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NORTH STATE
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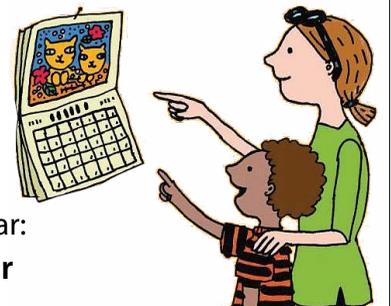


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Happy Lunar New Year

2026 the Year of the Horse

By Stacey Leigh Mohr

The Year of the Horse in the Chinese Zodiac begins Feb. 17, 2026, and this year is the year of the Fire Horse, bringing energy, freedom and transformation until Feb. 5, 2027. In Chinese astrology, Horses symbolize vitality, speed, perseverance and success. People born in Horse years are thought to be hardworking, warm-hearted and independent. On the flip side, Horses are famous for being impatient, impulsive and easily frustrated when things are slow or when they feel boxed in.

Children born during this lunar year will evince strength, independence, speed, enthusiasm and a spirited pursuit of freedom and action. What does this look like in your little Horse?

HappiestBaby.com provides some helpful details:

- **Big energy:** Even as a baby, your Horse may wiggle, kick and squirm through tummy time, story time and...well, most of the time. They're built to go.
- **Free spirit vibes:** Horses love freedom and really dislike feeling fenced in. Expect a toddler who wants to pick their own clothes, choose their own snack and decide which playground you're visiting.
- **Charm for days:** Many Horses are naturally social, upbeat and funny. As they grow, they're likely to collect buddies everywhere – from the sandbox to the soccer field.
- **Stubborn streak:** When a Horse sets her mind on something, look out! This strong will can blossom into impressive grit and persistence...once he learns to channel it.

CELEBRATE LUNAR NEW YEAR IN THE NORTH STATE

Lunar New Year celebrations are gorgeous, colorful festivals full of dancing, puppets and joy. Bring the family to these fun, family-friendly celebrations of the Year of the Horse at these historic North State landmarks:

• Weaverville: Saturday, Feb. 21, 10 am-2 pm.

Join California State Parks and its partner, the Weaverville Joss House Association, to watch history come alive with a traditional Lunar New Year celebration and Lion Dance at the Weaverville Joss House State Historic Park, 630 Main Street, Weaverville.

• Oroville: Saturday, Feb. 21, 11 am-2 pm.

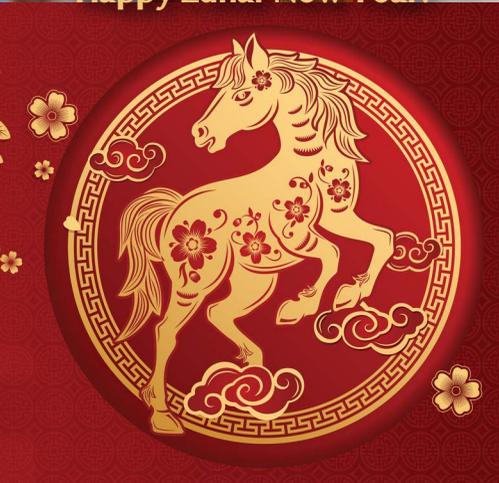
For a festive Lunar New Year celebration filled with culture, tradition & family-friendly fun, celebrate Lunar New Year in one of Oroville's most treasured historic landmarks, the Oroville Chinese Temple, 1500 Broderick Street, Oroville.



Vanessa Cantú, Cultural Facilities Curator for the City of Oroville, invites everyone to visit the beautiful Chinese Temple in Oroville where they can learn about the rich culture and traditions of our Chinese neighbors. Photo by Kate Hiller.



**2026 - Year of the Horse
Happy Lunar New Year!**



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DEAR READERS

Happy Lunar New Year! As we ease into 2026, many of us are considering how best to be happy and healthy this year. Simple strategies like getting out for a 15-minute walk at lunch, choosing a salad instead of a burger, preparing two vegetables for dinner instead of just one or biking with the family on the weekend can make a big difference. Even mild physical activities and one or two simple dietary shifts can make us feel better, more balanced – happier.

I heard a TED talk recently in which the speaker maintained that true happiness comes from having purpose in our lives. After meeting the basics of food and shelter, feeling that we matter, that we are making a difference, is vital to thriving. We here at NSP advocate for community building projects and volunteerism as a way to feel connected and make a community-wide difference. Volunteering as a family shows your community you care and can influence others to care, as well.

The TED talk program went on to say that environmental supports were key to providing opportunity for good decision-making and growth. Supporting education and advocating for healthy after-school programming for all children can help steer youth in your community to make good choices; it provides purpose while helping to create a community where everyone can thrive.

So here's to a happy, healthy 2026, filled with purpose, balance and simple pleasures.

Pamela and the North State Parent Team



The NSP staff rang in the new year with a visit to the beautiful murals painted by Tehama Creatives in downtown Red Bluff. *Photo by Kate Hiller.*

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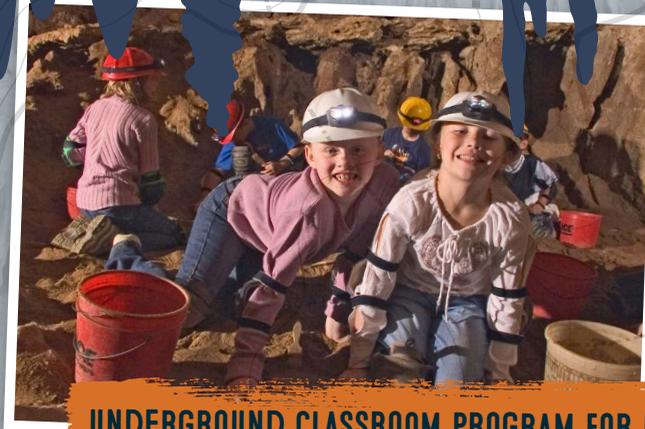


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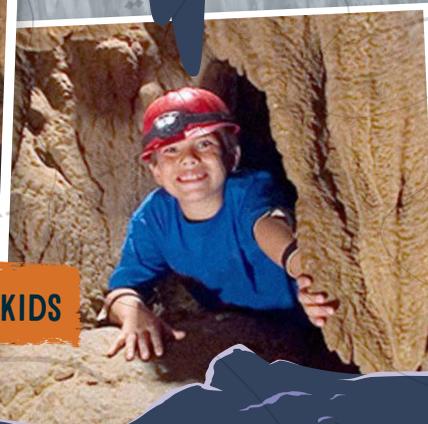
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12 Months Take their first steps. Play with a variety of toys. Begin to say "mama."

