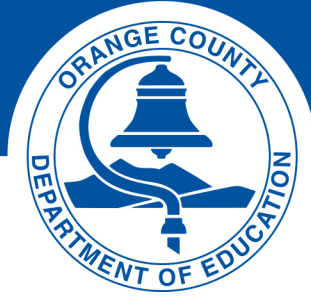


NEWS RELEASE

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Top educators to be honored at 2017 Orange County Teachers of the Year event Annual ceremony presented by OCDE, sponsors will take place at Disneyland® Hotel

COSTA MESA, Calif., OCTOBER 18, 2016 – Sixty-three educators from Orange County school districts and community colleges will be recognized on Tuesday, Oct. 25 at a dinner celebration coordinated by the Orange County Department of Education.

SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union will once again serve as the premier sponsor of the 2017 Orange County Teachers of the Year event, which begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim. As the legacy sponsor, the Dr. James Hines Foundation will present cash awards to each of the nominees to honor the important work they do to promote the success of all students by instilling pride, hope and respect in academically stimulating environments.

This year's finalists are: Steven M. Bautista of Santa Ana College in the Rancho Santiago Community College District; Matthew Bidwell of South Junior High School in the Anaheim Union High School District; Kristine Clarke of Dana Hills High School in the Capistrano Unified School District; Courtney Smith of Tustin Memorial Academy in the Tustin Unified School District; and Raquel Solorzano-Duenas of Western High School in the Anaheim Union High School District.

"Each year, the Orange County Department of Education and its community partners proudly honor those educators who go above and beyond to nurture, inspire and equip future generations," said Orange County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Al Mijares. "Though many shy away from recognition, these exceptional leaders are responsible for elevating the teaching profession, and their contributions go far beyond imparting knowledge. Our best teachers connect with students, allow them to take intellectual risks and share innovative instructional strategies with other educators. As such, they expand their expertise to all classrooms and exemplify the theme of this year's event — One Voice."

Each honored educator will receive a table for 10 at the event courtesy of SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union, along with prize packages provided by SchoolsFirst and the Disneyland Resort. Additionally, Bill and Sue Gross have contributed more than \$150,000 in cash awards for this year's nominees through the Dr. James Hines Foundation, which was established 24 years ago in honor of Dr. James Hines, a literature professor at Saddleback College. Since 1992, Bill and Sue Gross have contributed more than \$3 million to the Orange County Teachers of the Year program.

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