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Lamorinda teachers compete for County Teacher of the Year

By Sora O'Doherty



Cindy Fisher Photos Sora O'Doherty Jennifer Dodd Jennifer Strohmeier

Three Teachers of the Year from Lamorinda elementary schools are in the running for Contra Costa County's 2019-20 Teacher of the Year award: Cindy Fisher of Happy Valley Elementary School (Lafayette School District), Jennifer Strohmeier of Donald L. Rheem Elementary School (Moraga School District) and Jennifer Dodd of Del Rey Elementary School (Orinda Union School District).

Although Moraga just selects one Teacher of the Year for the entire district, both Lafayette and Orinda select a TOY for each of the schools in their districts. For Lafayette, in addition to Fisher, the following were deemed Teachers of the Year: Katie Pitts, Stanley Middle School; Deborah Hungerford, Springhill Elementary School; Gwen Rikeman, Lafayette Elementary School, and Kim Isaacs of Burton Valley Elementary School. For Orinda, in addition to Dodd, the Teachers of the Year are

Terry Schrittwieser, Glorietta Elementary; Beth Hoogerhuis, Sleepy Hollow Elementary; and Liz Headley of Wagner Ranch Elementary. In addition, OUSD also named Asley Appel as Teacher of the Year at more than one site, and Eric Page as Teacher of the Year at Orinda Intermediate School.

"We are extremely proud of the Teachers of the Year, Class of 2019-2020," reports Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey. "When you review their TOY applications, it is quite evident that the latest candidates were thoughtfully selected to represent their schools and districts, while at the same time truly embody what is best about public education."

The county's TOY program uses a three-stage selection process, with a point and percentage system to determine the final candidates. A committee of 13 judges, representing the county's education, business, and public-sector partners carefully reviewed the TOY representative applications submitted by the school districts. This committee independently read and rated each application. After the application screening and scoring are completed, four teachers will be selected to advance to the next two phases as finalists. Then from April 22 to May 17, a small committee of education specialists and business partners will observe the finalists interacting with their students. Immediately following, the committee will interview the candidates, discussing topics such as their teaching philosophy and techniques.

On July 24, the TOY finalists will each give a three- to five-minute speech to another panel of a dozen educators, business, and public-sector representatives who will judge the finalists on their speech and presentation skills.

On the evening of Sept. 26, all 22 Contra Costa County TOYs, accompanied by their families, friends, and co-workers (an audience of close to 500) will be honored at the annual Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year Dinner Celebration, held at the Hilton Concord. The night will conclude with the announcement of the two 2019-20 Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year.

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