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The mission of our be the change column is to feature community members from the North State who are actively making a difference in community life. If you would like to nominate someone who is making a difference, please write to pn@northstateparent.com.

Lori Woodward

REACHING STUDENTS THROUGH A GROWTH MINDSET

Throughout her 30-year career as a second grade teacher at Millville Elementary School, Lori Woodward has “always been an exceptional teacher,” says former principal Mindy Desantis. Lori creates strong connections with her students, finds fun ways to present information, supports her colleagues with enthusiasm and jumps into extracurricular efforts to support students. And yet, Mindy marvels, in the last few years Lori’s “skills have exploded” into a whole new level of teaching.

A GROWTH MINDSET ENRICHES STUDENTS’ LEARNING

In recent years, Lori’s leadership has helped Millville Elementary with student-centered initiatives like Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), early literacy support and neurodivergent student learning support. Her passion and advocacy for students across grades, Mindy says, has “made a significant difference in our abilities to reach all students, including the nearly unreachable student.”

What caused this explosion? What could amplify the already excellent skills of a caring and experienced teacher? Lori’s answer: A growth mindset.

“Growth mindset” describes the idea that learners can continue to expand their intelligence, as opposed to a “fixed mindset” – the idea that learners have a ceiling to their understanding or intelligence.

Beginning in 2015, a two-year grant through the Shasta County Office of Education enabled Lori to join teachers from all over the country at a STEM (science, technology,

engineering and math) conference that promoted a growth mindset to develop more of an interactive, student-centered approach and helped Lori implement STEM ideas in the classroom.

Lori has always sought to enrich students’ learning with captivating lessons. “Our motto is work hard, play hard,” she says. The STEM program gave her new tools to do both. As a lifelong learner, Lori’s adoption of a new approach deep into her career models the very principle she desires her students to live by: always look for opportunities to grow.



Lori Woodward inspires a growth mindset in her students that will serve them well for the rest of their lives. *Photos by Kristen Schmidt*

INSPIRING INTERNAL MOTIVATION AND EDUCATIONAL GROWTH

Lori’s renewed approach to teaching involves providing students with more open-ended assignments that feed on students’ own interests and foster internal motivation. Rather than telling students to make a prescribed project, for example, Lori presents her students with a problem and tasks them with inventing a solution.

They may receive a tangible challenge, like building a tower out of spaghetti and marshmallows or perhaps finding solutions to the predicament of a character in a novel she’s reading to the class. Either way, the need to solve the problem sparks creativity. “We need to inspire kids to want to learn,” Lori explains. “When they are interested, you can take it so much further.”

Lori also coaches her students to set their own educational goals. A student might set a goal to read for a certain number of minutes a week or to memorize a set of math facts. Lori challenges the students to think of obstacles to their goals and then what steps they will take to work around those obstacles.

Students regularly share their progress toward their goals with the class and

Be the Change: Lori Woodward

they know to use any extra time in class toward their goals. "If they're finished with their assignments, I just say, 'goal,' or 'grow your mind,' and they go right to it," Lori says.

Every morning starts with a class walk around the track – a ritual Lori initiated after learning about the importance of morning sunlight for mental health. The walks let students connect with Lori and each other and by the time they return to class they are "settled and happy," Lori says. "You would be amazed how quickly they can get their homework turned in and materials ready for the day knowing they get to head back out the door for a quick run or walk around the track."

BECOMING ASSETS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND FLOURISHING

Lori loves connecting with every student and providing individualized learning for each of them, but she knows she can't do it alone. "It takes a village working together to meet the needs of students," she says.

Search Institute, a nonprofit research organization, has identified 40 assets that help kids thrive and grow into healthy, flourishing adults. The list includes family support, positive relationships with nonparent adults, a caring school

climate and parent involvement in schooling. Lori encourages parents, friends and family members to intentionally become "developmental assets" in kids' lives. She welcomes school volunteers to share their gardening skills with students, host afterschool clubs like chess or robotics or simply develop connections with the students.

Lori also encourages parents to connect with their children outside of school. Activities can be both simple and fun, such as "rainbow spelling" (writing words on a piece of paper and tracing them repeatedly in different colors) reading together, practicing spelling or math facts in the car or playing math games like rolling a pair of dice and adding or subtracting the numbers. In Lori's experience with hundreds of second graders over the years, "Students learn through play. You just make it fun for the kids and that ends up being fun for you!"

Community and parent engagement is essential to the success of Lori's innovative teaching strategies. All teachers need support to be most effective in their students' lives and learning experiences.

If you would like to learn more ways you can support and retain quality teachers in local schools, read our article "Teacher Retention: Why Does it Matter?" on page 8. ■

Lori is proud to teach at Millville School, empowering her students to use their creativity to solve problems and academic challenges.



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everybody
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Jenna Christophersen is a Chico native who fell in love with writing as she wrote her first words as a student at McManus Elementary School.



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Teacher Retention: Does it Really Matter?

Much has changed in our world and yet our educational system, by and large, is based on a model created during the industrial revolution. Since then, the working environment and expectations for teachers has dramatically shifted, resulting in a challenge to retain top teachers in the classroom.

QUALIFIED, EXPERIENCED TEACHERS MAKE A PROFOUND DIFFERENCE

According to *The Economist*, a British international news publication, nothing makes more difference to a child's schooling than the quality of their teachers. Leading studies, notably those by Eric Hanushek of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, have consistently found that teachers in the top quintile of effectiveness can produce five years of achievement gains in a single academic year, whereas teachers in the bottom quintile produce only 0.5 years of gain. California State Board of Education President Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond says, "There is no question that well-qualified teachers are among the most important contributors to a student's educational experience."

MULTIPLE PRESSURES ON CALIFORNIA TEACHERS

A recent California Teachers Association (CTA) study found one in four teachers in California have seriously considered leaving the teaching profession. CTA compiled a list of concerns that teachers express when deciding to stay or leave the profession.



