



— 2025 —

# **EMPLOYEE** *Recognition*

**THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2025**

**Riverside County Office of Education  
Conference Center**



## **RIVERSIDE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Edwin Gomez, Ed.D.

## **RIVERSIDE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Elizabeth F. Romero, President

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## **COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT'S CABINET**

**Scott Price, Ph.D., Associate Superintendent**

Division of Administration and Business Services

**Heather Williams, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent**

Division of Personnel Services

**Kathy King, Assistant Superintendent**

Division of Early Education Services

**JoAnne Lauer, Assistant Superintendent**

Division of Early Education Services

**Amanda Corridan, Chief Academic Officer**

Division of Educational Services

**Jeffrey A. Vaca, Chief Governmental Relations Officer**

Division of Governmental Relations

**Stephan McPeace, Assistant Superintendent**

Division of Leadership, Wellness, and Student Services

**Dominique Samario, Chief Strategic Partnerships and Communications Officer**

Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

**Nereida Gutierrez, Assistant Superintendent**

Division of Student Programs and Services

# PROGRAM

## WELCOME

**Scott Price, Ph.D.**  
Associate Superintendent

## REMARKS

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

## YEARS OF SERVICE AWARDS

### 2025 RCOE EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

#### CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

**Madelynn Knust**

Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

#### SITE SUPPORT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

**Ernesto Garcia**

Division of Administration and Business Services

#### TEACHER OF THE YEAR

**Nicholis Kalantar**

Division of Student Programs and Services

#### CLASSIFIED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

**Charles Viramontes**

Division of Early Education Services

#### CERTIFICATED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

**Melissa Bazanos Hutton, Ed.D.**

Division of Educational Services

#### PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

**Lucie Gonzalez**

Division of Student Programs and Services

#### MILO P. JOHNSON AWARD OF DISTINCTION

**Jaymie Baiza**

Division of Educational Services

## RETIREE AWARDS

# YEARS OF SERVICE RECIPIENTS

## 10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Pamela Aleman, EES	Janet Loza, SPS
Rosario Almy, SPS	Samuel Maddux, ABS
Alicia Alvarez, ABS	Susann McCoy, SPS
Aysheh Antuono, SPS	Natalie Mercado, SPS
Tammy Bakewell, SPS	Jorge Merino Orea, EES
Guadalupe Barboza Reyes, EES	Susana Meza, EES
Jessica Bauer, SPS	Liliana Mosqueda, ABS
Berenice Canchola, EES	Janelle Munongo, SPS
Nicole Carroll, ABS	John Nyhan, SPS
Mirtha Cecena, EES	Lizette O'Campo, SPS
Natasha Contreras, ABS	Marrakech Ommanney, ES
Liliana Nellie Cornejo, SPS	Bibiana Pastrana, SPS
Cherrie Cunningham, ES	Amy Pedvin, SPS
Suzanne Davis, SPS	Christal Pennington, SPS
Priscilla Duran, SPS	Beverly Pope, SPS
Derek Ellingson, SPS	Anne Pruett, SPS
Luis Enriquez Pulido, EES	Esmeralda Ramirez, EES
Sylvia Esquivel, SPS	Kytzia Rayos, SPS
Amanda Felix, SPS	Brandy Reeves, SPS
Maricela Flores, EES	Kathryn Rhodes, SPS
Nadine Flowers, SPS	Robert Ritchie, SPS
Allyson Ford, SPS	Madeline Rocca, SPS
Roger Guevara, SPS	Martha Sanchez, SPS
Kendra Hawthorne, EES	Richard Slocum, SPS
Leondra Ingram, EES	Jeffrey Smith, ABS
Jeremiah Jackson, SPS	Juliana Soria, EES
Heather Kim, SPS	Brian Sousa, SPS
Paul King, ABS	Reginalde St. Urbain Enriquez, EES
Jodi LaChance, SPS	Dane Teague, SPS
Daniel Leedy, ABS	America Vallejo, EES
Ana Limon, EES	Jasmine Wright, SPS

