WE ARE TR!

Celebrating Our Successes!

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Graduation 2015

TwinRivers UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendent's Message

You Did It!

The best is yet to come for Twin Rivers graduates

Congratulations to the graduating Class of 2015 and their families. We're so proud of each and every one of you! To the Twin Rivers staff and community, warmest thanks and deep appreciation for all you have done to improve the educational outcomes for all of our students.

I can't say enough about our awesome grads. Graduation rates are up 2 percent from 2013 to 2014 and more students are taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams and applying to four-year colleges and universities.

We are so proud that a Twin Rivers student, Nicole Ogbu, has been offered full scholarships to Stanford University and Brown University, among the top universities in the country. The district has three Dell Scholars — Dallas Vue, Maria Leon and Christy Xiong — who each will receive a $20,000 scholarship. More than 100 students received the State Seal of Biliteracy.

And there's more!

Two of our Career Technical Education (CTE) students — Roger Penaloza and Kathy Thao — were among the top finalists for a national entrepreneurship contest hosted by the Jacobson Institute for Youth Entrepreneurship at the University of Iowa. Christopher Wright won the SkillsUSA state competition in welding and will represent California at the national competition this month in Louisville, Kentucky.

Our staff is soaring, too. Teachers Jeanette Providence and Yolanda Jimenez were selected by University of California, Davis to attend a two-week residency at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London this summer. Lisa Liss was one of 150 educators nationwide to participate in the Freedom Writers Empowerment Symposium held in Washington, D.C. Associate Superintendent Dr. Jacqueline Perez is part of a delegation of the country's top educators chosen to attend the Education First (EF) Global Student Leader Summit in Switzerland and a professional learning study tour to Finland.

The Board of Trustees continues to govern in a highly effective way, supporting a clear vision for how we go about advancing student engagement and achievement. In addition, there's collaboration occurring throughout our system and a very respectful partnership with a deeply caring and diverse community on how best to meet the needs of our students.

A few final words to our graduates: First, my personal congratulations to each of you for your hard work and dedication in your studies to complete high school successfully. Through the next stages of your life, you will make mistakes and fall down many times — but don't give up! These are experiences that will prepare you for the challenges you'll face on your journey. Finally, I wish you the best in all your endeavors and a life filled with happiness and success. Always aim high and don't settle for anything less!

We Are TR!

-Dr. Steven Martinez
Superintendent of Twin Rivers Unified School District

TR Talk

"How are Twin Rivers schools preparing you for college?"

"The teachers are helpful because they are teaching me what I need to learn — like what math skills I'm going to need — so I can go to college and get a good job. The things I'm learning will help me later in life. I want to be an eye doctor when I grow up."

Jagjeet Kaur, *fifth-grader at Regency Park Elementary School*

"I just got enrolled in a program called Breakthrough, which prepares kids for college at a young age. It's a summer program and we're learning algebra and other skills that will help us in the future. My parents didn't go to college because they didn't have the money, so I feel like that's an advantage for me that I have the materials I need to go to college and get the job that I want."

Johan Ruiz, *sixth-grader at Harmon Johnson Elementary School*

"Our school provided a person from Breakthrough to come and speak to us about the importance of college. It's a six-year program that follows you until you go to college. We also have a GATE [Gifted and Talented Education] program that has a lot of activities like youth aviation and teaches advanced math skills. We have a lot of tools to help us."

Cheyenne Vang, *sixth-grader at Harmon Johnson Elementary School*

Student Excels Despite Hardships

A story of perseverance and transformation

by Brittany Wesely

When Rio Linda High School graduating senior Laura Nelson moved from Washington to California in 2011, she thought that beginning her freshman year at a new school without knowing anyone would be one of the most difficult experiences she'd have. Then, just before the start of her sophomore year, Nelson's house burned to the ground, leaving her family homeless.

