

# MCOE Quarterly Employee Newsletter



Quarter 3, 2014

## Superintendent's Message

*Welcome to MCOE's  
first quarterly  
employee newsletter*



I want to begin by wishing you a Happy Fourth of July. As we participate with BBQs, water activities, water-

melon and fireworks to celebrate the birth of our country, I ask you to pause and remember all those men and women in uniform, past and present, who have served to preserve the freedom we enjoy. As a nation, we have our challenges but this is still a land of opportunity and we are free to pursue our dreams.

More than 400 employees completed the MCOE survey last month and some of you asked that I continue writing about MCOE and send an e-mail to employees as I have done in the past. These days, I never seem to have enough time to write to you but I will make time. I know that newsletters like this have to be accurate and free of statements that might give people the wrong impression. Words are very powerful and it is easy for the receiver to misinterpret what the sender is suggesting. For example, not too long ago my wife was babysitting our three year old grand-

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## Costa applauds Head Start



**Congressman Jim Costa held a press conference at Fairside Head Start on July 2 to announce the annual award of \$11,219,272 Merced County will receive for the federal early education program. Superintendent Gomes touts the benefits of early education while holding his granddaughter Charlotte.**

Congressman Jim Costa hosted a press conference at the Fairside Head Start on July 2 to announce \$11,219,272 in Head Start funding for the 2014-15 school year.

Superintendent Gomes, with granddaughter Charlotte, Head Start Director Linda Kaercher and members of the media, gathered for the event.

The funds will be used to operate 16 Head Start sites that serve about 1,200 Merced County children and their families. MCOE became the grantee for the Head Start program in 2005 and was awarded an Early Head Start grant in 2010, which serves infants, toddlers and a limited number of pregnant women.

The \$11 million grant includes restoration of funds that had been removed by federal sequestration earlier this year.

Multiple studies verify that Head Start works. The early education program helps

lead to higher high school graduation rates, lower incarceration rates, lower usage of mental health and special education services and it is even estimated that \$1 spent on Head Start saves tax payers \$7.

Now in its 50th year, Head Start curriculum is based on CDE's Child Development Division Learning Foundations. Daily routines include whole group gatherings, small group instruction and multiple opportunities for individual exploration and guided practice: all important components of the Common Core.

### *Inside this issue:*

- Father of the Year
- NVLI Graduation
- Family Day Pictures
- MCE Foundation
- Cooper Avenue Updates

## *Improvements, Moves Continue at Cooper*

If you have visited the Cooper Avenue site lately, you may have noticed there is a paved parking lot, a courtyard area and quite a few more staff members. Several programs in the Business Office — Information Technology Services and the Warehouse staff — have moved to Cooper Avenue near Highway 59.

Staff from Special Education will soon move to the offices at Wired Cafe and the former warehouse site in the J Building.

Head Start staff have been at the Cooper Avenue site for several months.

In the future, MCOE plans to develop one of the buildings at Cooper Avenue into a conference center with a capacity to hold up to 300 people and could be divided into several smaller rooms.

Look for other changes in the future and say hi to some of your new neighbors!

### *Superintendent's Message from Page 1*

daughter, Charlotte, and had just picked her up from preschool. On the trip home, my wife said to Charlotte, "Grandma is taking you home and going to fix dinner." Charlotte said, "Fix dinner? Fix dinner? Grandma you can't fix dinner, it isn't broken!" Charlotte then laughed hysterically. Grandma made sure she said "prepare dinner" so she would not be the straight man in Charlotte's comedy routine.

I was happy to see so many employees with members of their families at the MCOE Picnic. We served more than 1,000 lunches and everyone seemed to have a great time. Please mark Thursday, August 14, on your calendar to attend the MOCE Kickoff Celebration. The Kickoff is a great opportunity to meet people from other departments and recognize employees for advancing their education and their time serving the families

## **Delhi Father Named Father of the Year**

Thirty fathers and father figures were honored on June 9 at the 2014 Merced County Father of the Year Essay Awards Banquet at El Capitan High School in Merced, with one father named Merced County Father of the Year.