9 ▶

Quality teachers can change the trajectory of children's lives, but they need our support to meet many current challenges of teaching.

Teacher Retention: Does it Really Matter?

Eighty-four percent of educators said their workload has increased while state and local support and resources have decreased. Dr. Darling-Hammond agrees. "In the U.S., teachers work more hours per week/per year than any other teachers in the world." Adding to that pressure, California ranks in the top five states with the largest class sizes in the country. And 69% percent of California teachers cite inadequate health care coverage with high out-of-pocket expenses as a deterrent to staying in the profession.

Teachers are now expected to extensively support students' social and emotional health, once centered in families, community and religious organizations. Violence in schools, once uncommon, has become more prevalent.

While everyone dealt with COVID-related school closures, some schools have also had fire-related closures. Heavy use of technology outside the classroom has severely affected student focus along with negatively affecting social behavior. Lack of support for handling mental health issues was cited by 68% of educators as a consideration for leaving the profession.

Teachers are expected to know how to use a staggering variety of ever-changing software and technology tools for student testing and required reporting, but often little or no time is provided or allowed to learn the technology before having to implement it.

Finally, according to the Economic Policy Institute, American teachers earn 26% less than other similarly educated professionals and it is one of the largest such gaps in the world.

Is there anything that can be done to encourage excellent teachers to stay in the profession? Yes. There are several related strategies that parents and communities can implement to ease the pressure on teachers and support quality educational experiences.

COMMON THREADS OF TEACHER RETENTION

ADVOCACY: Community members concerned about education can advocate for policy and structure changes and/or directly support teachers. Creating changes to give teachers the time, resources and compensation appropriate to this important work is essential for teacher retention.

TRUST AND APPRECIATE: Although concerned community members may not be involved with the daily work of running a school, choosing leaders (through principal selection committees and school board attendance) who value the work of excellent teachers results in teacher empowerment. Parents can support teachers by honoring teachers' professional judgement.

TIME AND FUNDING FOR ENHANCED LEARNING:

Examples of excellent teaching include use of innovative teaching methods such as project-based learning and collaboration with outside local or national organizations. Teachers require the time to thoughtfully include broader experiences and interactions with educational organizations and specialties and funding to benefit from professional development opportunities. Specialists need to be able to attend current conferences/workshops and all teachers need to be able to attend both subject-specific and innovative general learning-focused events. Teachers also benefit from time to share with each other examples of successful learning.

For example, the office of education in the district in which I taught paid select teachers who applied to work 10 days in the summer, providing structured time and support for teachers to build a relationship with a variety of organizations. This resulted in field experiences for over 300 students in several high schools. Afterward, advanced math and business classes hosted a schoolwide environmental awareness fair. The Office of Education was able to send professional educators to witness student project presentations and provide feedback for improvement before public presentation.

This work of involving the broader community as part of the classroom experience or creating dramatic presentations, business plans or science fair participation without the required structure supports (time and money), frequently results in teacher burnout.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS: School community members can assist not only by specifically acknowledging teachers but providing resources. For example, when planning a unit on early California history, a teacher

might want to know possible field experiences, cost, times, availability and funding.

A parent, after listening to parameters, could research options. Once the teacher decides on the best match for student learning goals, a parent could follow-up with the required logistics.

Backing our educational system by advocating for teachers, both from a policy/administration standpoint and by offering direct teacher support, results in more effective learning for our students. Choosing to put time

and effort into our future through such actions is an essential part of creating a positive outcome for students and for the teachers who make such a profound impact on their lives. ■



Qualified, experienced teachers that make learning fun and engaging for students are a precious community resource.



Catherine Paine is an educator who has taught 20+ subjects at the high school level. She has worked extensively in both public and charter schools, K-12. She has an M.Ed. and an MBA and is nationally board certified. She is a proud mom of two college students.



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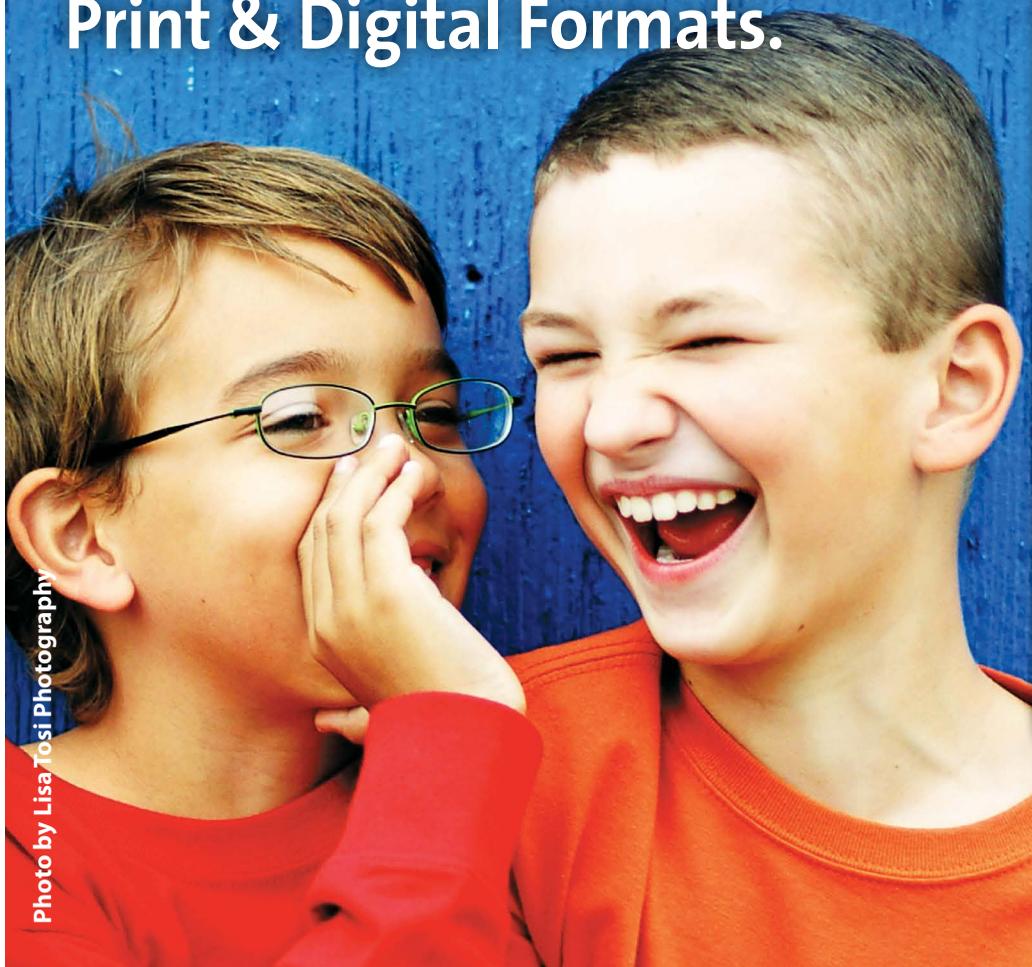
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SHASTA COUNTY