"My best friend was staying over the night before and we woke up to the fire in my room," Nelson recalls. "A week, maybe two, later, we started school and that was one of the toughest things to do because we didn't have anything at all. It wasn't easy."

After the fire, Nelson's family was not able to settle down in a permanent home. They moved frequently between hotels and rentals and friends' couches. Nelson's grades significantly suffered. She says the chaos of it all wreaked havoc on her family life and put a strain on her relationship with her parents.

Eventually she moved in with her best friend's family, where Nelson says she was able to get support and encouragement that her parents weren't able to provide.

Nelson enrolled in summer school and during the school year participated in the Charge Credit Recovery Program, a program that allowed her to retake classes at the end of the school day to improve her grades.

She also continued to be involved in extracurricular activities, like playing tenor saxophone in the symphonic band and serving on the leadership team for Future Farmers of America.

In honor of her ability to overcome hardships, Nelson was given the Perseverance Award at her school's Senior Awards Ceremony in May. She also earned recognition as an honor roll student at graduation in June.

As her final days of high school come to an end, Nelson is looking forward to her future. She plans to get a job and start taking classes at American River College, but she admits the idea of graduation feels a bit surreal.

"It's going to be a huge relief that I actually made it," Nelson says. "I couldn't have done this without the help of my counselors and teachers and all the support they've given me. I'll never be able to thank them enough."

Student Spotlight

Despite facing homelessness and family conflict, Laura Nelson persevered and achieved her goal of graduating as an honor roll student.
Photo by Charles Gunn

"I couldn't have done this without the help of my counselors and teachers and all the support they've given me."

Laura Nelson
Graduating senior at Rio Linda High School

Dell Scholars from Grant Union High School, from left: Christy Xiong, Maria Leon and Dallas Vue.
Photo by Charles Gunn

Making Higher Education Dreams a Reality

Scholarship eliminates barriers to college

Three Grant Union High School seniors were recently named Dell Scholars, numbering among only 300 students in the nation to receive the distinction. As recipients of the Dell Scholars Program, they have each been awarded a free laptop and $20,000 to be used for college tuition, fees, textbooks, housing or study abroad programs.

The Dell Scholars Program was started in 2004 by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation to award scholarships nationally each year to help ensure that more students not only go to college but also succeed at obtaining a degree. To qualify for the scholarship, students need to be from a low-income family, have participated in a college-readiness program, be graduating with a minimum GPA of 2.4 or higher, and plan to enroll full time in a bachelor's degree program at a higher education institute the fall immediately after high school graduation.

Since Grant started its college-readiness programs in 2008, 18 students have been named Dell Scholars. One of the three recipients at Grant this year is Dallas Vue, the fourth person in his family to receive a Dell scholarship. Vue participated in Upward Bound, a college-readiness program offered at the school in partnership with UC Davis.

In the program, Vue was enrolled in an Upward Bound class during the school year for all four years of high school. He also participated in a six-week summer session at UC Davis, during which he lived in a dormitory on campus and completed college courses.

"Upward Bound taught me perseverance. It showed me that education can really be a life-changing experience," Vue says. "And receiving the Dell scholarship is really going to lessen my financial burden for going to college."

In the fall, Vue will attend UC Davis, where he plans to pursue a career as a medical doctor.

Christy Xiong also participated in Upward Bound and will receive a Dell scholarship this year.

Xiong is the second recipient in her family and says she plans to use the scholarship to pursue her bachelor's degree in computer science at Sacramento State.

The third recipient, Maria Leon, participated in the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at Grant Union High School. Leon is the first person in her extended family to pursue higher education. She also plans to study at Sacramento State, where she will be majoring in kinesiology.

Your Valedictorians

Rio Linda High School

As the oldest child, it has always been important for **Hunter Clark** to set a good example for his two brothers and sister. The Rio Linda High School valedictorian says he tries to do that by working hard to continually push himself to a higher bar of excellence.

A typical day for Clark involves going to school, football practice, practicing violin for an hour, and studying and doing homework. Despite his busy schedule, Clark says he still finds time to hang out with friends and relax.

