

2024

RECOGNITION

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2024

Riverside County Office of Education **Conference Center**

RIVERSIDE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Edwin Gomez, Ed.D.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Division of Governmental Relations

Heather Williams, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent Division of Personnel Services

Program

WELCOME

Jodi McClay, Ed.D.Riverside County Deputy Superintendent of Schools

REMARKS

Edwin Gomez, Ed.D.Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

YEARS OF SERVICE AWARDS

2024 RCOE EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Melissa Reynoso

Division of Student Programs and Services

SITE SUPPORT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Feliciana Rodriguez

Division of Student Programs and Services

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Julie Drogo

Division of Student Programs and Services

CLASSIFIED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR
Nicholas Chitwood, Ed.D.
Division of Educational Services

CERTIFICATED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

Kristin Brooks, Ed.D.

Division of Student Programs and Services

MILO P. JOHNSON AWARD OF DISTINCTION

Steve A. Leland

Division of Administration and Business Services

RETIREE AWARDS

Nears of Service Recipients

10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Erica Aguiar, ORCSS Luis Aguirre, ABS Cynthia Berumen, EES Michael Bremser, SPS Tanya Carter, EES Elizabeth Castillo, SPS Diana Ceja, ES Maria Ceja, SPS Cindy Chavez, SPS Nicole Chavez, SPS Catalina Cifuentes, ES Steven Conley, SPS Lydia Contreras, SPS Jose Cornejo, ABS Frances Davenport, ABS Julie Drogo, SPS Jennifer Early, EES Judy Felix, ABS Leticia Garcia, GR Bhaskar Gopishetty, ABS Tracy Grey, SPS Nancy Henry, SPS Melina Hernandez, SPS Nancy Hernandez, EES Esther Holguin-Mascorro, SPS Carmen Jacobsen, SPS Adriana Loaeza, SPS Markus Maldonado, ABS Denise Mascarella, ABS Christine Matthew, ES Marisa Murrieta-Heang, ABS Jacob Parker, ABS Deborah Parsons, SPS Dashette Perkins, SPS Craig Petinak, ORCSS Nancy Ramirez, EES Angelica Rangel, SPS David Richer, SPS Jennifer Robles, ABS Feliciana Rodriguez, SPS Yadira Rosales, EES Dana Sanchez, SPS Elena Sanchez, LWSS Adriana Sandoval, EES Jasmin Sandoval, SPS Kimberly Sharp Rawls, ORCSS Matthew Snellings, ABS Deborah Sofia, ORCSS Thomas Tackabery, ABS Alexander Towner-Silva, SPS Tauni Vance, ES Leslie Wilmott, LWSS Lee Wygand, SPS

15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Erica Acevedo, SPS Lisa Adkins, SPS Paula Aguilar, EES Paulette Allred, SPS Lydia Bobadilla, SPS Kelley Bowers, SPS Pasqual Chavez, SPS Karen Comstock, SPS Nancy Courter, EES Lindsay Currier, ABS Estibaliz Diaz, SPS Amanda Eddy, SPS Deirdre Edwards, ES Susan Ellis, SPS Claudia Gallegos, SPS Mariana Garcia, EES Yvette Hagerman, SPS Karen Jurgewicz, ES Patricia Kennedy, SPS Amelia Kohler, SPS Lori Kopitch, SPS Ana Lambert, ABS Vickie Marquez, EES Desiree Mead, SPS Liliana Millan, EES David Nill, SPS Maria Quinonez-Valenzuela, SPS Chanel Reeder, SPS Amalia Rocha, SPS Christy Rochin, SPS Monica Salas, ABS Xochitl Saldana, EES Lydia Sandoval, EES Tamara Smith, SPS Casey Thomas, SPS Graciela Woods, EES Rose Yoval, EES

