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Educator Honors Announced at Saroyan Gala

The Fresno County Office of Education and Educational Employees Credit Union announced the county's top three educators for 2009 at the Annual Awards Gala held last evening at the Saroyan Theatre.

This year's winners are:

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Amanda James

Clerical Assistant, Polk Elementary School
Central Unified School District

ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

Rosario Sanchez

Principal, Lincoln Elementary School
Fresno Unified School District

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Kent Hammons

Special Education Teacher, Fresno Pacific University ATP
Fresno County Office of Education

The winners were selected from among all classified employees, administrators, and teachers in the thirty-four districts in Fresno County. Each winner was awarded a bronze replica of "The Three R's," a sculpture designed by local artist Clement Renzi. All other nominees received a signed, framed, limited edition art print of the original sculpture.

The Teacher of the Year, Neriada Barba, will now advance to represent Fresno County in the California Teacher of the Year Awards Competition.

Also honored at last night's event was Irma Montalvo (Kerman Unified School District) who received The Barnett Award, named after retired EECU CEO/President Bruce Barnett.

For additional information, please contact Jennifer Quinn, Educator of the Year Program Coordinator, at 265-3014.

END

Winner Bios included

2009 - EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR WINNERS INFORMATION

EMPLOYEE – AMANDA JAMES

Clerical Assistant II, James K. Polk Elementary
Central Unified School District

- Amanda is the Attendance Secretary at Polk Elementary and SO much more! She lead the charge for last year's yearbook, helps students one-on-one with their homework, made the "Accelerated Reader" bulletin board during her time off in the summer and has no problem dressing in the occasional crazy wig or hat to boost the morale of the students.
- Polk Elementary has the highest attendance in Central Unified and the principal gives the credit to Amanda. She started a Saturday School for students and signs them up during the same phone call that alerts her to their absence.
- Amanda also goes above and beyond by volunteering her time for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and is an active member of the Sunshine club at her school.

ADMINISTRATOR –ROSARIO SANCHEZ

Principal, Lincoln Elementary
Fresno Unified School District

- Rosario took one of the poorest and lowest performing school sites in Fresno Unified and turned it into a place the entire community can be proud of. She brought much needed consistency to her teaching staff and supplied an unwavering passion for her students.
- Rosario believes that you must educate the whole child and that equal access for equal opportunity is a must. To give her students the best, she meets with teachers regularly, has a variety of after school programs for both students and parents and, in doing so, she has provided a safe place where everyone can learn.
- From the inside out, Rosario transformed Lincoln Elementary... a diamond in the rough.

TEACHER – KENT HAMMONS

Special Education Teacher, Fresno Pacific University ATP
Fresno County Office of Education

- Excerpt from application: *"When Fredrick Douglas escaped from slavery he talked about what it meant to be free and valued as a person. He took great delight in doing things we take for granted like simply being able to have a job, developing relationships and taking part in the community... our students have the same dreams and need to be valued... I want to give every student the ability to dream, build and contribute."*
- Kent has given his students the ability to contribute by giving them life skills, confidence and healthy habits. Writing a \$40,000 Kaiser Permanente grant, he created a health and fitness program at Break-the-Barriers and has been instrumental in working with local organizations to give his students access to the community in which they live.