"One of the biggest challenges for me has always been time management and juggling everything," Clark says. "You have to be devoted to everything you do. I hold myself to a higher standard. I don't want to just be the best in my class. I want to be the best in my district."

Clark will attend Montana Tech of the University of Montana this fall. He is interested in studying either engineering or applied physics.

Highlands High School

Wanting to make a difference in the world is what motivates Highlands High School valedictorian **Nicole Filbert** to succeed. She wants to find a career where she can use her talents to help people, but for now, she's happy to lend a hand in any way she can.

In 2014, Filbert organized a fundraiser through her church to send packaged food, hand sanitizer and blankets to people in Liberia during the Ebola virus outbreak. When she wasn't helping others or studying, Filbert also found time to play on the girl's volleyball, softball and basketball teams. Highlands High School principal Darryl Hawthrone says it is the perfect example of why Filbert is a role model for all of his students.

Filbert says she is looking forward to staying busy in college and exploring her options. She will be attending University of California, Los Angeles and plans on going into the medical field.

"I really want to make a difference in the world," Filbert says.

Creative Connections Arts Academy (CCAA)

Dean-Angelo Horton doesn't see himself as exceptional. But those who know CCAA's valedictorian disagree.

CCAA counselor Desiré Deane-Hanson says Horton is simply amazing.

"He's an overachiever … so hardworking, conscientious and ambitious," says Deane-Hanson. "He has overcome a lot of hardships in his personal life and just has a positive attitude about life. Dean-Angelo is going places and it will be exciting to see where he ends up."

Horton is headed to UC Davis where he plans to major in computer engineering.

"I push myself every day," says Horton. "I want to do well, get a good job, take care of the people I care about and give back to those who have helped me get this far."

Horton credits his mother, godfather and the CCAA staff with keeping him focused.

"Mom always pushed me to do my best — told me I could achieve anything if I put my mind to it."

A Year of Successes

It's not just our students who are graduating and promoting who deserve congratulations. We also celebrate teachers and staff throughout Twin Rivers for helping our students succeed, including these achievements:

Graduation Rate Higher Than Ever

- Graduation rates have increased nearly 2% in one year.
- Most schools in the district boast graduation rates at or above 85%!
- 5 of 6 high schools have graduation rates between 4.8% and 15.8% higher than the state average.

College Applications Increase

Twin Rivers students are applying to college in ever-increasing numbers. Districtwide applications to the California State University and University of California systems increased 13% this year.

UC/CSU application increase by school:

- Rio Linda High up by 21%
- Foothill High up by 18%
- Grant Union High up by 7%
- Highlands High up by 12.5%

BRAVE NEW WORLDS

Graduating seniors from Twin Rivers' Class of 2015 have been accepted to excellent institutions of higher education both near and far. Twin Rivers graduates stay in our region to become local leaders, as well as set off to earn distinction in their careers throughout the country. Here are just a few of the colleges and universities where TR students in the Class of 2015 have been accepted:

Stanford University
Brown University
Cal Poly, Pomona
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
Pepperdine University
UC Berkeley
UC Davis
UCLA
UC Irvine
UC Merced
UC Riverside
UC San Diego

Your Valedictorians

Keema High School

For Keema valedictorian **Rebeca Rio Chavez**, it's all about making good choices and surrounding herself with supportive family and friends.

"I had the discipline to do my schoolwork and not be distracted," says Rio Chavez. "I have had a lot of help at Keema, especially from one teacher — Susie McGuire — who helped me excel."

Rio Chavez is one of more than 100 Twin Rivers students who earned the State Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish. She plans to go to American River College.

"American River is a good start for me," says Rio Chavez. "It will help me really decide what I want to do before I transfer to a four-year university. I'd like to major in creative writing."

She says high school has been a very positive experience, and it was a surprise when she learned she's one of Keema's two valedictorians.

