

SLOCOE e-News



Monthly News from the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education



Congratulations to the Class of 2021 and to the teachers, mentors and families boosting and cheering their success!

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Brighter Days Ahead

by James Brescia, County Superintendent

I recently heard Mahalia Jackson's version of "A Brighter Day Ahead." The song caused me to pause and think about where we are now as COVID-19 positives decline, safety protocol restrictions lessen, and in-person services increase. There are brighter days ahead.

*I've learned that no matter
what happens, or how bad it
seems today, life does go on,
and it will be better tomorrow.*

~ Maya Angelou

Taking a moment to celebrate the reduction in hospitalizations and the increase in vaccinations is undoubtedly warranted. I receive daily reports from Public Health regarding the pandemic, and the information in the last few reports has been some of the most promising in over a year. We can give thanks to our health care professionals,

safety officers, and to the public service sector, including you. You have stepped up, leaned in, and continued to provide services for our county.

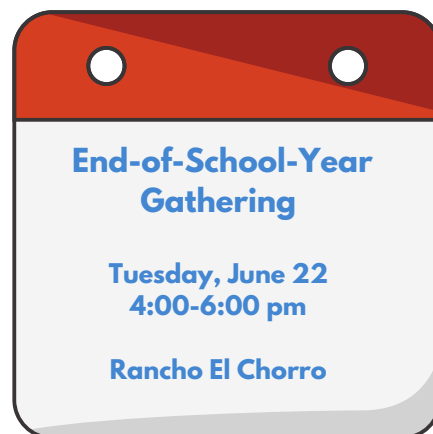
We are planning an outdoor end-of-school-year "thank you" to include all SLOCOE employees on Tuesday, June 22, 4:00-6:00 pm, on the grounds of Rancho El Chorro. Mark your calendars and look for additional information soon.



Thank you for your continued service to the community. It is an honor to serve as your county superintendent of schools.



~Jim Brescia



Meet Sherry Lopez-DeWolf

Payroll Retirement Specialist, Business Services

No challenge appears too large for Sherry, who joined SLOCOE's Payroll staff approximately two months ago. She says she loves to learn, peeling layers of knowledge like the layers of an onion as she deepens her understanding of school payroll. Prior to joining SLOCOE Sherry devoted her time and attention to overseeing distance learning in her own home for three nieces and a nephew, now ages 11, 14, 16 and 17.

"We call our house, *Homework Club*, Est. 2018," she says proudly, adding that her husband is her biggest supporter and cheerleader.

Sherry's home is on property purchased by her grandfather in the 1930s, steeped in generations of family history. Her father grew up there with 13 siblings. During her ten-year stint as a real estate transaction coordinator, Sherry learned how to split the property into two lots and built a new home on the other lot. It took courage to demolish the structurally unsound house that had stood there for years, but Sherry was undaunted. "I drove the bulldozer knocking down the porch!" she says.



Sherry studied and graduated from Cal Poly in 2016, after which she joined a CPA firm, and also volunteered with AARP, providing free tax services. She says serendipity brought her to SLOCOE not long after she made it a goal to find

sustainable and long-term employment. She feels like she belongs here.

In her life away from work, Sherry enjoys horses. Learning to ride five years ago transformed her life, helping her to heal from the trauma of a sudden health crisis that befell a family member while they were vacationing in Hawaii. She now rides as often as possible, at Oceano Beach, at Montana de Oro, and other locations throughout the county. Another companion in her life is Amigo, a chihuahua-mix pup, adopted from Woods Humane Society.

Sherry, you fit right in here at SLOCOE. We wish you much success.

SLOCOE's Collaboration with Community Partners Provides Breakfast and Books for Kids!

Imagine you are a child whose family struggles to provide healthy meals. Imagine your delight when your family receives a "breakfast backpack," which contains a week's worth of food, and books too!

Shannon Pimentel, SLOCOE's coordinator for Raising a Reader, explains that a collaboration with The Monday Club helps to collect donations of new and gently used children's books. The Monday Club delivers the books to the SLO Food Bank, which then offers the books to children and families along with meals. Labels in the books provide reading tips for parents to support regular reading routines and family bonding. According to Shannon, 2,000 books were collected on the first day.



Monday Club volunteer Pamela Wood accepts a box of donated books.

This collaboration between SLOCOE's Raising a Reader program, The Monday Club, and the Food Bank can include you! Book collections are scheduled for June 14, 28, and July 12 and 26 at 1815 Monterey Street in San Luis Obispo. Contact Shannon at spimentel@slocoe.org for more information.

