

# THE SIGNAL

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**Santa Maria Joint Union**  
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear SMJUHSD Staff,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones doing well, as we conclude the first semester of the school year. I would also like to extend my warmest greetings, and wish each of you peace, health, and joy during this holiday season. Maria and I are looking forward to having both of our daughters home for a few days during the winter break to celebrate Christmas together.

As we head into the new calendar year, there are several changes to the composition of our school board. Ms. Diana Perez will serve as the new Board President and Ms. Amy Lopez as the new Clerk. Dr. Carol Karamitsos has completed her fourth term on the board, most recently as President, and did not seek re-election. Mr. Dominick Palera completed his second term on the board and was not re-elected. I am grateful to Carol and Dominick for their commitment to serving our community on the school board, 16 years and 8 years respectively. They led with great integrity and conviction, dedicated to meeting the needs of all students in our district. They were honored for their service and leadership at Tuesday's board meeting. New to the board, we welcome Mr. Feliciano Aguilar and Mr. David Baskett. Mr. Aguilar is a school psychologist for the Santa Maria-Bonita SD and Mr. Baskett is an aviation professional who serves on the Santa Maria airport board.

During the winter break, school and district offices will be closed to the public. We will reopen the District office on January 3, with schools reopening on January 9, and classes starting on the 12th.

Have a safe and wonderful winter break. Thank you for all that you do for our students in SMJUHSD...where greatness grows!

With much gratitude,

Antonio Garcia  
Superintendent

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Where greatness grows.

# BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT

SMJUHSD staff were out in force for thousands of parents and students during "Back-to-School Night" at Pioneer Valley, Righetti and Santa Maria High Schools on August 25 and Delta High School on Sept. 1.

The friendly environment gave families a chance to experience a student's schedule, meet staff, teachers, and members of the administration. Teachers were available to answer questions about course expectations and academic progress. Parents were also urged to ask questions about SMJUHSD participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program for the 2022-23 school year.

"My mom comes to open house every year so that she can learn more about my classes and get to know my teachers," said PVHS senior Makayla Gonzales. "Both of us always look forward to spending this time together."

"Back To School Night is always a fun opportunity for parents to tour our campus and meet each of their students' teachers and tonight was no exception," said Panther Principal Shanda Herrera. "We had counselors available to answer questions and PVHS made free covid take home kits available for our families."

Former SMJUHSD School Board Member Dominick Palera, who greeted parents, students, and staff at all three comprehensive high schools, described the events as "very engaging experiences" for all.



The Human Resources Department is still recruiting for multiple positions . Please check our website for vacancies and send the link to others you know that may have the skills we are seeking.

<https://www.applitrack.com/smjuhsd/onlineapp/>

# THE GREAT SHAKEOUT

"The Great Shakeout" rocked the SMJUHSD and nine million others in California on Thursday, October 20th.

The SMJUHSD "Shake!" happened at Pioneer Valley, Righetti, Santa Maria, Delta, and the Mark Richardson Career Technical Education Center and Ag Farm. Everybody participated in the statewide drill to practice what to do during earthquakes, and to improve preparedness. Santa Maria High School held its drill separately.

Staff used the intercom to announce they were simulating an earthquake. Students were instructed to move away from windows and heavy objects and get beneath their desks in the "Drop, Cover and Hold On" position for one to two minutes. Checks were conducted in all bathrooms, hallways, classrooms, and facilities before the "all clear" announcement ended the drill.



"Everyone knows that when we talk about earthquakes, it's not a matter of if, but when," said Director of Facilities, Operations and Transportation Reese Thompson.



## RHS Tony Payne



ERHS Varsity Football Coach Tony Payne, who took over the program in 2018, stepped down Nov. 10 to have more family time and dedicate more time to his special education classes.

He led the Warriors program for five seasons, which included last year's Central Section CIF Division 5 title, the first for Righetti in football.

"It's been an honor to be part of the Warrior football program and a dream come true," said Payne, who graduated as a Warrior in 1995. "I love Righetti High School and I'm not going anywhere. I plan to help this program to continue to grow and thrive. I am proud of

what we have accomplished in the last 5 years, and I am forever grateful for the chance to coach and teach at my alma mater. There are so many people that have supported our program and I greatly appreciate all of them. Football is a tough sport for tough kids, and I appreciate the commitment and the sacrifice that my Warriors make for this program. Shout out to the "CHOSEN ONES"!!! (this means not everyone will have the privilege to play varsity tackle football).

Rustin "Russ" Pickett has been selected as the new Head Coach. The comprehensive hiring process included visitations, zoom interviews, as well as in-person formal interviews, according to Warrior Principal Ted Lyon. Pickett is currently working as the Athletic Director at McClane High School in addition to his duties as a position coach at Fresno City College.

Payne has been coaching football on the Central Coast for about 15 years at schools including PVHS, OAHs and RHS. He played two years of football at AHC before earning a full ride scholarship to West Texas A&M where he also played a few years. He has a BA Degree from Cal State University, Fresno.