# YEARS OF SERVICE RECIPIENTS

## 15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Kimberlee Ayala, SPS  
Jekereen Barrozo, SPS  
Jennifer Everhart, ABS  
Aida Fiske, EES  
Eva Gamboa, ABS  
Shawna Guild, SPS  
Cynthia Herrera, EES  
Inez Jarrett, EES  
Yolanda Jimenez, EES  
Christen Kleinschmidt, SPS  
Irene Mejia, EES

Melissa Mejia, SPS  
Marichelle Mercado, SPS  
Karla Meza, EES  
Erica Munoz, SPS  
Nicole Okoye, SPS  
Erica Sandoval, SPS  
Magda Schommer, EES  
Todd Schuch, SPS  
Heidi Stoltz, SPS  
Louis Vega, SPS  
Wanda Wetmore, ABS

## 20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Juan Barro, SPS  
Mallela Bautista, EES  
Shalley Burkholder, SPS  
Jennifer Carpenter, SPS  
Ruben Contreras III, ABS  
Nancy Delgado, ES  
Deborah Hamlin, SPS  
Gloria Harrington, EES  
Margita Hoover, EES  
Shauna Jaime, SPS  
Anabelle Lintag, SPS  
Ryan Macias, SPS  
Molly McCabe, ES  
Bertha Meeks, ABS  
Tabitha Muteti, SPS  
Agustin Navarro, LWSS  
Yara Pacheco, ABS

Georgeann Padilla, EES  
Martha Plascencia, SPS  
Amal Qaqish, ABS  
Mary Rice, EES  
Christina Rodriguez, EES  
Jenny Rodriguez, EES  
Myra Sanchez, LWSS  
Alejandro Serrato, SPS  
Beverly Slusher, SPS  
Deborah Stayton, SPS  
Mira Tanijan, ABS  
Robin Warner, EES  
Dayanara Williams, EES  
Marisa Wine, SPS  
Rose Yoval, EES  
Ellen Yufa, ABS

# YEARS OF SERVICE RECIPIENTS

## 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Nereida Arreola, EES

Latisha Baston, SPS

Kathy Beglau, ORCSS

Michelle Bondora, LWSS

Lisa Cassel, ES

Guadalupe Castaneda, EES

Yadira Chavelas, ORCSS

Christine Chrest, EES

Linda Delgado, EES

Heather Dodt, SPS

Rachel Dryden, SPS

Leticia Esquer, EES

Shirley Fierro, SPS

Brenda Franklin, ABS

Evone Gallardo, PS

Astra Garcia, ES

Rosa Garcia, SPS

Sylvia Garcia, ABS

Gilda Gonzalez, EES

Kimberly Guevara, SPS

Maribel Hernandez, EES

Kathleen Keating, SPS

Cynthia Livers, GR

Araceli Luna, SPS

Mathikone Makaya, SPS

Yvonne Marquez, SPS

Tamara Martin, SPS

Theresa Munnell, SPS

Patricia Munoz, SPS

Gena Nolan, SPS

Cheryl Reynolds-Young, PS

Annalisa Salgado, ABS

Carmen M. Smith, SPS

Roberta Sommers, SPS

Juanita Soriano, EES

Hugh Thornton, ABS

Ify Uwaeme, EES

David Wilkinson, ABS

Castella Ysaguirre, SPS

## 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Cristina Cano, SPS

Candace Edwards, EES

Abelino Martinez, ABS

Linda Thesier, SPS

Raquel Westerman, SPS

## 35 YEARS OF SERVICE

Michelle Cooper, EES

Rhonda Nodal, ABS

Harry Owens, ABS

## 45 YEARS OF SERVICE

Lisa Wisniewski, SPS

# AWARD RECIPIENT

## CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



### Madelynn Knust

Events Technician

Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

Madelynn "Maddie" Knust is the kind of behind-the-scenes force that turns good events into unforgettable ones. As an Events Technician with the Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools, Maddie has become known across the organization as the go-to person for all things related to registration, logistics, and troubleshooting. What truly sets her apart is her mindset: every detail matters, every person deserves support, and every challenge is an opportunity to make things better.