Deans of Service Recipients

20 years of service

Shari Booth, SPS Martha Bozarth, ABS Ana Burgueno, EES Roberto Castillo, EES Maria Davalos, SPS Sandra Diaz, EES Debbie Estrada, ABS Deborah Fowler, ABS Eva Gonzales, SPS Lillian Granger, SPS Linda Houser, SPS Paula Johnson, SPS Christy Le, SPS Kelly Londenberg, SPS Socorro Lopez, EES Sean Luk, SPS Camelia Mann, EES Stephan McPeace, LWSS Velma Miller, ES Angelica Munoz, EES Juana Ontiveros, EES Joel Perez, EES Julie Portillo, ABS Maritza Quinonez, SPS Deborah Ramirez, LWSS Cleotilde Rodriguez, SPS Donna Romero, EES Rosa Ruiz, EES Lorena Sanchez, EES Rosie Serrato, SPS Gabriella Smock, EES Excelsa Deo Thomas, EES Valerie Tvedt, SPS Beatriz Valenzuela, ABS Juliana Villalobos, EES Lori Wiedensohler, EES

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Peter Ainsworth, SPS Celestine Albin, SPS Melisa Barajas, EES Elias Barraza, ABS Jennifer Beggs, EES Julie Carter, ABS Marlene Collins, ABS Ellen Dreyer, SPS Adriana Duff, SPS Michelle Elias, SPS Melinda Gluckman, ABS Karen Gutierrez, SPS James Harvey, ABS Carolina Martinez, EES Jose Martinez, EES Rocio Montano, ABS Rosemary Montano, EES Todd Pemble, ABS Cecilia Rosiles, EES James Winn, SPS

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Amarilis De La Garza, ABS
Thomas Freeman, ABS
Lori Fry, SPS
Steve Leland, ABS
Rebecca Martinez, SPS
Clementina Perez-Nava, SPS
Alicia Rivera, EES
Maria Rodriguez, EES
Benita Torres, SPS
Marilyn Warner, SPS

35 YEARS OF SERVICE

Irene Abbott, SPS Denise Chappell, SPS

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



Melissa Reynoso

Executive Director's Secretary

Division of Student Programs and Services

Melissa Reynoso, Executive Director's Secretary for Alternative Education at RCOE Main, is celebrated for her exceptional dedication and versatility. According to Dr. McCarty, Executive Director, Alternative Education, Melissa consistently exceeds her responsibilities, offering unwavering support to new staff and stepping in across multiple divisions as needed, including during a colleague's maternity leave. Her ability to manage additional tasks, such as organizing five graduation ceremonies, all while maintaining a positive demeanor, highlights her adaptability and commitment. Melissa's cheerful disposition and welcoming nature make her a universally positive presence in the workplace, especially during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic. She handles public inquiries with professionalism and empathy, going beyond her duties to find solutions for those in need. Melissa's pivotal role in planning and executing graduation ceremonies showcases her composure under pressure and her focus on student support and recognition. Her remarkable ability to manage challenging personalities and maintain a focus on student success makes her a go-to person for administrative procedures and services. Colleagues describe her as a lifeline to parents, families, and staff, providing extraordinary care and support. Melissa's infectious positivity, high energy, and meticulous attention to detail contribute significantly to the cohesive and efficient functioning of the Alternative Education team, enhancing the workplace atmosphere. Her dedication, growth mindset, and passion for service make her a deserving recipient of this honor.

MELISSA'S MESSAGE:

It's truly a privilege and an honor to receive the distinguished title of RCOE's Classified Employee of the Year. When the news was announced, my family was there to witness all of the kind words spoken about me. Later, my husband jokingly asked, "So you're incredibly positive and bubbly but do you actually get any work done?" I told him, listen guy, "I can't help it if my sunny disposition makes me a delight to be around!" But in all seriousness, I'm deeply grateful to be surrounded by the most supportive clerical and management team within the organization. Together, we share a unified vision: ensuring that our students remain our priority.

Throughout my 17-year journey at RCOE, I have been in various positions, units, and divisions. I can confidently say that my experience with Alternative Education has been nothing short of exceptional. It's been like finding a family that always has your back, minus the occasional awkward family dinner conversations. I've found not only a sense of belonging but also immense fulfillment in the work we do. The feeling of being valued and appreciated is truly profound and a testament to the inclusive and nurturing culture fostered within this unit.

