla Elementary
School District



Jessica Fairbanks
Principal
Yosemite Unified
School District



Erin Falke
Principal
Madera Unified
School District

Administrator Nominees



*Nicholas Mihall
Assistant Director,
Information Systems &
Technology Support
Madera County
Superintendent of Schools*



*Kelli Reeves
Director of Curriculum,
Instruction, and
Assessment
Golden Valley Unified
School District*



*Brandon Yamasaki
Director of Maintenance
Operations & Transportation
Chowchilla Union High School District*

Teacher of the Year



Sundae Ervin
Teacher
Chowchilla Elementary
School District

Sundae brings 27 years of educational experience to her third-grade classroom at Ronald Reagan Elementary School. She centers her teaching on the belief that "Team Ervin is family." She fosters an inclusive, structured, and compassionate environment where students feel safe to take academic risks and learn from their mistakes. Beyond her own classroom, she is a vital instructional leader who mentors new teachers. Known for supporting the whole child, Sundae frequently goes far beyond standard expectations to connect with her students and their families. She sends personalized notes home, attends students' extracurricular activities, and has even offered personal home visits to ensure students facing medical challenges do not fall behind. Her passion for service also extends into the broader community through the "Block R Club," a program she helped establish to cultivate civic duty and social responsibility. Through this club, she leads students in local park beautification projects, National Public Lands Day cleanups, and visits to local senior facilities.

Sundae is a true example of a leader, mentor, teacher, and advocate for students. She is a pillar of the Chowchilla educational community.

Teacher Nominees



*Weston Borba
Teacher
Chowchilla Union
High School District*



*Chris Coburn
Teacher
Madera County
Superintendent of Schools*



*Heather Mackney
Teacher
Golden Valley
Unified School District*



*Barbara Morales
Teacher
Chawanakee Unified
School District*

Teacher Nominees



Heather Rodriguez
Teacher
Madera Unified
School District



Sylvia Sloas
Teacher
Yosemite Unified
School District



Tawny Tafoya
Teacher
Bass Lake Joint Union
Elementary School District

Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence in Education

*Please enjoy a walk down memory
lane of the previous honorees.*



*Kristi Fisher, Administrator of the Year, Golden Valley Unified School District
Cheri Adams, Employee of the Year, Golden Valley Unified School District
Laurene Hensle, Teacher of the Year, Madera Unified School District*

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*Eric Lowry, Teacher of the Year, Madera Unified School District
Sally Condon, Employee of the Year, Yosemite Unified School District
Steve Raupp, Administrator of the Year, Yosemite Unified School District*

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*Julie Lara, Teacher of the Year, Madera Unified School District
Scott Tefft, Administrator of the Year, Golden Valley Unified School District
Sue Muenster, Employee of the Year, Chawanakee Unified School District*

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*Teresa Dawson, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Union High School District
Paige Sanders, Administrator of the Year, Madera County Office of Education
Jon Corippo, Teacher of the Year, Chawanakee Unified School District*

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*Celso Tovar, Employee of the Year, Madera Unified School District
Danielle Ross, Teacher of the Year, Chowchilla Union High School District
Felipe Piedra, Administrator of the Year, Golden Valley Unified School District*

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*Deborah Brown, Teacher of the Year, Yosemite Unified School District
Chris Imperatrice, Administrator of the Year, Golden Valley Unified School District
Linda Pistorresi, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Union High School District*

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*Andres Del Villar-Juarez, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District
Michele Chenowith, Teacher of the Year, Yosemite Unified School District
Art Davis, Administrator of the Year, Madera County Office of Education*

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*Nicole Lalumiere-Weaving, Teacher of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District
Michael Tamberi, Employee of the Year, Yosemite Unified School District
Gayle Fain, Administrator of the Year, Chawanakee Unified School District*

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*Kuljeet Mann, Administrator of the Year, Golden Valley Unified School District
Steve Browning, Teacher of the Year, Yosemite Unified School District
Kathy Bowerman, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District*

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*Andres Del Villar-Juarez, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District
Michele Chenoweth, Teacher of the Year, Yosemite Unified School District
Art Davis, Administrator of the Year, Madera County Office of Education*

2017



*John Henson, Teacher of the Year, Chowchilla Union High School District
Lawnna Porter, Employee of the Year, Yosemite Unified School District
Michelle Worrell, Administrator of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District*

2018



*Simone Montez, Employee of the Year, Madera Unified School District
Lalo Lopez, Administrator of the Year, Golden Valley Unified School District
Jennifer Vukovich, Teacher of the Year, Madera Unified School District*

2019



*Pedro "Pete" Ramos, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District
Richele Hedberg, Teacher of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary, School District
Oracio Rodriguez, Administrator of the Year, Madera Unified School District*

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*Patricia Sandoval, Administrator of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District
Andrea McCord, Teacher of the Year, Madera Unified School District
Rubi M. Diaz Ramirez, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District*

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*Joshua Lozano, Employee of the Year, Chawanakee Unified School District
Jennifer Bodine, Teacher of the Year, Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District
Steffan John, Administrator of the Year, Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District*

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*Danny Floriano, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Union High School District
Jacklyn Jones, Administrator of the Year, Madera County Superintendent of Schools
Jenny Mejia, Teacher of the Year, Madera County Superintendent of Schools*

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*Kirenjot Grewal, Administrator of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District
Ursula Newcomb, Employee of the Year, Golden Valley Unified School District
Mary Freitas, Teacher of the Year, Chowchilla Union High School District*

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*Leonard Perez, Administrator of the Year, Madera Unified School District
Elizabeth "Libby" Cross, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Union High School District
Megan Williams, Teacher of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District*

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*Kristin McKenna, Administrator of the Year, Madera Unified School District
Danielle Willeke, Employee of the Year, Chowchilla Elementary School District
Kristin Sheehan, Teacher of the Year, Madera Unified School District*

Selection Committee



*Commander Josiah Arnold, Ryan McWherter,
Desiree Martinez, Nancy Prosperi,
Mattie Mendez, & Stell Manfredi*

Planning Committee

*Jennifer Pascale, Coordinator
Armida Aguilar, Autumn Alford, Aimee Beintker,
Ashton Buchnoff, Larisa Durr, Sheri Ramos,
Karen Roget, Elizabeth Soto, Raylene Trent,
Kim Vass, & Kristi Winter*

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Affan Sajid, & Kim Vass*



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Special Thanks

Dr. Cecilia A. Massetti

Carla's Decor

Pardini's

Photography by MJD

Priscilla Huerta

EECU Staff

MCSOS Staff