Maddie approaches every event with thoughtfulness and intention. She reviews every Bizzabo setup with the eye of a registrant, spotting inconsistencies or gaps before they become problems. Maddie doesn't just fix issues, she teaches others how to avoid them. Whether she's training colleagues or offering feedback to improve processes, she does so with a spirit of teamwork.

What makes Maddie especially remarkable is her ability to anticipate needs before they are ever spoken. She shows up prepared, not just with tape and pliers, but with insight, compassion, and a genuine desire to help.

Maddie may not seek the spotlight, but her work shines in every event she touches. Her dedication, foresight, and professionalism make her a truly deserving recipient of this year's Classified Employee of the Year award.

# AWARD RECIPIENT

## SITE SUPPORT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



### **Ernesto Garcia** General Maintenance Worker Division of Administration and Business Services

Ernesto Garcia is the kind of colleague every workplace hopes for, dependable, kind, and quietly exceptional. As a Maintenance Worker at the Brooks P. Coleman building, Ernesto brings more than technical skill to his role. He brings an unwavering commitment to service and an authentic pride in every task he takes on.

Whether it's repairing drywall, painting with care, or resolving last-minute issues before a major event, Ernesto never waits to be asked. He sees what needs to be done and does it, often going above and beyond in ways that others might overlook.

What sets Ernesto apart is not just his strong work ethic, but the respect and goodwill he builds wherever he goes. Staff across multiple buildings often mention how helpful and approachable he is. Presenters and visitors alike recall how he paused what he was doing to assist with equipment, carry materials, or offer directions, all while remaining courteous and cheerful. His presence brings reassurance and reliability, traits that make him indispensable to both operations and morale.

Ernesto's pride in his work, his constant pursuit of excellence, and his humble, can-do spirit embody the best of RCOE. He doesn't seek the spotlight, but those who work alongside him know the vital role he plays.

# AWARD RECIPIENT

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR



### Nicholis Kalantar

**Teacher**  
**Division of Student Programs and Services**

Nicholis Kalantar is more than a teacher, he's a mentor, a filmmaker, a creative architect, and a builder of futures. Nicholis leads the Digital Photography and Film Production pathways with passion, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to student growth. His classroom is not just a place to learn about cameras or editing, it's a launchpad for self-expression, leadership, and life-changing experiences.

Nicholis has developed a comprehensive and dynamic Career Technical Education (CTE) program that rivals college-level media studies. Under his guidance, students don't just complete assignments, they produce full-length documentaries, live stream festivals, create public service campaigns, and manage event coverage for the community.

What makes Nicholis truly exceptional is how he fosters a sense of belonging. He invests in students not just as learners, but as individuals with stories to tell. Whether it's through the Patriot Press daily news, the Media Arts Festival, or mentoring a student who finds their voice behind a lens, Nicholis makes every student feel seen and capable. He also encourages civic engagement, with students covering community events and contributing to causes like mental health awareness and food drives.

Nicholis teaches students how to lead, how to communicate, and how to believe in their potential. His influence is lasting, and his impact stretches far beyond the classroom walls.

# AWARD RECIPIENT

## CLASSIFIED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR



### Charles Viramontes

**Director II**

**Division of Early Education Services**

Charles Viramontes leads with quiet strength and a servant's heart. As Director II of Early Education Services, he plays a pivotal role in supporting a division that spans three major programs—Early Care and Education, Early Education Programs, and Migrant Head Start—each with unique structures, goals, and funding requirements. Despite the scale and complexity of his work, Charles remains approachable, responsive, and grounded in his commitment to people.

Charles has led key efforts to strengthen systems for staff and families alike. He worked closely with the Migrant Head Start team to improve curriculum planning and reduce administrative burden for Family Child Care providers. His process, observing, listening, problem-solving collaboratively, and providing training, ensured a successful transition that empowered staff while maintaining program quality. This is a hallmark of his leadership: balancing the human and operational needs with care and integrity.

Beyond systems and strategy, Charles is deeply embedded in the fabric of the division. His support of new managers is especially meaningful; he offers coaching, conducts training, and models how to lead with professionalism and heart. Whether navigating personnel challenges or helping a new leader write their first evaluation, Charles brings patience, clarity, and wisdom.

