

Connections

Sharing news and information about the students, staff, families and communities of the Twin Rivers Unified School District

A call to action

Five simple ways to bring more money to classrooms

School districts throughout California have felt the pain of recent budget cuts, and Twin Rivers District is no exception. This will be a challenging year for our schools. Our classes will be adding a few students and our schools will have less staff to assist with important work outside the classroom. Our communities have also suffered with job losses, decreased home values, and home foreclosures.



There are some things, like our state budget, that we don't have a lot of control over. However, there are a number of simple and surprising ways that our families can ensure that their neighborhood school receives and preserves the most funding possible.

Idea One – Turn in Those Lunch Forms!

Many families don't turn in an application for free or reduced meals because they don't think they qualify, they don't plan to have their child eat in the cafeteria, or they want to save their school money. What families may not know is that each of our schools receives additional funding based on the percentage of families who qualify. In addition to repaying our cafeteria fund for the cost of student meals, this percentage also provides funding for student computers and technology, certain academic programs and staff, even some of our parent involvement programs.

Idea Two – Attend School On Time, Every Day!

Our schools are funded through a formula that keeps track of each hour that a student is in the classroom. Each time that a student is late, leaves early, or misses a school day, we lose funding for staff and programs.

Idea Three – Protect Your Investment!

Our schools are built and maintained through investments by local taxpayers. If you live near a school and you see vandalism, burglary, or another type of crime in progress, call our Twin Rivers Police Department at 916-286-4875 and let us know. Our police department is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also anonymously call the We Tip Hotline toll free at 1-800-78-CRIME. We Tip provides rewards for information leading to an arrest.

Idea Four – Volunteer!

Every school in our district will be operating with less staff this year and your help in a classroom or around campus can assist in filling that gap. If you're interested in volunteering, please call our Family and Community Involvement Department at 916-566-1600 extension 1367. We also plan to launch a new volunteer section of our web site at www.twinriversusd.org, so please check for additional opportunities.

Idea Five – Donate Everyday Items!

Sometimes it's the smallest things that our schools really need - things like Kleenex, copy paper, pens, pencils, printer ink or printer cartridges. Want to give your child's teacher some classroom supplies but not sure what to get? Try a gift card from RAFT (Resource Area For Teachers), a local nonprofit teaching resource center. RAFT is located at 3136 Howard Street, McClellan, CA and can be reached at 916-640-1442.

With the financial challenges we face, every effort can help us get through the next few years. Thank you for all you do to help our north area schools!

Contact Us

General Information
916.566.1600

Activities & Athletics 566.1691

Adult Education 286.3838

Communications 566.1628

Curriculum 566.1635

Human Resources 566.1736

Police Dispatch 286.4875

Preschool Programs 566.1696

Special Education 566.1617

Transportation 263.6315

Our district office is located at
5115 Dudley Boulevard, Bay A,
in the McClellan Business Park.

Board Meetings are usually
held on the first and third Tues-
day of each month. Meeting
times, locations and agendas
can be accessed on our web
site.

www.twinriversusd.org

CONNECTIONS is published
at no cost to schools through
the Communications Office of
the Twin Rivers Unified School
District. For translated copies
and additional information
about our schools, visit
www.twinriversusd.org.

We welcome your feedback.
Please contact the
Communications Office at
916.566.1628.

Twin Rivers Unified School District is proud to announce that Anna Ampania and Reginald Harris have been selected as our District Teachers of the Year for the 2009-10 school year. They will represent Twin Rivers in the Sacramento County Office of Education Teacher of the Year program and will be honored at several events throughout the school year, including a half-time presentation at a Sacramento Kings game!

Anna Ampania creates a lively, hands-on classroom



Anna Ampania knows how to captivate a young audience. Even when the topic is math, Ampania's exuberant first-graders at Woodridge Elementary School dive right in.

There's joy in the classroom as they sing their "math" song and recite multiplication tables with Ampania. This isn't a shy group. The youngsters are quick to speak up when their much-loved teacher asks them who can solve a particular problem. There's a lot of laughter and learning. It's a lively environment where all students are encouraged to jump right in and learn by doing—to focus on the goal and to expect success.

"When they are excited about learning and realize they've accomplished something great, there's nothing better than that," says Ampania. "I feel like I'm making a difference. I'm touching not just the lives of the children that I'm teaching, but I feel like I'm reaching out to their families and the community. I'm helping these kids to become good citizens, to be good people ... I believe the classroom is essential for community building and service learning, shaping the child's self-awareness, showing them a path for good citizenship and responsibility ...

I let my students know that learning gives them power, but they ultimately have to make the choice to be responsible and try their best."

With her passion and commitment, along with her dedication to the Northern Sacramento community where she was educated, it's no surprise Ampania is the

2009-2010 Twin Rivers Unified School District Elementary Teacher of the Year.

"I can't even believe it," says Ampania. "I'm blown away. I'm one of many teachers who love what they do. It's nice to be rewarded, being recognized for something you love to do. I can't picture me doing anything else. At my school I feel like I'm one of 30 teachers who could be Teacher of the Year. I just happened to be nominated by some of my colleagues. I don't necessarily think I'm doing anything special or anything different from what they're doing because we learn from each other."

