

## **SchoolsFirst FCU Partners with Santa Maria-Bonita School District to Celebrate 2nd Annual Excellence in Education Awards Gala**

**TUSTIN, Calif. (April 21, 2026)** – [SchoolsFirst Federal Union](#) partnered with the Santa Maria-Bonita School District for the 2nd Annual Excellence in Education Awards Gala, held March 27 at the Santa Maria Fairpark Convention Center.

The evening celebrated the achievements of district employees and honored the talent, dedication and passion they bring to Santa Maria-Bonita schools. Awards were presented in three categories: classified employees, certificated employees (teachers) and administrative employees. Nominees were selected by their peers and chosen by a panel of community partners.

Among several finalists honored in each category, this year's Excellence in Education Awards honored the following individuals for their dedication and contributions to student success:

**Classified Employee of the Year:** Lucy Castaneda, Office Manager, El Camino Junior High School

**Teacher of the Year:** Pamela Morse, School Counselor, Oakley Elementary School

**Administrator of the Year:** Katie Ibarra, Program Specialist, Special Education

"Educators and school staff play a critical role in shaping student success, both in and out of the classroom," said Josh Smith, vice president, school and community relations. "The Excellence in Education Awards Gala recognizes the dedication, impact and commitment these individuals bring to their school communities every day."

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### About SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union

SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union is dedicated to improving the financial lives of its Members. Founded in 1934 by 126 school employees, the Member-owned cooperative provides a full range of financial products and services to more than 1.5 million Members and is the largest financial institution dedicated to serving school employees and their families. SchoolsFirst FCU has been named California's top credit union by Forbes for seven consecutive years and recognized by J.D. Power as the #1 Credit Union for Member Banking Satisfaction for two years in a row. With more than \$36 billion in assets, SchoolsFirst FCU is the largest credit union in California and the third largest in the United States. For more information, visit [schoolsfirstfcu.org](https://schoolsfirstfcu.org).

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