What sets Charles apart is his ability to bring people together. He doesn't just respond to needs—he anticipates them, addresses them, and turns them into opportunities for growth. His humility, reliability, and deep care for others make him not just a leader, but a cornerstone of the Early Education Services division.

# AWARD RECIPIENT

## CERTIFIED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR



### **Melissa Bazanos Hutton, Ed.D.** Executive Director Division of Educational Services

Dr. Melissa Bazanos Hutton brings a rare blend of strategic vision, policy insight, and grounded leadership to her role as Executive Director of the Assessment, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement (AACI) Unit. Her work has left a transformative imprint not only at RCOE but also across the state, where she is recognized as a respected thought leader in California's educational landscape.

Within RCOE, Melissa leads a dynamic team of professionals with a steady hand and an eye toward excellence. She coordinates support for districts undergoing Differentiated Assistance, leading root cause analyses and ensuring that district leaders are equipped with the tools and insights they need to make meaningful improvements for students. Her approach is collaborative, rooted in both expertise and humility.

Her leadership on statewide initiatives, such as the development of needs assessment tools and her advocacy for continuous improvement over compliance has improved systems and clarified practices for districts throughout California.

Those who work with her know that Melissa doesn't seek recognition—she simply does the work. She uplifts others, navigates complexity with grace, and brings out the best in her team.

# AWARD RECIPIENT

## PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR



### Lucie Gonzalez Principal Division of Student Programs and Services

Lucie Gonzalez exemplifies compassionate leadership and professional resilience in one of the most complex educational settings: correctional and adult education. As Principal of Alternative Education at Desert Edge, Lucie oversees programs across multiple jail sites, working directly with the Riverside County Sheriff's and Probation Departments to provide access to education for incarcerated, on parole, and probationary students. Her leadership ensures that every learner, regardless of circumstance, is treated with dignity and given the opportunity to grow.

Lucie leads with a calm, collaborative spirit. From the moment she stepped into her role, she prioritized listening and learning, giving her staff the space to share insights and shape the program together. She fosters an environment where both students and staff feel seen and supported—an achievement that is even more powerful given the challenging nature of the correctional setting.

Whether guiding her team through WASC Accreditation, mentoring new educators, or championing curriculum tailored to diverse learner needs, Lucie's commitment never wavers.

Lucie is more than an administrator—she's a role model, a mentor, and a catalyst for positive change. Her passion for restorative education, her steady optimism, and her unwavering support for both staff and students are what make her a truly exceptional Principal of the Year.

# AWARD RECIPIENT

## MILO P. JOHNSON AWARD OF DISTINCTION



**Jaymie Baiza**  
**Administrator**  
**Division of Educational Services**

As a longtime team member at RCOE, Jaymie Baiza has earned the deep respect of colleagues across the organization for her calm demeanor, sharp insight, and genuine care for others. Her approach to work is marked by humility and a deep-rooted belief that supporting others behind the scenes or face-to-face—is one of the most powerful contributions a person can make.

Jaymie is the person everyone turns to when they need clarity, consistency, or a thoughtful solution. She brings a steady hand to complex logistics, an encouraging word to new team members, and a level of professionalism that lifts the entire workplace. From mentoring incoming staff to helping navigate unfamiliar systems, Jaymie meets every challenge with grace. Her teammates describe her as the heartbeat of the office, someone who not only makes work better, but makes people better.

Through years of service, Jaymie has shown that excellence is not always loud, it's consistent, kind, and deeply committed to the people we serve. She represents the very values that Milo P. Johnson himself embodied: integrity, dedication, and quiet but powerful leadership.

