

Madera County
Excellence in Education
Awards



September 28, 2023
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

Dr. Cecilia A. Massetti
Madera County Superintendent of Schools



Cecilia A. Massetti, Ed.D.

**Madera County Superintendent of Schools
Welcome as we celebrate seventeen years of
excellence! We award honors to special
individuals who demonstrate their passion
and commitment to children and their
families in our schools. We celebrate the
accomplishments of educators and**

**instructional staff from throughout Madera County who
make a difference daily. We showcase our honorees and the
contributions they have made to enhance the lives of children.
Our honorees are often “unsung heroes”. We shine a light on
their achievements and see how they inspire students.**

**Please join me in expressing appreciation to the Educational
Employees Credit Union Board of Directors, President and
CEO Elizabeth Dooley, and the EECU staff for their
commitment to honor educators and for their impact and
service to our community. EECU is the sole sponsor of this
elegant event. We are fortunate to partner with an
organization whose dedication to our schools is genuine and
whose helping hands are felt in many ways.**



**Elizabeth J. Dooley
President & CEO**

**Educational Employees Credit Union
EECU has proudly sponsored the
Excellence in Education awards program
since 2007. It is with great pleasure that we
join together each year with the Madera
County Superintendent of Schools to honor**

outstanding educators in Madera County.

**Congratulations to all of the nominees, finalists and winners.
The work they do every day deserves to be recognized and
celebrated. They are all very deserving of this special
recognition of their commitment and dedication to their
students, their schools, and their community, and for all they
do to support students and help them realize their academic
potential.**

Program

Welcome
Tricia Protzman
Master of Ceremonies

Flag Salute

National Anthem
Priscilla Huerta

2022 Honorees
2023 Nominees and Finalists

Greetings
Dr. Cecilia A. Massetti
Madera County Superintendent of Schools

Elizabeth J. Dooley
EECU President & CEO

Presentation of Awards
Tricia Protzman

School Employee of the Year



*Ursula Newcomb
EDEP Coordinator
Golden Valley Unified
School District*

Ms. Newcomb has worked as the coordinator for the after-school Extended Day Enrichment Program (EDEP) at Sierra View Elementary for six years and has been a member of the Golden Valley Unified School District family for 20 years. Through her guidance, the program has become more than just a safe place for students to go after school. It is an interactive learning environment that provides a multitude of hands-on experiences such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) activities. Children are eager

to attend, engaged while in the classroom, and sad when they have to go home. Principal Kelli Reeves commented, "Sierra View and the after school program is grateful to have Ursula on our team. She is an exceptional champion for students." Ms. Newcomb connects school and afterschool academics by consulting with teachers to support them and assist students in the program to succeed. She works with parents to make sure struggling students have the support they need at home. She invites parents and community leaders to share information about their professions to help prepare young minds for their own. Ms. Newcomb stated, "I am deeply touched when students are reluctant to go home at the end of the day or when they boast to their peers about how fun the program is. This job is an amazing experience for me. I am inspired by the students every day."

School Employee Nominees



Adriana Corchado
Secretary
Chowchilla
Elementary
School District



Debbie Gaumnitz
Food Service Worker
Chowchilla Union
High School District



Lidia Lewis
Cafeteria Lead
Yosemite Unified
School District



Lisa Lorenzana
Office Tech III
Chawanakee Unified
School District



Kellie Stiles
Health Aide
Madera County
Superintendent of
Schools

Administrator of the Year



*Kirenjot Grewal
School Psychologist
Chowchilla Elementary
School District*

Ms. Grewal has served as the school psychologist and counselor for Chowchilla Elementary School District since August of 2020. She oversees behavioral and academic needs for special and general education students. Her primary role, is to assess and determine eligibility for Special Education students. She helps to develop Behavior Intervention Plans and Individualized Education Plans. She assists the Resource Specialist Program in supporting children with learning disabilities by giving them strategies to help with their educational success. She has helped to promote district wide awareness of Adverse Childhood

Experiences (ACE's) regarding its effects and the components of care that have proven to heal the stress caused by ACE's. She is a member of the Cal-HOPE Social Emotional Community of Practice, which is bringing social emotional curriculum to campuses throughout Madera. Ms. Grewal commented, "Putting the stress aside, the rewards are plentiful and when I see my students succeed, it brings so much joy to my heart... Many of them run toward me to greet me with a hug, sometimes it brings tears to my eyes because this unconditional love is the biggest and most priceless reward." Ms. Grewal's peers noted in their letters of recommendation that she is an advocate for students, a resource for educators and parents, and an asset for the community.

Administrator Nominees



Tara Campanella
*Chief Business
Officer
Bass Lake Joint
Union Elementary
School District*



Jessica Fairbanks
*Human Resources
Director
Chawanakee Unified
School District*



Alex Manriquez
*Manager,
Transportation
Madera County
Superintendent of
Schools*



Albert Pando
*Secondary Counselor
Golden Valley Unified
School District*



Randy Sharp
*Maintenance and
Operations Manager
Yosemite Unified
School District*

Teacher of the Year



Mary Freitas
Teacher
Chowchilla Union High
School District

“Being a high school special education teacher comes with many challenges and responsibilities. Preparing my students for the world after high school is one of the most important,” stated Ms. Freitas who has served as education specialist at Chowchilla Union High School for 18 years. Ms. Freitas has taught English, Civics/Economics, Math, Transition Skills, and Science.

Through it all, Ms. Freitas emphasizes the importance of working well with others, being good citizens, and becoming self-sufficient adults. Her classroom is a place of mutual respect and high expectations. There is no repetition and no boring reading aloud exercises. Instead, students are active participants in the learning process. Ms. Freitas uses different approaches to teaching all the while encouraging her students to believe in themselves and their abilities. Quizzes are games in her classroom. Lessons are student taught. Reading is acting out a scene from a book. At the heart of everything she does is the desire to give her students the best chance at a successful life. She lovingly refers to all of her students as, “my kid.” Like every good parent, she wants the world for her kids. Director of Student and Education Services Dr. Karla Ceballos-Lopez commented, “Mrs. Freitas is a doer... She is passionate about what she does for students... She meets students at their level and sets high expectations for them. She is understanding, but structured. She is experienced, but energetic. She is a leader and a team player.”

Teacher Nominees



***Jennifer Clark**
Teacher
Madera County
Superintendent of
Schools*



***Lana Jackson**
Teacher
Chawanakee
Unified
School District*



***Jeffery Kirby**
Teacher
Yosemite Unified
School District*



***Beverly Schulz**
Teacher
Chowchilla
Elementary
School District*



***Michelle Tessman**
Teacher
Golden Valley
Unified
School District*



***Catherine Williams**
Teacher
Bass Lake Joint Union
Elementary School
District*

Selection Committee



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Karan Long, & Connie Moreno-Peraza*

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Donnie Gray, Dr. Rosemary Morales,
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Special Thanks

Tricia Protzman

Leo Martin, Elegant Occasions

Pardini's

Photography by MJD

Priscilla Huerta

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