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 Experienced, qualified and nurturing teachers. Full, extended and half-day programs, small class sizes, kindergarten readiness. Lic# 455403185

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eesd.net/ourschools/preschool Licensed programs build confidence, skills and school readiness in a safe, nurturing environment. Free options available for qualifying families. Lic# 455403855



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kidsinterconnectionspreschool.com
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Kotasik Daycare

2 Sutter Street, Suite C, Red Bluff • (530) 727-9607
 ⓈⓂ Ages: 2-5yrs • M-F, 7:30am-5:30pm
 All staff are fully qualified, first aid and CPR certified. Drop-ins welcome. Subsidized payment accepted. Breakfast and Lunch served family-style. Lic# 525407977

- ⓓ = Diapers Accepted
- Ⓢ = Snacks Served
- Ⓜ = Meals Served



SCHOOLS OF CHOICE DIRECTORY

The Schools Of Choice Educational Directory focuses on local public schools created through a partnership among parents, teachers and students. These charter and other types of schools aim to involve parents and give teachers and students the freedom to innovate, while providing a personalized learning environment for each student.

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www.blueoakcharterschool.org

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6249 Skyway
Paradise • (530) 872-1171
www.hometech.org

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GRADES 9-12



At Inspire School of Arts & Sciences, we are known for our innovative block schedule, wide range of elective coursework that allows students to explore their passions and develop their interests, and career technical education pathways that build students' skills in the arts and sciences. Our approach to learning challenges students to aim for excellence, while our small-school environment, advisory program, and staff of master teachers allow for the support needed to get them there. Visit Inspirechico.org to learn more, or request a tour of our tuition-free, public charter high school. This is learning, inspired.



335 W. Sacramento Avenue
Chico • (530) 891-3090
www.inspirechico.org

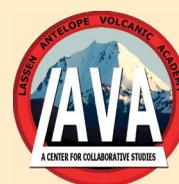
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GRADES 5-8



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LAVA Charter, a small 5th to 8th grade school in Red Bluff, offers a rigorous program with small class sizes. Our unique partnership with Lassen Volcanic National Park provides students with more than 10 ranger-led field trips to Lassen National Park every year. In addition to our flexible on campus scheduling we also have an at-home independent study program available for our students. Call today for more information.



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lava.antelopeschools.org

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Red Bluff • (530) 528-7301
www.lincolnstreetschool.org

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Serving Butte, Glenn, Mendocino, Plumas, Shasta, Tehama & Trinity Counties
19500 Learning Way
Cottonwood • (530) 377-7850
<https://eie.evergreenusd.org>

FOREST RANCH CHARTER SCHOOL

GRADES TK-8



We offer a caring, small school solution for Chico and Forest Ranch families that strikes a balance between high academic expectations and positive social/emotional development. We promote a growth mindset in a multidisciplinary, technology-rich environment that supports differentiated learning, mindfulness and student leadership. Take our FREE bus and elevate your child's education today!



15815 Cedar Creek Road
Forest Ranch • (530) 891-3154
www.forestranchcharter.org

GOLDEN EAGLE CHARTER SCHOOL

GRADES TK-12



Golden Eagle Charter School (TK-12) offers flexible, personalized learning through home-based learning, online courses, in-person classes in Mt. Shasta and Yreka, diverse curriculum options, exciting field trips, Career Technical Education (CTE), and dual enrollment with College of the Siskiyous, including our Early College High School Program.



Serving Siskiyou County & Castella • (530) 926-5800
www.gecs.org

HEARTHSTONE CHARTER SCHOOL

GRADES TK-12



Hearthstone is a Community School where strong connections, personalized learning, and small classes are the norm. Parents are invited to choose between a program that is 100% Independent Study or our Hybrid program which includes a few days of on-campus classes per week. With an average enrollment of 180 students school-wide, we are a perfect alternative for families who are dedicated to partnering in the schooling of your child.



2280 6th Street, Oroville
(530) 532-5848
www.HearthstoneSchool.net

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GRADES 2-8



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Learn more and enroll at northstatevirtual.org

NORTHERN SUMMIT ACADEMY

GRADES TK-12



We provide a personalized approach to providing a standards-based education and career awareness and preparation to students who need the flexibility of independent study combined with the support of classroom teachers, classes, and an academic environment. Our personalized approach and delivery utilizes traditional and innovative materials, equipment, techniques, and community resources with an emphasis on collaborative relationships.



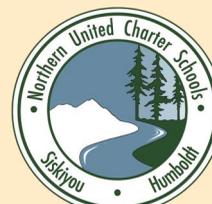
2301 Balls Ferry Road
Anderson • (530) 338-1399
www.ns-academy.org

NORTHERN UNITED CHARTER SCHOOLS

GRADES K-12



NUCS believes in honoring individual education choices and is committed to providing an innovative public education environment for students, their parents, and teachers, through independent study facilitation, small group instruction, tutoring, online and blended learning, as well as community college co-enrollment.



Serving Siskiyou & Humboldt Counties
(530) 842-4509 or (707) 629-3634
www.nucharters.org

OAK BRIDGE ACADEMY

GRADES K-12



Oak Bridge is an independent study school within Chico Unified. The K-5 families partner with CUSD teachers weekly in their comprehensive grade-level education of students. Enrichment opportunities include field trips, learning labs, and art classes. Our award-winning secondary 6th -12th grade program is WASC accredited, college-preparatory and NCAA approved. Students can take classes, play sports and engage in other extra-curricular activities at their school of residence in CUSD.