I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a remarkable team and organization. Being connected to a program that effectively supports our students is like having a secret superpower, sadly without the superhuman strength. As we continue our journey forward, I remain committed to upholding our shared values and striving for excellence in everything we do.

SITE SUPPORT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



Feliciana Rodniques

Program Assistant, At-Risk Students

Division of Student Programs and Services

Feliciana Rodriguez, Program Assistant for At-Risk Students at the Desert Edge Adult Education Program in Banning, has been instrumental in managing the High School Equivalency (HSE)/GED program across Riverside County, serving a diverse population including inmates, adult learners, and juveniles. She oversees all program aspects, from testing to data entry, and collaborates with partners like YouthBuild and the Riverside County Sheriff's Department by sharing crucial data. Feliciana actively promotes the GED program, fostering community awareness and partnerships. With over six years of leadership, she has navigated significant challenges, implementing effective solutions. Known for her excellent planning skills and conscientious approach, she is well-respected and trusted by colleagues and partners. Feliciana enhances employee engagement by organizing site-wide celebrations and training new staff, creating an inclusive workplace. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she secured at-home testing options through her network with state officials and vendors. According to Lucie Gonzalez, Principal, Alternative Education, Feliciana is a relentless innovator whose proactive nature and capacity to identify areas for improvement have significantly benefited RCOE's HSE/GED program. Her extraordinary reliability, hard work, and commitment to the program's success, along with her determination and dedication, make her a deserving recipient of this honor.

FELICIANA'S MESSAGE:

I am honored and grateful that I have been nominated for this award. To be recognized by others that have many years of combined experience in education and student services is such a compliment. This recognition is not only for me, it represents the success of each of the students I have had the pleasure to serve. It also represents the many teachers, support staff, amazing principals, administrators and executive directors I have worked with throughout the 10 years that I have been employed at RCOE. Accomplishing great things can only be reached by a strong and committed team effort. I am thankful and in awe of my committed and inspiring work family!

I provide the high school equivalency services and GED exam for RCOE and Desert Edge School throughout the county in various settings. The students that I serve deserve the most recognition. They have faced various challenges, setbacks and obstacles and they show up ready to tackle the task at hand. My biggest highlight is giving students their passing results! To witness their joy, tears and surprise is an exciting moment that I will never take for granted.

The best team I am surrounded by every day is my beautiful family. My husband Eddie and children Ethan, Erik and Lauren. You all support, inspire, and drive to do my very best.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Julie Drogo

Itinerant English Language Development Teacher

Division of Student Programs and Services

Julie Drogo, an Itinerant English Language Development (ELD) Teacher at CBK Charter School-Education Opportunity Center site, has been providing exceptional support to over 50 English Language (EL) students since August 2021. In her role, she offers small group instruction and equips CBK Charter School teachers with effective strategies for EL students. Julie travels to more than 18 CBK Charter School sites monthly to provide in-person support classes, monitor ELPAC scores, prepare students for testing, and track the progress of redesignated students. Her dedication has earned her the 'Heart of Exemplary Service' award from RCOE. Julie's career at CBK Charter School began in 2013 as an Specialized Academic Instruction Teacher/Lead Teacher, where she supported 32 students with tailored curriculums and one-on-one teaching, collaborated with peers and staff. She also served as a Community Liaison, supporting the principal and handling various administrative tasks. Julie holds a Master of Arts in Special Education from Brandman University and several teaching credentials. According to her students, Julie's organized and attentive approach ensures they feel remembered and supported, even with her extensive responsibilities. The CBK Charter School Principal highlights her ability to create a safe and inclusive environment where students thrive academically and socially. Julie Drogo's unwavering commitment to her students and innovative teaching methods make her a deserving recipient of this honor.