"I feel very fortunate," she says. "But I also feel I earned it."

Keema High School

Naomi Martinez is definitely proud of what she's accomplished so far and excited about the future.

"I worked hard every day because studying wasn't easy for me," says Martinez. "Being valedictorian is a great accomplishment."

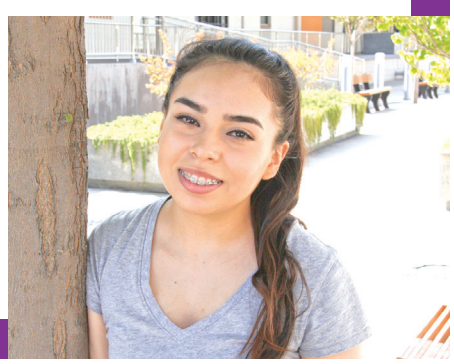
Even though she has always been surrounded by a supportive family, Martinez says that ultimately, it was up to her to dig deep to fulfill her goals.

Her passion is cosmetology and while still in high school Martinez was able to enroll early in a Sacramento cosmetology academy. She has no second thoughts.

"My mom told me to make my passion my paycheck," says Martinez.

She's thrilled to be a valedictorian and has some wise words for students who are struggling to get to classes and get the work done.

"They need to keep going because high school is the starting point for the rest of their life," says Martinez. "It gets you to college and in the workforce … for a better future."



Grant Union High School

Grant Union High School valedictorian **Maraid Jimenez** understood the importance of a good education at an early age.

"I grew up working with my family cleaning offices," Jimenez says. "My parents didn't graduate high school. They never even made it to high school. They both told me if I wanted to have a job like the people in the offices we cleaned, I needed to graduate and go to college."

Jimenez has been driven throughout her high school career to achieve, but also to give back to others. During her senior year, she organized a fundraiser which donated $5,000 to a school in Mexico to purchase playground equipment and build a patio. Darris Hinson, Grant Union High School principal, says Jimenez is someone who will always achieve whatever she sets out to do.

Jimenez will attend University of California, Berkeley this fall and plans on majoring in Latin American studies.

Foothill High School

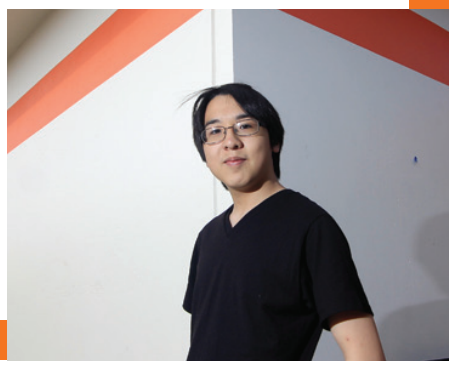
Eric Lu says he has always pushed himself to be the best. The Foothill High School valedictorian maintained straight As since his freshman year, an achievement that is unmatched by anyone else at his school. Lu also served as the student school board member for his school district — Lu was the first at his school to hold that position.

Lu says that all of his teachers were supportive and encouraged him to succeed in high school. Anytime he had a question about anything, they would be there to answer it.

Foothill High School principal Brian Welborn says Lu embodies all of the skills someone needs to be successful.

"You have to be dedicated and be organized to succeed," Lu says. "You have to have good time management skills and be motivated to work hard."

Lu will attend University of California, Berkeley this fall and plans on studying mechanical engineering.



UC Santa Barbara
UC Santa Cruz
CSU Sacramento
CSU San Jose
CSU San Francisco
CSU Channel Islands
CSU Fresno
CSU Long Beach
CSU Monterey
CSU Sonoma
CSU Chico
CSU East Bay
CSU Stanislaus
Humboldt State University
University of Nevada, Reno
University of Oregon
University of the Pacific
University of Utah
Virginia State University
Alabama A & M
Arizona State University
Wyoming State University
Art Institute of San Francisco
North Carolina A & T University

Star Staff

Making a Difference Every Day

Twin Rivers recognizes exceptional teachers

by Mike Blount

Teachers are an extremely important part of society. They educate and inspire youth to become future leaders. They put in countless hours to ensure every student receives a quality education. Twin Rivers Unified School District proudly recognizes these "Teachers of the Year" for the work they are doing in the classroom and beyond.