Serving Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter, Tehama & Yuba Counties
(530) 897-8877
oakbridge.chicousd.org

**PHOENIX CHARTER
ACADEMY COLLEGE VIEW**

GRADES TK-12



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Redding - (530) 222-9275
www.ourpca.org

PIVOT NORTH VALLEY

GRADES 6-12



Pivot North Valley is a tuition-free, public charter school. Pivot uses a blended learning model, giving students the flexibility to learn on-site and online. Teachers provide daily oversight, motivation and academic guidance that is customized to each student based on learning style and progress. Field trips, events, clubs and other social activities are available. Call or visit Pivot North Valley to enroll today!



1350 E. 9th Street, Ste. 150
Chico - (530) 636-4479
www.pivotnorthvalley.com

**REDDING SCHOOL
OF THE ARTS**

GRADES K-12



Redding School of the Arts (RSA) is built on one core belief: the arts are essential to a child's full educational experience. When students engage in music, visual arts, and performing arts, they not only grow creatively – they thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Research shows that participation in the arts can improve attendance, boost self-esteem, strengthen cooperation with peers, and positively impact performance in other academic subjects. By integrating creativity with rigorous academics, RSA prepares students not only for academic success, but for a lifetime of curiosity, expression, and meaningful contribution. Come explore the unique opportunities at Redding School of the Arts – Where Education and the Arts Connect!



955 Inspiration Place
Redding - (530) 247-6933
www.rsarts.org

**SHASTA CHARTER
ACADEMY**

GRADES 9-12



Join us for amazing on-site classes, Shasta College enrollment, traditional home schooling, high-quality tutoring, and more. We are SUHSD sponsored and WASC accredited. Let's have a great school year together!



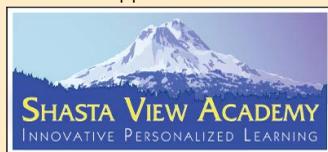
307 Park Marina Circle
Redding - (530) 245-2600
www.sca-edu.org

**SHASTA VIEW
ACADEMY**

GRADES TK-12



SVA offers a personalized learning/independent study program dedicated to serving families who make the choice to school their children at home. We provide credentialed staff, a wide array of curriculum choices, small group classes, one-on-one tutoring, field trips, and extracurricular enrichment opportunities.



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(530) 233-3861- shastaview.org

**SHERWOOD
MONTESSORI**

GRADES TK-8



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1010 Cleveland Ave.,
Chico - (530) 345-6600
www.sherwoodmontessori.org

**TEHAMA eLEARNING
ACADEMY**

GRADES 7-12



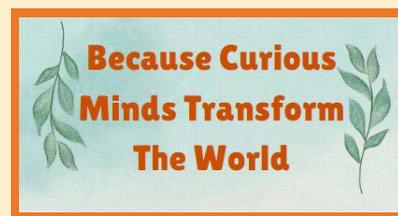
Tehama eLearning Academy is a WASC accredited independent online charter school, with a 7-12 program, that serves Tehama and the adjacent counties. Students at TeLA complete their coursework online or at the Red Bluff Campus. The school has accredited teachers, a-g programs, credit recovery classes, individual education coursework and onsite electives. We also have an adult education school where adults can earn their High School Diploma or GED.



979 Douglass Street
Red Bluff - (530) 527-0188
www.telacademy.org

**WILDFLOWER
OPEN CLASSROOM**

GRADES TK-8



Wildflower cultivates curious, compassionate, and confident learners. Through our integrated thematic curriculum model, students find excitement in their studies and enjoy opportunities for holistic learning, self-discovery, and personal responsibility they take forward in their education and beyond.

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Contact the office to schedule a tour!



2414 Cohasset Road
Chico - (530) 892-1676
www.wildflowerschool.com



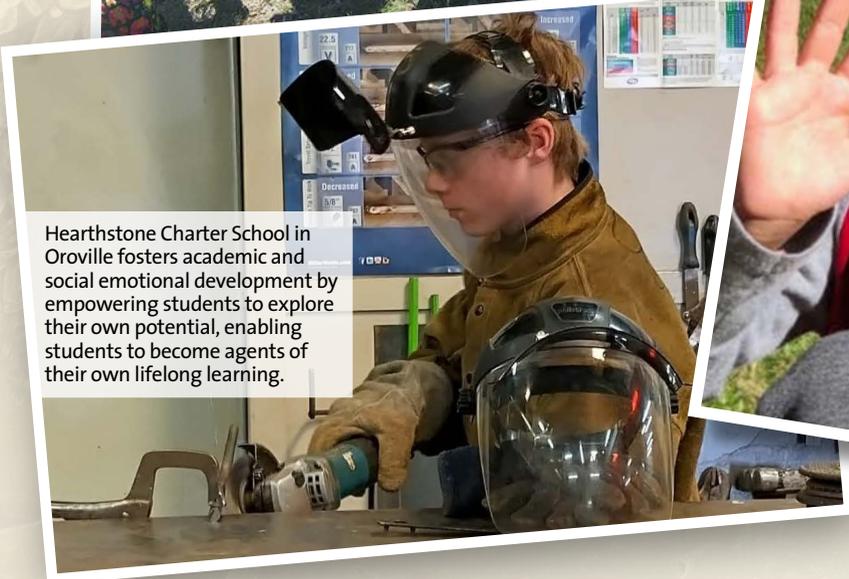
Golden Eagle Charter School in beautiful Mount Shasta provides a learning environment where students, teachers and families work together to build community and promote academic excellence.



Forest Ranch students experience a rigorous academic program that promotes self-reliance, social action, a passion for learning and a growth mind set.



Wildflower Open Classroom in Chico is an innovative school that invites children, teachers and parents to collaborate as a community, inspiring and celebrating the adventure of learning through an integrated thematic and project-based approach.



Hearthstone Charter School in Oroville fosters academic and social emotional development by empowering students to explore their own potential, enabling students to become agents of their own lifelong learning.



Evergreen Institute of Excellence in Cottonwood prepares students for success through enrichment classes and teamwork with parents, highly qualified teachers, staff and fellow students.