JULIE'S MESSAGE:

I am honored and excited to be recognized as the 2024 RCOE Teacher of the Year. As a former athlete, I am used to being honored as part of a team, not as an individual. That being said, I gratefully accept this award on behalf of the CBK Charter School teachers, principals, staff, and students. It is such a wonderful privilege to work with so many amazing teachers and staff. Every one of us strives to make sure that our students feel valued and loved. While being part of a strong team, I strive to do my part by doing my best to come to work everyday with positive energy and to be student focused. I like to make my lessons meaningful and challenging for my students, so they become invested in their learning. I absolutely love being a teacher. It's my second purpose in life. My first purpose has always been being a mom to Tylor and Trevor. They have always been my inspiration and the joys of my life. Thank you again for such a wonderful recognition!

CLASSIFIED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR



Nicholas-Chitwood, Ed.D.

AdministratorDivision of Educational Services

Dr. Nicholas Chitwood, Administrator of Assessment, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement (AACI) at RCOE Main, consistently exceeds expectations through his innovative and collaborative approach to data collection, analytics, and visualization, benefiting Riverside County school districts. He has automated data collection processes, streamlining report development and minimizing manual data requests. Dr. Chitwood has been instrumental in the Literacy by 5th Grade Initiative, creating data tools for literacy screeners, and supporting the Financial Literacy Initiative by gathering data from ScholarShare for CalKIDS. His data analysis tools have been crucial for identifying positive outlier schools in the Equity and Inclusion Initiative. Demonstrating a commitment to data governance, he authored a comprehensive "Data Governance" manual and a Data-Sharing Handbook. Dr. Chitwood fosters a collaborative culture within RCOE, engaging with team members to offer data insights and build capacity. Leading the "COE Data Visualization" network, he enhances statewide educational initiatives by sharing practices and resources. He supports the College and Career Readiness unit by automating reports and developing educational tools. Dr. Chitwood's diverse background, including his experience as a music teacher and expertise in statistics, adds a unique dimension to his role. According to Dr. Melissa Bazanos, Executive Director of AACI, Educational Services, his innovative approaches and projects significantly impact district and county office staff, benefiting 430,000 students across Riverside County. Dr. Chun-Wu Li, Administrator of AACI, Educational Services, commends his expertise in transforming complex data into insightful reports and his dedication to professional development, making him a true leader in the county.

DR. CHITWOOD'S MESSAGE:

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with so many dedicated individuals across RCOE and our districts. These opportunities arose from our shared commitment to understanding and improving data on the 430,000 students we serve. Each Superintendent's Initiative has collaborated with the AACI unit to enhance their efforts.

I want to thank my wife Alissa for her unwavering support during the long work year, and I am incredibly proud of my kids Caydence, Paxton, Aria, and Bennett as they grow and learn in schools in our county.

Finally, some data. Over the past year, we pulled 41,701 data files (61.3 GB), responded to 87 custom data requests, performed 34 A-G audits, and supported data on 25,490 students registered for CALKIDS, resulting in \$12,745,000.00 in claimed funds. This would not be possible without great colleagues, and I look forward to continuing our work to help our students thrive.

CERTIFICATED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR



Kristin Brooks, Ed.D.

Assistant SuperintendentDivision of Student Programs and Services

Dr. Kristin Brooks, Assistant Superintendent of Student Programs and Services, exemplifies a growth mindset, staying current with educational trends and leveraging data-driven decision-making to foster educational excellence. Her strategic planning emphasizes inclusivity and diversity, reflected in her financial stewardship and statewide partnerships, aligning with the Riverside County Office of Education and the California Department of Education. As a visionary leader, she creates an inclusive environment, valuing team input to cultivate a positive workplace culture. Dr. Brooks champions professional growth, encouraging her team to embrace change with an asset-based mindset. Her commitment to inclusivity is demonstrated through robust professional learning experiences, including diversity training and leadership development, benefiting all RCOE employees, Supporting Inclusive Practices (SIP) Grantees, and partners. Actively engaged in policy discussions, Dr. Brooks fosters a community-oriented, empathetic workplace. Colleagues praise her intelligence, flexibility, and dedication, noting her exceptional ability to inspire and unify teams. Her proactive support, transparent feedback, and advocacy for equitable education highlight her dedication to creating inclusive and equitable school environments, making her a deserving recipient of this honor.