## PVHS Athletic Director Anthony Morales

Pioneer Valley HS Athletic Director Anthony Morales has been selected as the recipient of the Central Section Athletic Director of The Year Award.

Morales will receive public recognition for this great accomplishment at the C.S.A.D.A. Conference Awards Banquet at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Santa Clara on April 22, 2023.

"I am very honored for this prestigious award," Morales said. "Most importantly, I am very blessed to work with all of you and our entire student body." Morales will also be featured in their newsletter this summer.

"Congratulations Anthony on your commitment to Pioneer Valley and for being recognized by your peers," said Panther Principal Shanda Herrera.

He has served as Athletic Director at Pioneer Valley since December 2020.




# SANTA MARIA EMPTY BOWLS

SMJUHSD Culinary Arts students and a few educators teamed up to help provide healthy food for those facing hunger in the Santa Maria Valley and Santa Barbara County.

The students, who were from SMHS, PVHS, ERHS and DHS, made tasty pork and chicken pozole at the Mark Richardson Career Technical Education Center & Ag Farm. The event at the SM Fairpark benefited the Santa Barbara County Food Bank.

Warrior Teachers Elisa Carlson and Melissa Johnson volunteered and helped the public choose their beautiful bowls. Warrior students decorated and donated 200 bowls and help raise \$6,000 for the Food Bank. CTE Director Paul Robinson also pitched in and served the soup from the CTECAG.





TACO TUESDAY 2022-23	
Date	School Site
12/16/22	SSC
2/14/23	PVHS
3/14/23	RHS
4/4/23	SMHS
4/18/23	CTE
5/16/23	DELTA
6/6/22	SSC

## Maintenance and Operations

All District Maintenance and Operations Staff at their Annual Safety Training.



## Mid-Year Retirees



Congratulations to all mid-year retirees!

Thank you for the many years of service to the following staff members:

- Oral Abellano – Bus Driver for 16+ years
- Marc Brogoitti – District Energy Manager for 9+ years
- Daniel Nunez – SMHS Campus Security Assistant for 15+ years
- Jose Rodriguez – SMHS Custodian for 15 years



# SMHS NEW BUILDING

Construction on the new Santa Maria High School 50 classroom/admin building is now 83 percent completed and expected to be finished by April 2023, according to Gary Wuitschick, Director of Facilities & Logistics. Students and staff will be able to move in by Fall of 2023.

Presently, various activities by construction trades are underway. They include including tiling, fixtures, carpeting, ceiling grids, plumbing, electrical, painting, security systems etc.

The new building will help ease the congestion on Camino Colegio, that small dead-end street, now the front entrance. It will also create permanent classrooms and eliminate nearly all portable classrooms.

The three-story 88, 774 square-foot structure will face Morrison Avenue and feature visitor parking and a bell tower. It's paid for through Measure H, passed by voters in 2016.



## TEACHER NEWS

Righetti High School Media Arts Teacher Jacob Gustafson was recently honored with the Excellence in Film Education award during the Central Coast Entertainment Expo at the Clark Center in Arroyo Grande.

The Central Coast Film Society's competition recognizes educators who provide educational lectures, screenings, seminars and/or other platforms for local students and filmmakers. Teachers from SLO High, Morro Bay High, Central Coast New Tech, Allan Hancock College, and Cal Poly also competed in the Central Coast Film Society competition.

"The administration has always been very supportive of my program since day 1 and continues today. I am also blessed to have the most enthusiastic, engaged, motivated, and fun students a teacher could ask for. I enjoy their creativity, humor, and respectful behavior. I truly believe I have the best students at RHS and that makes my job a whole lot of fun. Without my great students, there is no excellence in film education. I'm surrounded by amazing teachers, administrators, and students. Greatness is everywhere." – Mr. Gustafson



## Outgoing Board Members

Former SMJUHS Board of Education members Carol Karamitsos and Dominick Palera won't be forgotten for their dedication to students, parents, district staff and the Santa Maria Valley.

Karamitsos and Palera have helped keep the district fiscally responsible, watched the community pass a more than \$100 million bond (Measure H 2016) to improve infrastructure, managed two superintendents, oversaw the redistricting process, the creation of a new logo and much more.

Dr. Karamitsos, who most recently served as board president, was elected in November 2006. She represented Trustee Area 2. "My parents taught me that education provides us opportunities to reach our goals," Karamitsos said. "I will always be grateful to the community for entrusting their youths' high school experience to us and have tried to set direction that benefitted the students' wellbeing as completely as possible. I have enjoyed the energy and the talents of the students and the staff. I have gained wonderful friendships along the way. I will miss the work and the fun of being on the board, but I will continue to serve the community as a private citizen!"



Palera, who was elected in November 2014, represented Trustee Area 5. "I have been honored to have served the district as a board member these last 8 years," Palera said. "During this time, I have gotten to know some incredible and dedicated people that I will never forget. I look at public service as not what is in it for the individual but what contribution you have made to make the district a better place. My hope as I leave is that I have lived up to that and wish the new board all the best in the years to come."