Montessori Schools in Upper California

BUTTE COUNTY

Chico Montessori Children's House

Director: Sarah Livingston
 Preschool, ages 3-5
 814 Glenn St., Chico
 chicomontessori.com
 (530) 342-5518 Lic# 0454406630

Sherwood Montessori

Director: Michelle Yezbick
 TK-8th grade, public charter school
 1010 Cleveland Ave., Chico
 sherwoodmontessori.org
 (530) 345-6600

SHASTA COUNTY

Montessori Children's House of Shady Oaks

Director: Julie Helart
 Private learning environment for PreK-6th grade
 1410 Victor Ave., Redding
 shadyoaksmontessori.com
 (530) 222-0355 Lic# 455405949

Each school is individually operated.



"Early childhood education is the key to the betterment of society" ~Maria Montessori

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE FAMILY?

Check out our Events Calendar filled with classes, outings & places to visit.

northstateparent.com/calendar





Snowshoeing: A Family Winter Sport “Shoe-in”

Sometimes, the mention of “winter sports” calls up visions of expensive equipment rental or purchase, pricy resort passes, half-a-day of driving to reach the best snowy trails and high skill levels that preclude smaller family members.

Well, think again. Snowshoeing, an inexpensive winter sport the whole family can enjoy, is great winter exercise; and fun, easy trails are a short drive for North State families. You don’t need lessons - it’s as simple as walking. However, [The Mountaineers](#) website offers snowshoeing resources, including instruction.

[REI](#) has a snowshoeing beginners guide that includes a basic list of what you’ll need and videos showing how easy

snowshoeing is. They also offer advice for more advanced backcountry snowshoe adventures.

PINCH THE PENNIES ON SNOWSHOE GEAR

Renting or buying secondhand snowshoes is inexpensive. [The Sportsmen’s Den](#) in Mount Shasta rents them for a nominal fee. At [Mt. Shasta Nordic Center](#), kids 0-17 receive free day passes and free snowshoe rental. Adult snowshoe rental is \$15 with a \$35 day pass. Day passes for seniors 70+ are just \$20 and snowshoe rental just \$10.

Secondhand gear can be found on sites like Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace. Keep an eye on the websites [mtshastasports.com](#) and [Fifth Season](#) for their annual used winter sports equipment exchange events in Mount



People of all ages can experience the joy of snowshoeing beautiful mountain trails right here in the North State.
Photo provided by Mt. Shasta Nordic Center

Snowshoeing: A Family Winter Sport "Shoe-in"

Shasta, where you can find super bargains on used and new equipment. Toddlers and preschoolers don't need snowshoes. They can walk in their parents' tracks wearing regular snow boots and ride in a sled or snow disk when they get tired.

LOCAL FAMILY-FRIENDLY SNOWSHOEING

Garrett Lovelace at Sportsmen's Den recommends families head up to Mt. Shasta Nordic Center off Hwy 89 for fun and safe snowshoe trails. Drive up Everitt Memorial Hwy to Bunny Flat on Mt. Shasta or head to Castle Lake just outside the town of Mount Shasta for easy family-friendly trails.

Nearby Plumas County boasts many free, uncrowded snowshoe trails. Scenic snowshoe trails around Manzanita Lake in Lassen Park offer families a beautiful winter excursion. In Northwest Plumas County, the Bizz Johnson Trail is an interesting snowshoeing trail. Snow coverage is best at higher, shaded segments west of Highway 36, upstream of the Devil's Corral Trailhead. In Southeast Plumas County, snowshoers can follow snowmobile trails along Little Grass Valley Reservoir and can find other shared trails at Lexington Hill.

SNOWSHOEING SAFETY

For first time snowshoeing families...

Start on Established Trails: Using resort trails like those at Mt. Shasta Nordic Center keeps you closer to potential help and reduces the risk from avalanches. Avoid snowshoeing alone. Leave your trip plan with a responsible person and let them know when you'll be back – and stick to your trip itinerary.

Keep Warm: Wear layers of warm clothing with a water-proof outer layer. Don't forget warm, waterproof gloves and a warm knit hat or cap. Stash a set of dry, warm clothes for each family member in your vehicle to change into after a day in the snow. Bring snacks, water and if possible, warm beverages in a backpack with you on the trail.

Note: Adults will get warm from the exercise, but babies and children on sleds will need to wear extra layers.

Stay hydrated: Be sure to carry and drink plenty of water. It will keep your muscles functioning and help your body fend off hypothermia. Use an insulating cover to keep water bottles from freezing.

Snowshoeing is an easy, fun way for people young and old to see spectacular winter scenery.



BEYOND SNOWSHOEING; MORE FAMILY FUN

While trekking through snowy landscapes, help your kids spot and identify birds. Look for animal tracks and try to identify what animal made them. Take along a local winter plant guide and see if family members can spot and name plants poking up through the snow. Pretend you are on a Lewis and Clark expedition: each new animal track could be a newly discovered woodland creature, each plant a marvelous new species.

Make up silly stories about the virtues or "dangers" of these "newly discovered" plants and animals. Local snowshoeing adventures can add exciting new chapters to your family's story of fun times together this winter. Epic natural wonders abound year-round in the North State, including the beautiful winter season. So get out there and make some winter wonderland family memories! ■



Stacey and her husband have new snowshoes and they are looking forward to trying them out on the stunning Mount Shasta Nordic Center trails this year before all the snow melts!

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THRIVING THROUGH A CAREER CHANGE:

Finding Stability for Ourselves and Our Families

The job market is shifting fast. Between mass layoffs, AI, automation and outsourcing, we're not just seeing jobs cut – we're seeing entire roles disappear. Unlike generations before us, parents can't count on staying in the same company for decades. The world of work is evolving and the old idea of job security doesn't exist the way it used to.

So the real question becomes: How do we stay grounded and resilient when everything around us feels uncertain? It usually takes a mix of self-care and support, a growth mindset and practical action. This combination not only guides you toward the next aligned opportunity, but also shows your children what it looks like to meet change with openness and strength.

