

NEWS RELEASE

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2016 Stanislaus County Teachers of the Year Announced

The Modesto Rotary Club and the Stanislaus County Office of Education (SCOE) announced the selection of four local educators as **2016 Stanislaus County Teacher of the Year** at a Rotary luncheon on May 3. In addition, a **Jane Johnston Civility Award** was presented to one of the 12 finalists for exemplifying the principles of civility.

Teachers were nominated by their principals and finalists were selected from 88 nominees representing 17 school districts in Stanislaus County. A selection committee, composed of local Rotarians and educators, narrowed the nominations through a paper screening process and then visited the classrooms of 24 semi-finalists before narrowing it down to the 12 finalists.

The 2016 Teachers of the Year are: **Kristine Jensen** from *Hughes Elementary School* in the Empire Union School District – TK-3 division; **Stephanie Pimentel** from *Cunningham Elementary School* in the Turlock Unified School District – 4-6 division; **June Forrest** from *Roosevelt Junior High School* in the Modesto City Schools District – junior high division; and **Mary Asgill** from *Turlock High School* in the Turlock Unified School District – high school division.

The **Jane Johnston Civility Award** was presented to **Rosio Valenzuela** from *La Rosa Elementary School* in the Ceres Unified School District. The Civility Award is in honor of former SCOE Assistant Superintendent Jane Johnston, who helped launch the county-wide Choose Civility Initiative in 2010 and passed away unexpectedly in April 2012. Johnston was a member of the Modesto Rotary Club, co-chaired the Teacher of the Year Program, and was active with the Education Foundation of Stanislaus County. “Jane was an exceptional model of civility at work and in our community,” said Education Foundation Chairperson Pam Denney. “The Education Foundation once again honored her memory with this award.”

2016 Teachers of the Year Finalists honored at the luncheon included:

| <u>ELEMENTARY (TK-3) LEVEL</u> | <u>SCHOOL</u> | <u>DISTRICT</u> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Kristine Jensen | Hughes Elementary | Empire Union |
| Michelle Jones | Magnolia Elementary | Oakdale Joint Unified |
| Nikki Whorton | Orchard Elementary | Sylvan Union |

| <u>ELEMENTARY (4-6) LEVEL</u> | <u>SCHOOL</u> | <u>DISTRICT</u> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Stephanie Pimentel | Cunningham Elementary | Turlock Unified |
| Rosio Valenzuela | La Rosa Elementary | Ceres Unified |
| Quinn Waterson | Robertson Road Elementary | Modesto City |

| <u>MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL</u> | <u>SCHOOL</u> | <u>DISTRICT</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| June Forrest | Roosevelt Junior High | Modesto City |
| Robin Johnson | Blaker-Kinser Jr. High | Ceres Unified |
| Carrie Silva | Mountain View Middle | Chatom Union |

| <u>HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL</u> | <u>SCHOOL</u> | <u>DISTRICT</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mary Asgill | Turlock High | Turlock Unified |
| Brandi Erickson | Ceres High | Ceres Unified |
| John Godfrey | Modesto Christian High | Modesto Christian |

This is the 18th year that Modesto Rotary and SCOE have joined efforts to honor teachers in Stanislaus County. The program not only honors local teachers and celebrates excellence in education, but also provides an opportunity for teachers to receive state and national recognition. Two of the four Teachers of the Year will be selected, through an interview process, to represent Stanislaus County in the State Teacher of the Year Program. One state winner then proceeds to the national level.

“A good teacher inspires students, ignites imaginations, and instills a love of learning,” said County Superintendent Tom Changnon. “It is truly an honor to partner with the Rotary to recognize these outstanding teachers – each who helps inspire and shape the lives of young students in our county on a daily basis.”

Sponsors of the Stanislaus County Teacher of the Year program include the Modesto Rotary Club Foundation, Stanislaus County Office of Education, Nasco and Mocse Credit Union.