Marcela Huynh and Ora-Lee Camp will represent Twin Rivers in the 2015-2016 Teacher of the Year program through the Sacramento County Office of Education. The Teacher of the Year program highlights educational innovation, student learning and the rewards of teaching. The winning teachers took part in an intense selection process earlier this spring that included essays, classroom observations and interviews.

Marcela Huynh

Spanish/world language teacher at Grant Union High School

When Marcela Huynh first came to the United States, all she wanted to do was go to college and learn English. After she reached both of those goals, it became clear what she wanted to do next.

"I wanted to be a teacher and be an example to other Hispanic students," Huynh says. "I wanted them to see me and know it doesn't matter how old you are or where you came from or your background. All that matters is what you want to do with your life."

As a Spanish/world language teacher at Grant Union High School, Huynh says she enjoys seeing her students learning. She describes her teaching style as direct, choosing to get all of her students involved in the lesson when she can.

"Students usually start with me in ninth grade, and at the end of three years, having them understand how to construct a sentence is so rewarding for me," Huynh says.

While Huynh admits being a teacher is hard work, she is thankful she has the opportunity to impact the lives of her students.

"My students see me not only as a teacher, they see me as a mother and counselor," Huynh says. "They see me as a doctor. I love teaching because I can be so many things to them and teach at the same time. … I had a student come to my classroom and he hugged me so hard because he wanted to say goodbye. This year he is going to graduate. Those memories are going to stay with me for the rest of my life."

Ora-Lee Camp

Kindergarten teacher at Hillsdale Elementary School

Ora-Lee Camp was inspired to teach by her uncle. As a teenager, Camp spent many days with her uncle, who suffered from brain damage at birth and polio when he was a child. Though he was taken out of school at a young age to help out on her grandfather's farm, Camp worked with her uncle to teach him things when he wasn't working.

"I saw how people treated him — people shunned him and looked down on him," Camp says. "They never knew him. He was such a wonderful person. You can't look at someone and make a judgment. That's what brought me into education."

In 33 years of teaching, Camp has taught every grade of elementary school and self-contained special education. But it's the job she's had for the last 10 years — as a kindergarten teacher — that she enjoys the most.

"I love seeing that little light bulb go off when they start understanding something and put it all together," Camp says. "I get to be part of that and stir a love of learning."

Camp says she teaches with love. One of the most important things for her as a teacher is to encourage her students to try.

"We learn through mistakes, and you have to fail to learn," Camp says. "I want my students to know it's OK to fail and to keep trying. That's how you learn."

"I want my students to know it's OK to fail and to keep trying. That's how you learn."

Ora-Lee Camp

Marcela Huynh and Ora-Lee Camp will represent Twin Rivers in the 2015-2016 Teacher of the Year program through the Sacramento County Office of Education.
Photos courtesy of Twin Rivers

Festival of the Arts is an annual event that showcases student work in all areas of the arts. Students from 27 elementary schools and every junior high and high school in the district were represented.
Photos courtesy of Twin Rivers

Creativity on Display

by Mike Blount

More than 500 students took part in a dazzling showcase of expression at the McClellan Convention Center in April. Festival of the Arts is an annual event that provides students the opportunity to share their work in all areas of the arts with their peers and parents. Students shared their work in either visual art, music or dance.

In addition to live performances, the event featured 750 pieces of visual art from students in first through third grade and 150 pieces from students in grades seven to 12. Every junior high and high school participated, as well as students from 27 elementary schools in Twin Rivers Unified School District.

Organizer Jackie White says about 1,000 people attended.

