**DRAFT FOR REVIEW**


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**SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union Sponsors 2025 Santa Barbara County Teacher of the Year**

**and 2024 Classified School Employees of the Year Awards**

**Tustin, Calif. (June 14, 2024)** – [SchoolsFirst Federal](https://www.schoolsfirstfcu.org/gateway/schoolsfirstfcu/home) Credit Union, the largest credit union in California and the largest serving school employees and their families, today announced its sponsorship of the Santa Barbara County Teacher of the Year and Classified School Employees of the Year annual recognition programs.

The Teacher of the Year award recognizes one PreK-12 educator from a school in Santa Barbara County as an exemplary voice celebrating and representing all teachers. Separately, the Classified School Employees of the Year award recognizes multiple winners from nine classified school employment categories. These awards are among the highest honors an educator or classified employee in Santa Barbara County can receive.

The 2025 Santa Barbara County Teacher of the Year winner, announced May 9, is Laura Branch, a science teacher at Ernest Righetti High School (ERHS) in the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District. In addition, four Santa Barbara County classified school employees were recognized for their work as 2024 Classified School Employees of the Year:

* Nancy Barclay, lead custodian at El Camino Elementary in Lompoc Unified School District
* Marianne Heuchert, office manager for the Child Nutrition Department in Orcutt Union School District
* Kara Lane, librarian and media specialist at Joe Nightingale School in Orcutt Union School District
* Deborah “Debbie” Smith, school office assistant at Mountain View Elementary in Goleta Union School District

Each of the honorees will represent Santa Barbara County in California’s statewide competition.

“Teachers and classified school employees such as these winners are instrumental in fostering an environment for learning that creates a positive impact for students, laying the groundwork for their future accomplishments,” said Carol Chaney, senior school and community relations specialist for SchoolsFirst FCU. “It is important that we recognize their contributions to our schools, students and communities, as well as the dedication and innovation they demonstrate in their work.”

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About SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union

SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union is the largest credit union serving school employees, and once again Forbes has named SchoolsFirst FCU the top credit union in California. Serving school employees and their families, the organization is dedicated to delivering World-Class Personal Service and improving the financial lives of its Members. Today they serve more than 1.4 million Members with a full range of financial products and services. SchoolsFirst FCU was founded in 1934, when 126 school employees pooled $1,200 and established a Member-owned cooperative to help improve each other's lives. In 2024, the Credit Union reported more than $30 billion in assets and remains the largest credit union in California. For more information about SchoolsFirst FCU, visit schoolsfirstfcu.org.

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