DR. BROOKS' MESSAGE:

What an honor! To be acknowledged by my colleagues whom I strive to emulate is surreal, and I am grateful to be able to do this work alongside the most incredible team ever assembled. A huge thank you to our county office leaders who took the leap of faith by embracing SIP as part of the RCOE family and trusting our small but mighty team to be innovative, inclusive, and impactful throughout the state. A special thank you to my husband, Steve, and my two sons, Justin and Josh. You entertain my wild ideas for the future of education, support my travel to the furthest reaches of the state, and love me unconditionally to be my authentic self. You are my whole world, my purpose, and my motivation to be better every single day. Because of you, I can be me. I don't know how I got so lucky.

MILO P. JOHNSON AWARD OF DISTINCTION



Steve A. (cland)

Building SupervisorDivision of Administration and Business Services

Steve Leland, Building Supervisor for Operational Support Services at RCOE Main, has significantly enhanced the appearance and functionality of RCOE buildings over his three-decade tenure. His role transcends maintenance; it's about creating a welcoming environment for all facility users. Steve's technical expertise and effective interpersonal skills have led to substantial improvements in the work environment and a supportive culture. He has fostered a positive and productive workplace through shared leadership and team building. Steve's journey from night custodian to Building Supervisor showcases his growth and dedication, serving as an inspiration to his colleagues. His relentless pursuit of excellence and high standards for quality and efficiency reflect his commitment to continuous innovation and improvement. Steve's willingness to assist colleagues and his role in enhancing daily operations underscore his vital contribution to RCOE's success. His dedication, leadership, and positive influence make him an exemplary candidate for the Milo P. Johnson Award, as his contributions have significantly impacted the physical, cultural, and operational aspects of RCOE.

STEVE'S MESSAGE:

May 4, 2024 was my 30-year anniversary. Each day serving this organization has been a joy. I have received so much! I met the love of my life here, made countless friends, and had the pleasure being a part of a great organization committed to helping children. I've worked under the tutelage of Dr. Gomez whose professionalism I have tried to emulate. In 2007, I received an employee recognition award. And now at the end of my career I have been recognized and received the Milo P. Johnson award. That is such an honor and an award that I greatly appreciate and will treasure.

To all new employees joining RCOE. I encourage you to cherish being part of an organization with a great Superintendent, Board members and Administrative Council who are committed to the success of all students. You are part of something great and rewarding.

Thank you once again for this honor!



