CLASS NOTES

BY JANINE DEFAO

Award Winners, Scholarships, Grants and More

Education news this fall includes award-winning teens, available scholarship accounts and grants, and more.

1 Million Scholarship Accounts Claimed

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond announced in September that a million families have claimed CalKIDS scholarship accounts through a state program that allows eligible families to receive up to $1,500 to be used for qualified higher education and career training expenses including tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, and computer equipment.



A million California families have claimed CalKIDS scholarship accounts through a state program.

Every child born in California on or after July 1, 2022, is awarded a CalKIDS Scholarship worth up to $175, and 60% of public school students in grades 2-12 can secure a $500 scholarship. Students in foster care receive an additional $500, and students experiencing homelessness receive another $500, for a total scholarship worth up to $1,500. Families can check eligibility and claim an account at CalKIDS.org using their student's 10-digit Statewide Student Identifier (SSID), date of birth and county of enrollment.

Thurmond also highlighted a new personal finance graduation requirement under which California public high schools must offer a standalone personal finance course beginning in the 2027-28 school year, with completion required starting with the graduating class of 2030-31.

"Financial literacy is about giving young people the tools to build their own futures," he said. "We fought to make personal finance part of every California student's education because students should graduate knowing how to budget, save, invest and make informed financial decisions. CalKIDS builds on that commitment by giving eligible students a real investment in the opportunities ahead."

Teens Awarded for Making a Difference

Three freshmen at Stanford University have been awarded the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, a national award that recognizes 25 outstanding young leaders ages 8 to 18 who have made a significant positive impact on people and the planet.



Sophie Kim

Fifteen top winners each receive $10,000 to support their service work or higher education, and 10 others are recognized.



Daniel Vinegrad

Sophie Kim, 18, of Huntington Beach was one of the top winners. Kim founded The Clean & Green Initiative as an online community for young people struggling with eco-anxiety during the Covid pandemic. Her nonprofit now includes more than 700 members and works to convert climate anxiety into local action. She also founded the Bipartisan Bridges program to bring high school students together for structured debates on social issues.



David He

Recognized as runners up were Daniel Vinegrad and David He. Vinegrad, 17, of Coronado, founded Stop the Sewage to combat the Tijuana River sewage crisis along the United States-Mexico border where for decades, failing wastewater infrastructure has released billions of gallons of untreated sewage into Southern California's coastal waters. His coalition of students has organized large-scale beach cleanups, protests, letter-writing campaigns and community forums.

He, 18, of Poway, created a bioremediation method for breaking down ocean microplastic pollution using genetically engineered native marine bacteria. He has also developed a

theoretical bioreactor system for safe implementation of his bacterium within the marine environment.

Garden Grants Available

Big Creek Lumber is again offering schools within 25 miles of one of its locations the chance to receive redwood garden bed kits for use in school gardens and outdoor learning projects.

The program, now in its 11th year, has awarded grants to more than 100 schools, giving students and teachers a practical way to learn about nutrition, agriculture, carpentry and forestry.

Applications are due Oct. 30 and winners are chosen by random drawing, with two winners per location. Big Creek Lumber has Bay Area locations in Half Moon Bay, Santa Cruz and Watsonville. For more information, visit bigcreeklumber.com/schoolgardenbedgrants.

Library Aquarium Reopened

The Cupertino Library unveiled a refreshed saltwater aquarium, featuring over a dozen species of fish in a 16-foot-long, 3,240-gallon tank.

Originally opened in 2004, the aquarium is a beloved city landmark that was due for updates including a refurbished artificial reef. The work was made possible by the Cupertino



The Cupertino Library reopened its aquarium after receiving donations for renovations.

Library Foundation and donors, and it supports the Santa Clara County Library District's strategic goal of making libraries welcoming to all.

The library is located at 10800 Torre Ave., Cupertino.

Janine DeFao is editor of Education & Enrichment.

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