

PROCLAMATION

In honor of

Dr. James R. Tarwater

Whereas, Lake Tahoe Unified School District scored big when our esteemed Superintendent, Dr. James R. Tarwater reported for duty at Lake Tahoe Unified School District on July 1, 2005, fully equipped with all the bells and whistles we could ever ask for: tremendous passion for education, a 12-year teaching career, 7 years in two principalships, 6 years in instructional services administration, and 13 years as a district superintendent in Orange County, California.

Whereas, Dr. Tarwater's wisdom and experience in modernizing educational spaces, enhancing community environments, and procuring funding accordingly, LTUSD would soon be enlightened by Jim's vision for the future of the kids of South Lake Tahoe. He began to scope things out, visiting campuses, talking to teachers and maintenance folks, and what he saw and learned made him a little hot under the collar.

Whereas, dozens of dilapidated portable classrooms, 50-year-old school buildings with major infrastructure needs, a closed down school in Meyers with great potential, antiquated educational programs, playfields hanging by a string of dignity, and what? No track and field? No Friday Night Lights?... were sadly the aftermath of a long recession. There was no time to waste.

Whereas, Jim Tarwater went straight to work opening the Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School, allowing class-size-reduction across the district, sparking the evolution of themed elementary schools, and ultimately Career Technical Education pathways. Serving as the superintendent, the CFO, and the principal of LTESMS simultaneously, he began the pursuit of finding money...a lot of it.

Whereas, kindness, passion, fortitude, and a clear vision for a state-of-the art education for Lake Tahoe's youth, were the perfect potion for gaining community confidence in Dr. Tarwater. His qualities and shared passion for the future of our kids brought community leaders together to support the district's Master Plan through the passing of the Measure G bond in 2008 which brought \$64.5 million to the district. The hard work of staff members writing grants for matching funds brought in another \$34 million.

Whereas, the rest is *not* history. To this day, and well into the future, the astounding transformation of Lake Tahoe Unified School District continues to captivate school leaders, students, and families, near and far. New construction and modernization at every school site has brought renewed pride to the community. A Chromebook for every student and high-quality instruction promises every student will reach their highest potential.

Whereas, South Tahoe High School serves as a model campus for its learning spaces, housing innovative educational programs and technologies that inspire students to explore career pathways and pursue college ambitions. The shared excitement of Friday Night Lights at Viking Stadium is the glue that binds the community as a whole. Who needs the Niners when we've got the Vikings?


Whereas, constructing buildings, campaigning, balancing budgets, and analyzing instructional programs, don't scratch the surface of the potential in Jim Tarwater. What a gift it was that he picked South Lake Tahoe as his next endeavor. His legacy would be captured in a big bronze thing on one of our campuses, but for the fact that he's not a fan of permanent memorials, we shall instead etch Jim's memory in our brains (for what that's worth) and in the story told to our children when they ask, "Why do we have such an amazing school here in Lake Tahoe? Don't we live in the mountains?"

Whereas, this was Jim's vision for South Lake Tahoe, for his 4,000 children, his daughter and son, Ashley and Jake, and for his talented and caring staff. He is humble, considering all he has accomplished in his 54 years in education...but such is the disposition of a Giver. By nature, Jim Tarwater gives all of himself, and asks nothing in return. And while one can walk around the school sites and find almost nothing he has not touched, nor one individual he has not extended a personal kindness, he replies to gestures of gratitude with a sweep of his hand and a shy, "you're welcome."

Whereas, Jim Tarwater's empathy knows no bounds. He loves his staff, students, and families deeply. He genuinely cares about each person he meets, young and old, and connects with their human experience, going out of his way to help. He does things like makes calls to struggling families on his list, connects counselors to individual students, runs grade reports to find students that are slipping, meets with walk-in parents, and makes casual visits to campuses to give pep talks to "his kids" that few would suspect "are destined to change the world." He sees the potential in every single person he meets, and makes it a point to compliment them.

Whereas, before any job title, we consider ourselves Jim's friend first. That is what he has fostered since day one - solid, real, friendships with his people. It would be amiss to say we are content with fifteen years of his leadership, for we are selfish and a bit immature, but we've dug deep and held our chins high, in order to give our revered leader back to his family. They deserve to cash in on a lot of missed time with dad and husband - his attention and praise, his gentle and light-hearted ways, and that seriously infectious laugh! Jim's laugh would roll all the way down the office hall, causing a laugharama that typically ended with someone at the other end yelling, "does this mean we get to go home at four?"

Whereas, Dr. Jim Tarwater's contribution to education, to society, and to the thousands of young lives he has changed for the better, is immeasurable. We wish all of the love and good energy that Jim has put into the universe, to come right back around to him and his family, for many years to come. Happy retirement Amigo!


Dr. Ed Manansala, El Dorado County Superintendent of Schools
and all of Jim's friends at Lake Tahoe Unified School District



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