Self-Care and Support is Essential to Navigate Job Change

Many people feel shame around job loss and pull back – but this is the time to do the opposite. Lean into your support system. Let your family, friends, community and professional network be part of your rebuilding. Connection isn't a sign of weakness; it's one of the most powerful tools you have for recovery and renewal.

And while you rebuild, remember that self-care isn't indulgent – it's essential. Whether that means spending time in nature, going for a short



run, playing an instrument or simply taking a few long, mindful breaths, these moments help your nervous system reset. Self-care brings clarity, calm and perspective; the ingredients you need to see new possibilities.

Mindset...Turning Uncertainty into Opportunity

A growth mindset helps us remember that every disruption carries a new opportunity. True resilience isn't about holding on tighter; it's about staying adaptable, curious and open to change.

That means being willing to be vulnerable – speaking openly about your situation, your goals and needs, asking for help and taking steps even when you feel unsure. Real strength lives where courage meets humility: courage to do the uncomfortable things and humility to stay open instead of pretending you have it all together, to stay connected instead of isolating and to receive support with grace in a society that often tells us that strength means handling everything alone.

Practical Steps... Building Your Own Security Net

Strengthen financial resilience. Build an emergency

cushion early if you can. Reduce fixed costs and look for money drains. (*Do you really need all those streaming or food delivery subscriptions? Or that storage unit filled with things you forgot you owned?*) Invest in what aligns with your long-term values – especially health, learning and stability.

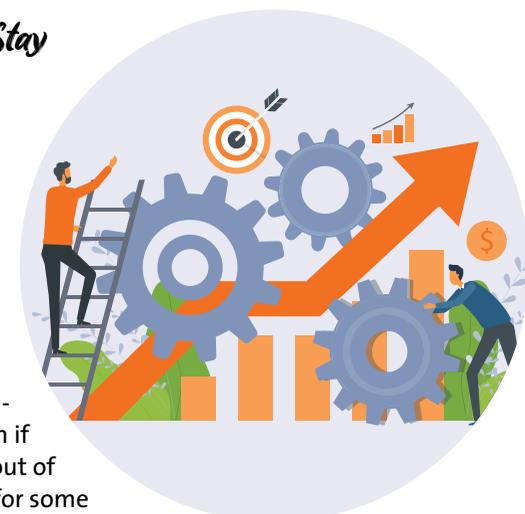
Upskill and Stay Current

Learn tools and skills that align with your interests and where the market is headed, while building on transferable strengths you already have. Even if you have been out of the job market for some time, skills like time management, communication, adaptability, problem-solving, emotional intelligence and a strong work ethic continue to be valuable. Flexible learning options – such as LinkedIn Learning, Udemy, Coursera and YouTube – make it possible to grow at your own pace.

Diversify Your Income

Freelancing, consulting or small side gigs can bring more flexibility and stability.

This can be as simple and low-cost as selling something you already make, offering help in your community or cooking homemade meals to share with neighbors and friends.



These small income streams don't require big investments — and they can grow into something bigger if you ever choose to take them further.

Expand Your Network

You're rarely more than a few connections away from your next opportunity. Stay visible: reach out to friends, family, neighbors and past colleagues. Keep your profiles, portfolios or websites fresh and active.

Social platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram or Behance are powerful places to let people know you're exploring new opportunities. A simple check-in can lead to a meaningful conversation and a conversation can lead to an opportunity.

Networking isn't just online — it's a web. Conferences, professional associations, local business groups, community meetups, creative markets, art walks, fairs and even neighborhood gatherings can open doors in surprising ways.

What matters isn't quantity; it's showing up where you feel aligned and having genuine conversations. When you connect from authenticity and purpose, you naturally meet people who resonate with your direction.

Teaching Kids to Navigate Life's Challenges

This season of change is a powerful opportunity to model for our children what it looks like to move through uncertainty with authenticity, vulnerability and strength. It doesn't have to look graceful all the time — what matters is that they see the process.

When we let them witness us navigating challenging situations, staying honest about our feelings, finding our footing and trusting that things will be OK, we teach them emotional intelligence no classroom can offer.

These moments open the door to meaningful conversations about resilience, trust, shared strength and the small things we can be grateful for even in hard times.

Trust Yourself

As much as we humans resist it, change is the one constant in life. It can feel uncomfortable, unpredictable and even unfair at times. Yet, every transition brings the chance to rediscover who we are and what really matters.

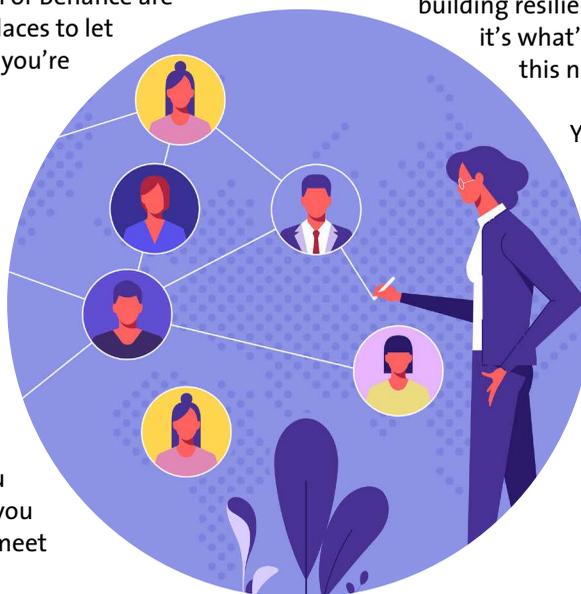
Trust that your whole life has been preparing you for this moment. Every experience — the "good" and the "bad" — has shaped the wisdom, strength and perspective you carry now. You've been building resilience all along and it's what's guiding you into this next chapter.

Yes, the world is shifting — but so are you. You've grown through change before and you'll do it again.

So take a breath, stand tall and remember: you are built for this. You've got this. ■



Julia Plotkina is a Chico-based writer and homeschooling parent. She holds a Master's in Business Management and has over 10 years of experience as a business consultant. Her personal and volunteer work centers on education, well-being, and community.



"In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or step back into safety."

ABRAHAM MASLOW

MASKING AND COGNITIVE FATIGUE: WHY AFTER-SCHOOL MELTDOWNS HAPPEN

If your child seems to hold it together all day at school only to fall apart the moment they walk through the door, you're not alone. Many parents of neurodivergent children describe after-school hours as the hardest part of their day.