Ampania has wanted to be a teacher since she was 13 years old. That's when she began teaching karate lessons and mentoring younger children. She gained a lot of confidence and discovered a lot about herself.

"I realized that I kind of had a gift of communication with other people," says a smiling Ampania. "My teachers in elementary school touched my life, and so did the library clerk at Joyce School, Ronda Chedotte, who's still with the district. I just realized that school and education were so important and she made me feel important. I

felt like I wanted to do the same thing for other children that she did for me.

"I think you know in your heart if you are made for teaching. As a teacher I am honoring the people who made a difference in my education and helped me believe that I could be great. I am nurturing our future generations with compassion, integrity, and aspirations to follow their dreams."

The 1997 graduate of Highlands High School grew up in North Highlands and attended F.C. Joyce Elementary School and the former Don Julio Junior High School. Ampania received her bachelor's degree in liberal studies, with a concentration in social science, from California State University, Sacramento. She has been a teacher at Woodridge for five years.

Ampania specifically wanted to work in the Northern Sacramento area after college. She feels connected here and participates in many community events. She's a fourth degree black belt and has been working with young people and adults in the community for more than 15 years.

"I couldn't picture being anywhere else," says Ampania. "I feel like I belong here. It's my community. It's where I grew up. I'm really comfortable where I'm at. My parents live about eight minutes away from this school. I lived with them all through college and did my student teaching in the former Rio Linda District.

"I'm passionate about what I do and I'm happy to come to school every day. I feel very supported by the staff and the families here. I feel like Teacher of the Year is not just an award I'm getting. It's an award for Woodridge, too, recognizing all the things we've been doing that are good."

From classroom “menace” to teacher of the year

Too bad Reginald Harris isn't an old school song and dance man. What a kick he would get right now singing a song from the 1966 Broadway musical Sweet Charity.

The song—“If My Friends Could See Me Now.”

Of course, Harris would have to change it to: “If My Former Teachers Could See Me Now.”

“I had elementary school teachers who basically said I wouldn't amount to much because I was somewhat of a menace in the classroom,” says Harris, flashing one of his bright smiles. “I was the class clown, always getting into trouble. I was bad. My mother could show you a stack of conduct notices and suspensions.”

Here's a news flash for Harris' former teachers. The little kid who gave you so much grief is no longer a “menace.” He's the Twin Rivers Unified School District Secondary Teacher of the Year.

“When I was told I jumped up in the air,” says Harris. “After I told my wife, I called my mother, dad and grandmother. I was just amazed. My dad was right. Hard work pays off and people see that.”

Harris is the physical education department chair at Grant Union High School. He's also the athletic director and the animated and extremely vocal defensive coordinator for the 2008 California state champion Grant Pacers football team.

What a year it's been for Harris, who used to teach earth science at Grant. He has a new baby boy (his third son), a state championship ring, and now Teacher of the Year.

“It's just been great for me and my family,” says Harris. “I love where I'm at in life. When I was in college I didn't know what route I was going

to take. I thought about majoring in finance, but it wasn't my passion and I needed to find my niche. A neighbor who lived to 104 years old told me to write down my pros and cons. I wrote that I was good at sports and working with children. I worked on campus with the National Youth Sports Program promoting an active lifestyle for kids. It was great. So I declared physical education as my major and never looked back.”

Harris attended Hampton University. He received a graduate degree in sports management at Old Dominion University and got his administrative credentials at California State University, Sacramento.

“I have the same motivation and passion now that I had for teaching 19 years ago,” says Harris. “No burnout for me because I'm motivated by the children. They're my battery in life. To be able to look at students and be in a position to lead them into becoming productive young men and women ... it's the pinnacle for me.”

With a lifelong passion for sports, Harris says he never just wanted to coach. For those who have seen him on the football field, it's hard to believe. He's considered a natural.

“I wanted to be an educator, to help young people to be successful and be able to have skills to survive in this world we live in,” says Harris. “And as an educator in physical education I want to inspire kids to go out and live an active



and healthy lifestyle. When I grew up we couldn't wait to get out of school and play in an open field. Kids today don't do that very much. Many have a sedentary lifestyle. I love motivating them. Kids need to be motivated to be successful, whether it's on the football field or in the classroom.”

Harris has been at Grant since 2002 and says it's where he wants to stay. He puts in long hours, especially during the football season. And during the summer he's the director of a Pop Warner camp full of youngsters who want to be Grant Pacers.

“I would never trade being at Grant with anything,” says Harris. “I love this place. I love being a Pacer. I'm a Pacer for life. But what I love the most is being connected to the Del Paso Heights community. Even my son plays for a little league baseball program here. So when I say I'm connected to this community, I don't just mean me. I mean my family, too.

“I have been blessed. I realize I wouldn't be in this position if not for Grant's faculty and staff, the administrative team, and all the stakeholders in the community. I'm a better educator because of them and our students. I open my arms to establish a comfortable learning atmosphere where they are challenged, motivated and inspired.”