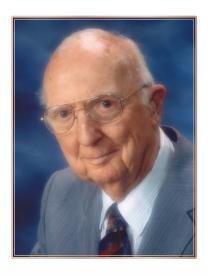
Retinees-



Janis Arnold, EES 19 YEARS OF SERVICE	Maria Gandera, PS 2 YEARS OF SERVICE	Mayda Medrano, EES 19 YEARS OF SERVICE
Lacy Arthur, SPS 26 YEARS OF SERVICE	Marina Grijalva, EES 14 YEARS OF SERVICE	Richard Melton, SPS 36 YEARS OF SERVICE
Phyllis Banks, SPS 22 YEARS OF SERVICE	Nancy Henry, SPS 9 YEARS OF SERVICE	Judy Morris, ABS 24 YEARS OF SERVICE
Martha Bozarth, ABS 20 YEARS OF SERVICE	Connie Hensley, SPS 16 YEARS OF SERVICE	Sharon Negrete, SPS 15 YEARS OF SERVICE
Robin Christensen, SPS 29 YEARS OF SERVICE	Jon Holquin, SPS 4 YEARS OF SERVICE	Marisol Pamatz, ABS 3 YEARS OF SERVICE
Ana Cano, EES 29 YEARS OF SERVICE	Paul Howard, SPS 7 YEARS OF SERVICE	Elon Parker, SPS 6 YEARS OF SERVICE
Kathy Cathcart, SPS 16 YEARS OF SERVICE	Wendla Hubrecht, PS 19 YEARS OF SERVICE	Bertha Resk, EES 13 YEARS OF SERVICE
Tracey Corso, ABS 7 YEARS OF SERVICE	Robert Jones, ABS 22 YEARS OF SERVICE	Elizabeth Salgado, EES 8 YEARS OF SERVICE
Sara Crowder, SPS 5 YEARS OF SERVICE	Joanne Kleveland, SPS 35 YEARS OF SERVICE	Lisa Schifano, EES 26 YEARS OF SERVICE
Gary Czech, SPS 22 YEARS OF SERVICE	David Landeros, EES 19 YEARS OF SERVICE	Carolyn Tovar, SPS 24 YEARS OF SERVICE
Bonney De La O, SPS 1 YEAR OF SERVICE	David Layton, ABS 34 YEARS OF SERVICE	Beatriz Valenzuela, ABS 20 YEARS OF SERVICE
Michael Diaz, PS 35 YEARS OF SERVICE	Theresa Layton, SPS 21 YEARS OF SERVICE	Debra Van Holland, ABS 38 YEARS OF SERVICE
Ellen Dreyer, SPS 25 YEARS OF SERVICE	Edward Lewis, ORCSS 5 YEARS OF SERVICE	Rashida Walton, ABS 28 YEARS OF SERVICE
Suzanne Duran, SPS 18 YEARS OF SERVICE	Chun-Wu Li, ES 24 YEARS OF SERVICE	C. Brian Wood, ES 5 YEARS OF SERVICE
Lisa Fierro, ES 23 YEARS OF SERVICE	Carolyn Mannlein, SPS 42 YEARS OF SERVICE	

Dn. Milo P. Johnson

JUNE 17, 1914 - DECEMBER 25, 2004



The Milo P. Johnson Award of Distinction was created in 1999 in honor of long-time Riverside County Board of Education Member Dr. Milo P. Johnson. The recipients are selected by the Riverside County Board of Education. The award honors employees who continually exhibit extraordinary service and support in all they do. The recipients demonstrate and possess traits and characteristics such as continuously seeking opportunities to innovate, improve, and expand their services, understand their role in contributing to student success, and provide service that is prompt, courteous, honest, and accurate in anticipating and responding to the needs of those we serve.

1999 Gary Taylor

2000 Gerri Israelson

2001 Marilyn Warner

2002 Clara Rodriguez

2003 Ginger Andrews

> 2004 Rick Strom

2005 Mogna Hendricks

2006 Vicki Sauceda

2007 Theresa Swickla 2008 Karen Radtke

2009 Mary Liette

2010 Kelly Londenberg

2011 Adriana Marshall

> 2012 June Miller

2013 Sylvia Gonzalez

2014 Lanelle Gordin

2015 Joan Patrick

2016 Chun-Wu Li, Ph.D. 2017
Janice Delagrammatikas
Barbara Moore

2018 Deborah Clark Lynn Smith

2019 Steve Ayon Jennifer Beggs

2021 Tracey Case

2022 JoAnne Lauer

2023 Sandra Alicia Martinez

Shane the Celebration!



Want to see tonight's Employee RECOGNITION videos again?

ALL VIDEOS WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE TOMORROW. SHARE THEM WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY.















www.rcoe.us/employee-recognition

Do you work with someone extraordinary?

Be sure to nominate your fellow employees for next year's recognition.



Altura Credit Union is proud to partner with The Riverside County Office of Education to help recognize and celebrate its amazing employees. They help cultivate the future leaders and minds of our community and their work has a lasting impact on all of us.





SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 12, 2025

Employee RECOGNITION

We Celebrate **You.**

Thank you for your commitment to education and our community. We are privileged to serve the educational community and recognize all that you do to help students and our community thrive.

SCHOOLSFIRST 🛄

FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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