

SLOCOE e-News



Monthly News from the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education



A display of Winter Holiday spirit from Oceano Early Learning Center Students

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Reaching Out Our Hands

by James Brescia, County Superintendent

A year ago, our office was in the middle of conference planning, preparations for holiday celebrations, and full-time in-person services. What a difference a year can make! As I complete my sixth year as your county superintendent, I continue to be impressed with your dedication, concern, and ability to serve our community, especially during COVID-19 conditions.

Mother Teresa wrote, "Love is not patronizing and charity isn't about pity, it is about love. Charity and love are the same - with charity, you give love, so don't just give money but reach out your hand instead." SLOCOE employees have been reaching out a hand to assist others. Please take a moment to reflect on your service to the community and know you are appreciated. Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist who founded analytical psychology,

once said, "You are what you do, not what you say you'll do."

During the holiday season, please keep safe, demonstrate compassion, and maintain a positive outlook. When we work together, we are much stronger as a service agency. We will get through this pandemic. I've been reading this Emily Dickinson poem, which is worth sharing.



*Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,*

*And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That so many warm.*



*I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.*

I thank you once again for your service, dedication, flexibility, patience and kindness. Thank you for your time and talents.

~Jim Brescia

Second Annual Staff Art Show at Studios on the Park

The county's Student Art Gallery inside Studios on the Park, 1130 Pine Street, Paso Robles, is showing art and photography from staff of school districts, charter schools, and the County Office of Education through January 15. Be sure to visit! The show, curated by Brent Moser, provides a showcase for staff art while providing time for students to prepare their own art for exhibit. Stroll through the other galleries inside Studios on the Park as well, and do your holiday shopping!



Artwork from SLOCOE staff includes ink drawings by Heidi Hopkins (above center); photography by Karla Knuckles (right); and Andria Gibson (far right).

Valerie Kraskey Looks Back with Gratitude and Pride

Wow! Thirty-five-years in service to SLOCOE's programs and students.



How does one look upon a career in education that spans 35 years? With gratitude and pride. "It's been fabulous," says Valerie, who retires January 18. "I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Valerie was 18 when she took her first job supporting two accountants in private industry. She had trained for professional office work with community college vocational courses, but it wasn't until she joined the County Office of Education in 1985 that she felt she was where she belonged. "I knew from day one I had landed in the right spot," she says.

At that time, "word processing" with desktop computers was new. All telephone calls came through a switchboard. Email communications had yet to dominate office life. As secretary and then department secretary, Valerie supported special ed-

ucation programs, the SELPA, and in the summer, Camp Hapitok. (Her camp name was "Summer Breeze.")

She feels grateful for the mentorship of supervisors who saw her potential, and gave her opportunities to take chances and demonstrate her commitment to SLOCOE's programs for children. One might say Valerie's career exemplifies her own belief in giving one's all behind the scenes, "until time for the curtain to go up" each school year. In her early years, this included inventorying equipment for medically fragile students, keeping tabs on bus transportation needs, or as she describes with a chuckle, "shopping" for extra special supplies in a closet at Chris Jespersen School.

After fifteen years in the special education side of the house, Valerie applied for a position supporting Julian Crocker, then the County Superintendent. To her great surprise (though perhaps not to colleagues and friends), Dr. Crocker offered her the position after a recruitment process that fielded more than 60 other applicants. Now as an Administrative Manager (supervising Media and Communications), and as a valued member of County Superintendent James Brescia's team, Valerie can lay claim to a deep well of knowledge of all the "behind the curtain" workings of a county office. This includes support for the County Board of Education; planning countywide training events for board trustees and support staff; school district governance and elections; committee work; compassionate and knowledgeable responses to the concerns of parents and members of the public; and harnessing social media on behalf of SLOCOE. As one who benefited personally from vocational education, Valerie also gladly supports the growth of career and technical education in our schools.

What will the next phase of life bring? Valerie plans to take six months just to breathe. She looks forward to reconnecting with friends and family, gardening, and walks with beloved Great Pyrenees dogs Nanuk, 7, and Logan, 8 months. Volunteer opportunities also lie in wait.

Valerie, the students, families and staff of SLOCOE thank you for your service. All wish you much happiness in the next phase of life.

SLOCOE Invites You to a Holiday Party on Zoom

Monday, December 21, 2020, 5:00-5:30 pm

Join via Zoom

<https://slococ-org.zoom.us/j/92574429007?pwd=Z01Tczc0S3FLVE53dHJyQm9oc2pSUT09>



Wear your favorite holiday sweater or hat for the sweater and hat contest, enter the drawing for holiday gift cards, and join the holiday sing-along.

A Gift Drive Brings Holiday Spirit to the Main Office

Following a tradition that dates back many years, a Holiday Gift Drive for preschool students is reaching completion in the main office. Educational Support Services thanks all of the participants who shopped for a child in this year's Preschool Holiday Gift Drive. Sponsors who shopped for these children are asked to:

- Deliver their gifts to the main office by Friday, December 11.
- Gifts can be left with Lauren Thorne, Danielle Mitchell, or Crista Whitney, or left in Lauren's office.
- Be sure to include your sponsor card with the gift.

If you have questions:

Danielle Mitchell dmitchell@slococ.org 782-7298

Crista Whitney cwhitney@slococ.org 782-7263



STAFF TRANSITIONS & NEWS

WELCOME TO SLOCOE!

Chelsea Campbell, Behavioral Health Specialist, Chris Jespersen School, Student Programs & Services

Marisol Espino Figueroa, Administrative Assistant II, Educational Support Services

Mia Ramos, Behavioral Health Specialist, Christ Jespersen School, Student Programs & Services

PROMOTIONAL CONGRATULATIONS

Shannon Pimentel, Promoted to Classified Coordinator, Early Learning & Educational Support, Educational Support Services

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

Valerie Kraskey, Administrative Manager, Communications and Media

WELCOME TO A NOVEMBER BABY

Ezra Steven Diaz, born November 15 to Mallory and Steven Diaz. Ezra joins big sister Audrey in the Diaz family.