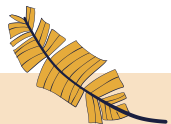


Members of The Monday Club, Shannon Pimentel, and Tara Davis of the SLO Food Bank proudly show off donated books.

"I love when SLOCOE collaborates with community partners like the SLO Food Bank and The Monday Club, offering opportunities for all children, including children who do not have many resources available to them, such as books and literary connections," Shannon says.



Two of SLOCOE's Retirees Graciously Share Thoughts on Future Plans and Gratitude for Their Time with SLOCOE



Bill Barnhill

Manager, Maintenance, Operations,
Transportation
Retiring after 9 years of service

What stands out in your service to SLOCOE? The commitment of my co-workers to always leave things better.

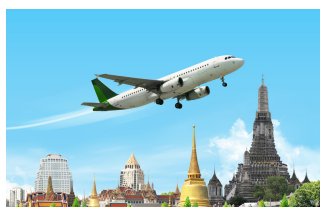
What have you loved most about your career in education? Knowing that we play a role in shaping the future through kids who will inherit the future.

What are you most proud of during your career here? The people I have had the privilege of serving with.

What changes have you experienced during your time with SLOCOE? I started at SLOCOE just after a major construction cycle. Over the past five years, many of those buildings/ sites have been turned over to the districts. I believe that allowed us to focus more closely on supporting each school district. Furthermore, it has allowed the districts to utilize those facilities to expand their ability to service their respective communities.

What do you look forward to in your new chapter of life? All my life I have been [a traveler, artist, volunteer, musician, master of leisure]. Now I will just have more time to devote, especially to the "master of leisure" part!

Any words of encouragement for the rest of us? Keep on doing the great job that SLOCOE has always done by helping to create one good student at a time.



Robin Kirby

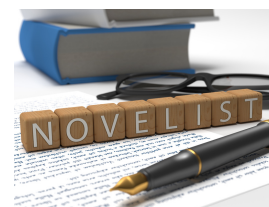
School Counselor, Alternative Education,
Educational Support Services
Retiring after nearly 18 years of service

What stands out in your service to SLOCOE? I found my passion working for the students and families who are experiencing homelessness or in foster care. This position tapped into my desire to understand, care, and support others. I felt so lucky to work for people who struggle hard to get by every day. I also know that I work with an extraordinary caliber of individuals who have empathy and grace to do more than expected.

What have you loved most about your career in education? I loved connecting with the students and recognizing their success. I loved watching the staff at our SLOCOE schools devote their time and energy to individuals who need it the most. I love my team and will miss them tremendously.

What do you look forward to in your new chapter of life? I look forward to following my passion to be a writer. I have a novel in me, as many of us may think we do! I look forward to developing characters and telling a meaningful story. I also really look forward to experiencing some travel to Europe and the holy cities in the Holy Land.

What are you most proud of during your career here? I have felt great pride to work for the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education. The leadership is exceptional. SLOCOE has a positive reputation in the county. I am proud to have been a part of the team.



SLOCOE Sights Captured On and Off "Campus"

Right: Even school buses need towing at times!

Below Left: A flourishing hay bale garden at Loma Vista Community School provides color and edibles.



Below Right: Human Resources staff wear big smiles as they enjoy a lunch out together, the first in a long while, after the lifting of some pandemic restrictions on outdoor dining and gatherings.

[Photos submitted by Shirley Marshall, Angela Simmons, Susan Richardson]



STAFF TRANSITIONS & NEWS

WELCOME TO SLOCOE!

Daniela Garcia, Classified Coordinator for Homeless & Foster Youth Coordinating Services Program, Educational Support Services

Nelson Payton, Manager, Maintenance Operations and Transportation

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR PROMOTION!

Danielle Mitchell, Promoted to Administrative Assistant III, Educational Support Services

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

Bill Barnhill, Manager, Maintenance Operations and Transportation; retiring after 9 years of service with SLOCOE

Robin Kirby, School Counselor, Alternative Education, Educational Support Services; retiring after nearly 18 years of service.

Devon McReynolds, Teacher, Grizzly Youth Academy

Holly Phillips, Director of Special Education, Student Programs & Services

Diane Hunt Roberts, Speech Language Pathologist, Student Programs & Services; retiring after more than 30 years of service.

Heather Soden, Behavioral Health Specialist, Student Programs & Services

Emma Wilkinson, Resource Specialist, Alternative Education, Student Programs & Services