Juan Manuel Avalos took top honors at the event. His daughter, Lauren Avalos, is an 8th grade student in Roxanne Azevedo's class at Hilmar Middle School.

In its 14th year, the essay contest is open to all kindergarten through 12th grade students in Merced County and highlights the special role fathers and father figures play in a child's life.

Students are asked to write a 300-word essay titled, "What My Father Means To Me," and a team of Merced County volunteers read each essay and choose the top three essays from each grade level.

More than 13,000 essays have been



**Juan Manuel Avalos and Lauren Avalos**

written in the previous 14 years of the competition and more than 300 fathers have been honored.

Students can write the essay about their father, stepfather, grandfather, or a father-like figure in their life.

and students of Merced, Stanislaus, and Madera County. I appreciate those employees who introduce themselves to me at these activities and tell about their program or role at MCOE. With 1,500 employees in this organization, it is difficult to remember everyone's name so if you see me in Merced or elsewhere, please do not hesitate to introduce yourself to me. Please do not think you are imposing or I do not want to be bothered away from work. Actually, the exact opposite is true and I always enjoy visiting with employees regardless of the location.

During the past two weeks, my re-election campaign ran an ad thanking voters for their support in my re-election even though I ran unopposed. The ad appeared in six newspapers in Merced County and I wanted to share it with you as well because I know many people do not receive a newspaper or live outside the county. I hope it adequately

describes the appreciation I have for the great work you do every day with and for districts, students, and families.

Nathan Quevedo, MCOE Public Information Officer, will help me assemble the MCOE newsletter each quarter and so if you have something about your program or department that you would like in the newsletter, please forward that information to him so we can report it to the entire organization.

In this first newsletter, you will read about MCOE's role in the North Valley Leadership Institute, Leadership Challenge for all, Merced Area Stem School and Merced County Education Foundation, the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Camp Green Meadows, the latest with MCOE's Cooper property, and other activities across MCOE. I hope you enjoy it and remember you cannot fix dinner because it is rarely broken!



## NVLI Graduates 23 Participants in First Cohort

The North Valley Leadership Institute, a collaboration between MCOE and the attorney firm AALRR, graduated 23 participants from 12 school districts throughout the Central Valley in the Leadership Academy.

With the majority of attendees from school districts in Merced County — and participants from San Joaquin County to the north and Madera and Fresno counties to the south — the graduates attended all 10 sessions ranging from Creating a Successful Team and Employee Engagement to Having Hard Conversations and Sexual Harassment.

The goal of the program is to better equip managers with the tools they will need in order to effectively and efficiently manage their employees.

The Leadership Challenge, which several MCOE employees are familiar with, is the introductory session that provides the context on which all other sessions will be based.



Superintendent Gomes poses with NVLI graduates from the Le Grand Elementary School district.

## Kathy Pon Named Interim Delhi Supt



Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services Kathy Pon will be named interim superintendent of the Delhi Unified School District on the board's

July 8 meeting.

Kathy will replace Brian Stephens, who will soon take the reigns as superintendent of the Tracy Unified School District. Delhi school district anticipates having a replacement superintendent by mid-August.

Join us in congratulating Kathy on her interim leadership post!

## MASS STEM School Goes Before Board

The Merced County Board of Education will soon vote on a proposed charter high school in Merced that will focus on science education.

The Merced Area STEM School (MASS) will have an emphasis on the core components of STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

In development by the Merced County Education Foundation, the MASS School is an independent, county-wide public benefit high school. Students from anywhere in the Merced area may enroll.

"MASS could provide students an opportunity to focus on STEM educa-

tion during their high school years. I think MASS has the potential to be an asset to Merced County's educational programs and economic development," said Superintendent Gomes.

If approved, the school is scheduled to open for the 2015-16 school year with 100 9th- and 10th-grade students, adding one grade level each year through 12th grade with a maximum student enrollment of 250 and the first graduating class in 2018.

The charter petition for the school was originally submitted to the Merced County Board of Education at the June 16 meeting, with an anticipated Board vote at the July 28 meeting.



## *Student abuzz at Merced County Fair Ag Spelling Bee*

More than 20 Merced County students participated on June 12 at the 2014 Merced County Fair Ag Spelling Bee.