Volunteers Needed...Project DREAM (Developing Resiliency through Education, the Arts and Mentoring) is a private, nonprofit organization that supports enrichment programs for Twin Rivers students, including programs in the arts, field trips and athletics.

Project DREAM is actively seeking parents, community members and business partners to serve on our Advisory Board. If you are interested, please contact Kate Bishop-Hazarian at 916.566.1788 or Email kate.bishop@twinriversusd.org.

www.dreamtwinrivers.com

Superintendent's Corner



No doubt about it, these are challenging times. With less funding for schools and programs, neighborhoods suffering through job and home losses, and our state struggling with a deep financial crisis, there are many reasons to worry.

There are also many reasons to feel hopeful. Our staff, our community, and our students are incredibly talented and resourceful. Working together, giving where we can, and filling in the gaps until our state's economy recovers, we will get through this.

At Twin Rivers, this means doing whatever we can to minimize the impact on our students. It means keeping our bus service and summer school programs going despite the economic challenges. It means creating partnerships with local businesses and nonprofit organizations to get more involved with our schools and students. It means staying positive even when our class sizes are larger than we want, even when we temporarily lose good programs, even when we are taking furlough days to preserve staff and programs.

The north area is resilient and strong. We have been through tough times before, and we will do it this time as well. I hope you'll take a moment to read on page one about how you can help our schools, sometimes simply by filling out a form or making sure your child attends class every day. I know you will enjoy reading the personal stories of our incredible Teachers of the Year as well.

Despite the challenges, we are using this time as an opportunity to become more creative, collaborative, and emerge even stronger and more connected to our community and families. Thank you for all you do for north area youth, we look forward to working with you to *inspire each student to extraordinary achievement every day!*

~Frank Porter, Superintendent

Эта информация доступна на русском языке на нашем веб-сайте www.twinriversusd.org/russian. Если вы желаете получить отпечатанную копию этой информации на русском языке, пожалуйста позвоните по телефону 916-566-1600, ext. 1278.

Si prefiere leer esta información en español, visite nuestra página en la red electrónica www.twinriversusd.org/spanish. Si le gustaría recibir una copia en otro idioma, por favor comuníquese al 916-566-1600 ext. 1306.

Yog koj xav nyeem cov ntawv no hais ua lus Hmoob, mus saib peb lub internet page ntawm www.twinriversusd.org/hmong. Yog koj xav tau ib daim qauv, thov hu 916-566-1600 ext. 1308.



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Congratulations to all of our 2009-2010 Teachers of the Year

Lynn Jensen, Adult Education Program
Denise McManus, W.A. Allison Elementary
Drucilla Ramirez, Aero Haven Elementary
Brenda Hin, D.W. Babcock Elementary
Alicia Todd, Michael J. Castori Elementary
Thuy Pham, Creative Connections Arts Academy
John McBeth, Del Paso Heights Elementary
Danielle Holaday, Dry Creek Elementary
Carolyn Daniels, Fairbanks Elementary
Denise Retter, Foothill Farms Junior High
John Lennertz, Foothill High School
Megan M. Gordon-Wooden, Foothill Oaks Elementary
Connie Cantalupo, Frontier Elementary
Shawn Martin, Garden Valley Elementary
*Reginald Harris, Grant Union High School
Sara Rikalo, Hagginwood Elementary
Brooke Hoppe, Highlands Academy of Arts & Design
Michelle Dice-Hodgdon, Hillsdale Elementary
Patty Fisk, Harmon Johnson Elementary
Michael A. Ossola, F.C. Joyce Elementary
Mike Lambert, Keema High School
Patricia J. Stackpole, MLK, Jr. Technology Academy
Laurie Morrison, Kohler Elementary
Bob Hablitzel, Larchmont Elementary
Michael Shaltry, Madison Elementary
Hannah Ures, Morey Avenue ECD
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Rebecca Hemphill, North Avenue Elementary
Summer Sorosinski, Northwood Elementary
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Sharon Reichelt, Orchard Elementary
Jesse Topasna, Pacific Career and Technology
Jim Tarrell, Pathways CDS
Stephanie Dvorak, Pioneer Elementary
Joy Ball, Regency Park Elementary
Kim Poppin, Ridgepoint
Sharon Glover, Rio Linda Elementary
Vladimir Gavrillov, Rio Linda High
Kristen Swain, Rio Linda Junior High
Ann Veu, Rio Tierra Junior High
Dan Chambliss, Robinson CDS
Gail Cunha, Sierra View Elementary
Shea Borges, Smythe Academy, K-6
Catherine King, Smythe Academy, 7-8
Terry Wheaton, Hazel Strauch Elementary
Paul N. Bennett, Village Elementary
Pam Avery, Vista Nueva Career & Technology
Anthony Wood, Westside Elementary School
Laurie Walker, Westside Preparatory Charter School
Bradley J. Meyer, Woodlake Elementary
*Anna Ampania, Woodridge Elementary

*indicates Twin Rivers District Teacher of the Year