"The Festival of the Arts brings schools together as part of a larger community," White says. "District staff, teachers, parents and students work together toward one common goal and celebrate student success in one common venue."

White says the arts are important to education because they give students critical avenues to engage and explore learning at the deepest levels of thinking. Arts curriculum allows students to work together and develop problem-solving skills, while also asking them to look at multiple perspectives. White says it is important to celebrate student creativity and talent through an event like Festival of the Arts.

"This event provides students an arena for the community to celebrate their perseverance and dedication after thinking, collaborating and practicing for months," White says.

Some highlights from this year's event include a performance from the 135-member district choir and elementary students from multiple sites singing and playing instruments, including the violin and recorder.

"I am so very proud of the team that puts this together," White says. "It takes a dedicated central staff, teachers and transportation plan to pull all of the parts together. It is our community at its best showcasing what is best about our community — our students."

> **"It is our community at its best showcasing what is best about our community — our students."**
> Jackie White,
> *Festival of the Arts organizer*

YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

Facility improvements beginning in summer

Twin Rivers Unified School District is continuing efforts to renovate its campuses and facilities. Over the next three years, the district will spend more than $25 million on 100 different improvement projects, including these scheduled to begin this summer:

- Turf replacement at Rio Linda High School, Grant Union High School, Highlands High School and Foothill High School
- Addition of walk-in refrigerator at Grant Union High School
- Restroom modifications at Babcock Elementary
- Kitchen HVAC replacement at Norwood Junior High School
- Hardcourt improvements at Woodridge Elementary, Rio Tierra Junior High, Pioneer Elementary
- Pool project at Miles P. Richmond School
- Roofing projects at Dry Creek Elementary, Creative Connections Arts Academy, Rio Linda Preparatory Academy and Rio Linda High School
- Hardcourts and play field improvements at Smythe Academy of Arts & Sciences
- Parking lot improvement at Community Country Day School
- Roof replacement at Foothill Oaks Elementary

A Look Back on the Year

Graduation is a time to look back on the year and the hard work and successes of students, faculty and staff. But it is also a time to look forward. While summer break is here, district staff will be getting ready to push students to meet their full potential next school year. Twin Rivers is committed to supporting the education of all students so they are ready for a promising future. With your help, we can ensure our students remain successful.

GET INVOLVED

Student success depends on strong relationships between families and schools. Help foster respectful partnerships with your child's school by visiting a parent resource center or attending a parent workshop. Further your participation by getting connected to a parent involvement group or committee.

For more information on how you can get involved, visit www.twinriversusd.org.

WORK AT TWIN RIVERS

The district is looking for qualified teachers and support staff to provide the best educational opportunities and classroom experiences for students.

For more information on employment with Twin Rivers, visit www.twinriversusd.org.

TwinRivers
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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916-566-1600
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Visit **www.twinriversusd.org** for:

List of schools — **District news** — **Parent resources**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Don't miss these important summer opportunities!

KINDER KAMP

Kinder Kamp is a great opportunity for pre-kindergarten aged children to visit their future school and experience daily life in an elementary school classroom. Special activities allow children to gain confidence, make new friends and understand classroom routines. If your child is already enrolled in kindergarten for the 2015-2016 school year, will be 5 years old by Sept. 1, 2015, and has not attended any preschool previously, he or she is eligible to enroll.

Kinder Kamp will take place from June 22 – July 23, 2015 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Parents or guardians must attend an orientation and volunteer one day in the classroom. Lunch will be provided by the National School Lunch Program.

For more information on Kinder Kamp and how to enroll your child, please call 916-566-1616.

SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM

Twin Rivers Nutrition Services Department will be offering free, healthy meals to all children 18 years of age and younger at specific locations in Sacramento this summer. No meal application is required. The department will serve Domino's "Smart Slice" pizzas, which feature a whole grain crust, reduced sodium and low-fat cheese. Four sites will offer a barbecue menu.

For a list of locations and times when meals will be served, please check your school's website.