Sponsored in part by PG&E, the Ag Spelling Bee focused on words related to agriculture.

Now in its second year, the contest was open to students who participated in the 2013-14 Merced County Spelling Bee.

Unlike the spelling bee during the school year, which is a written competition, the Ag Spelling Bee is the more traditional oral competition.

First place winner for Elementary was Harleen Thandi from Livingston. First place winner for Junior High was Julianna Muncherian from Merced.



## Green Meadows Celebrates 50 Years



**Camp Green Meadows celebrates 50 years of outdoor education in 2014. Below, Jack L. Boyd, who was Director of Outdoor Education for MCOE and founded the school, visits with staff in 2010.**

Camp Green Meadows celebrates 50 years of outdoor education in 2014 and the Merced County Education Foundation is holding a fundraiser on Sept. 6 at the outdoor school in Fish Camp.

Located near the Wawona entrance to Yosemite National Park, Camp Green Meadows serves students from throughout California and functions as a recreation camp in the summer. It has served as the outdoor school for thousands of Merced County students.

Outdoor Education in Merced County began in 1951 with a group of nearly 70 sixth-graders from Planada and Le Grand attending an outdoor facility. As the program grew, MCOE sought a larger facility, and relocated to the San Francisco YMCA camp known as Jones Gulch near La Honda.

Due to the rapid growth of the program, Outdoor Education Director Jack L. Boyd began searching for another site. Of several sites made available by the U.S. Forest Service, the site near Fish Camp was chosen due to the availability of electricity.

It would take Boyd several years of working with the U.S. Forest Service, Merced County Board of Supervisors and school districts before the first school



arrived at Green Meadows on May 1, 1964.

The \$100 per-person ticket includes round-trip travel from Merced to Fish Camp, appetizers, an authentic Western BBQ, a hosted bar, cowboy poetry and an optional tour of Camp Green Meadows.

All proceeds from the fundraising event benefit the MCE Foundation, which supports Green Meadows, foster youth, visual and performing arts, agriculture education and STEM education.

Camp Green Meadows is on Facebook and would like to hear your story about time spent at the outdoor school. Visit [www.facebook.com/CampGreenMeadows](http://www.facebook.com/CampGreenMeadows), "like" Camp Green Meadows and post a story about your favorite time at the outdoor school.

For tickets or more information about the fundraiser, call (209) 381-6602.





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## *Special Education Students Host Very Special Show*

MCOE's Special Education students hosted a very special performance for family, friends and the community at Golden Valley High School on July 3.

The performance was the culmination of the summer arts program, which includes the Orthopedically Handicapped and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programs.

"Our program and our students attempt to present a 'Portal to the Future' by exploring the possibilities of how those with disabilities are viewed and portrayed in society," said program organizer and MCOE itinerant teacher of orthopedically impaired John Russell-Curry.

The program is sponsored in part by VSArts of California, which helps make art accessible to people of all abilities.



# MCOE KICKOFF CELEBRATION

Art Kamangar Center, Merced Theater

Thursday, August 14, 2014

8 a.m. - Noon





## 2014 MCOE FAMILY PICNIC



### THANKING VOTERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT

I want to thank the Merced County voters for allowing me to continue to serve as the Merced County Superintendent of Schools. These past four years have been challenging and very exciting at the same time. Merced County is blessed to have outstanding teachers, staff, and school administrators doing a great job every day with the 55,000 students in our 20 school districts.

Additionally, it is a pleasure to work with the Merced County Office of Education staff as they provide outstanding service to families, children, and students as well.

As a life-long resident of Merced County and a person who attended local

schools, I am more committed than ever to help insure that Merced County students are given a world-class education. It is very exciting to be an educator today as education adapts to changing times.

Students will attend schools with all the information of the world at their fingertips and teachers will continue to transition from the bearers of information to the facilitators of learning. You can be confident that I will continue to work with passion and energy to serve the students in our county.

Once again, thank you for your confidence.

*Steven E. Gomes, Ed.D.*

*Merced County Superintendent of Schools*