# RETIREES

Jazmin Arenas de Fuentes, SPS  
**23 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Heather Arnold, EES  
**7 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Evangeline Burton, EES  
**29 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Earl Burts, ABS  
**36 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Julie Carter, ABS  
**26 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Denise Chappell, SPS  
**36 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Vincent Chugbo, SPS  
**19 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Kay Clayton, SPS  
**32 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Karen Comstock, SPS  
**16 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Ann Davis, ABS  
**29 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Amarilis De La Garza, ABS  
**30 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Janice Delagrammatikas, SPS  
**28 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Esther Delgadillo, SPS  
**20 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Candace Edwards, EES  
**30 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Gail Edwards, SPS  
**28 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Deborah Fowler, ABS  
**21 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Thomas Freeman, ABS  
**30 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Rosa Garcia, SPS  
**25 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Eva Gonzales, SPS  
**21 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Lucie Gonzalez, SPS  
**8 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Veronica Guiza, EES  
**23 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Karen Gutierrez, SPS  
**26 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Carmen Guyton, SPS  
**18 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Noemi Hernandez, EES  
**23 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Patricia Johns, EES  
**11 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Kathleen Keating, SPS  
**25 YEARS OF SERVICE**

JoAnne Lauer, EES  
**19 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Lavonne Lee, SPS  
**26 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Christopher Leon, SPS  
**2 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Socorro Lopez, EES  
**21 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Sylvia Lowe, EES  
**39 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Rennea Ludwig, ABS  
**28 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Yvonne Marquez, SPS  
**25 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Katherine Marshall, SPS  
**5 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Barbara Moore, SPS  
**38 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Armenia Murphy, EES  
**19 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Kalvin Narayan, SPS  
**14 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Cecilia Ochoa, SPS  
**23 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Azukaego Felicia Okwuokei, SPS  
**9 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Harry Owens, ABS  
**35 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Gina Pierson, SPS  
**37 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Edna Reid, SPS  
**21 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Irene Reyes, SPS  
**31 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Cecilia Rosiles, EES  
**26 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Annalisa Salgado, ABS  
**25 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Joy Sanders, SPS  
**38 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Jeffrey Shimizu, ABS  
**18 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Richard Slocum, SPS  
**10 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Gabriella Smock, EES  
**21 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Roberta Sommers, SPS  
**25 YEARS OF SERVICE**

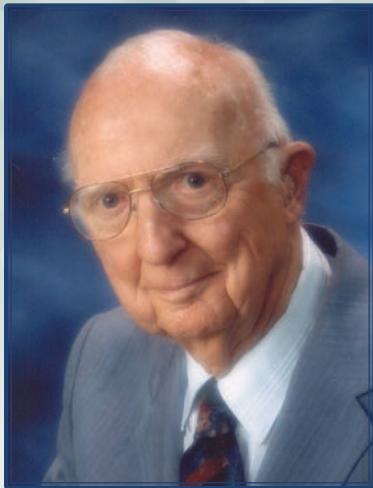
Pamela Veith, SPS  
**19 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Lisa Wisniewski, SPS  
**45 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Donna Woods, SPS  
**24 YEARS OF SERVICE**

# DR. 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**

Moana Hendricks

**2006**

Vicki Saucedo

**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 Delagrassmatikas  
Barbara Moore

**2018**

Deborah Clark  
Lynn Smith

**2019**

Steve Ayon  
Jennifer Beggs

**2021**

Tracey Case

**2022**

JoAnne Lauer

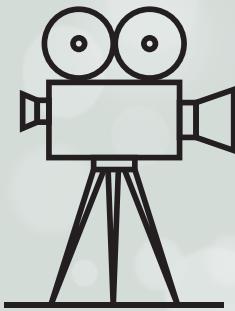
**2023**

Sandra Alicia Martinez

**2024**

Steve A. Leland

# SHARE 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](http://www.rcoe.us/employee-recognition)

**Do you work with someone extraordinary?**

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

**SAVE *the* DATE**  
**JUNE 11, 2026**

**2026**  
*Employee*  
**RECOGNITION**

We  
Celebrate  
You.

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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.

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**SCHOOLSFIRST**   
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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**Dr. Sheela H.**  
Department Chair, Counseling  
Member Since 2014

# THANK YOU

**Riverside County Office of Education employees  
for your dedication and service to the  
students in Riverside County.**



**RIVERSIDE COUNTY  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

EDWIN GOMEZ, Ed.D. | County Superintendent of Schools