What may look like defiance, whining and acting out is often what is known as cognitive fatigue from masking all day. If after-school hours feel overwhelming, it's not because you're doing anything wrong. It's because your child is using every ounce of energy to make it through the school day – and home is where they finally feel safe enough to let go.

WHY MASKING IS MENTALLY EXHAUSTING

Masking is when a child hides their struggles or copies expected behaviors to fit in and avoid standing out. Neurodivergent children often mask without even realizing it. This constant effort to watch others, imitate social cues and suppress their natural responses uses a huge amount of mental energy.

Over the school day that energy drain results in cognitive fatigue, which is a type of mental exhaustion that makes it harder to think clearly, regulate emotions, follow directions and cope with even small frustrations.

In most cases, the meltdowns or shutdowns when children get

home aren't about misbehavior. They're a response to being mentally overworked.

WHAT MASKING LOOKS LIKE AT SCHOOL

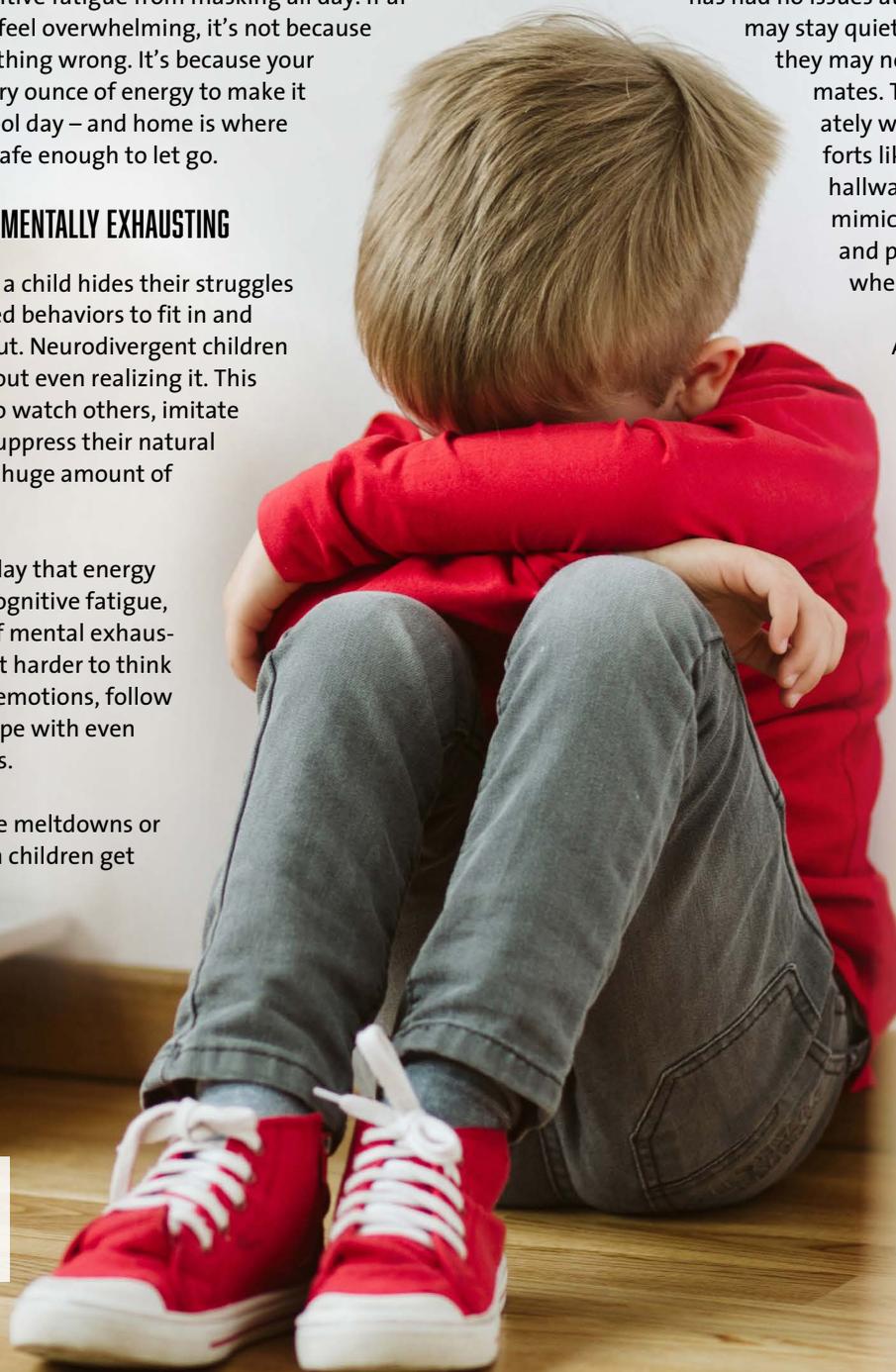
If you've ever been surprised by a teacher's report that your child has had no issues at school, they may be masking. A student may stay quiet even when they feel confused because they may not want to seem "dumb" to their classmates. They may sit still when their body desperately wants to move, or ignore sensory discomforts like bright lights, loud noises or crowded hallways. They may hold in their emotions, mimic their classmates' social behavior to fit in and push through transitions that feel overwhelming.

At the same time, their brain is working overtime translating verbal instructions, filtering out constant background noise and movement, decoding tone of voice, facial expressions and social dynamics and trying to stay organized while remembering dozens of routines.

They're also forcing themselves to sit, listen, wait and focus, all while navigating unpredictable situations that require quick adjustments. All this effort builds up, contributing to the cognitive fatigue that often hits hard the moment they get home.

HOW TO MAKE THE AFTER-SCHOOL TRANSITION EASIER

Understanding that masking may be why your child melts down after school can help you shift expectations at home and create routines that support your child's nervous system rather than overwhelm it. The goal isn't to eliminate every meltdown, but to reduce emotional overwhelm and create a softer landing



If your child has a meltdown after school, it could be because they are mentally and emotionally overwhelmed at school, but there are ways you can help them to better cope with school pressures.

Masking and Cognitive Fatigue: Why After-School Meltdowns Happen

at home. Many children need a decompression period before they can talk, think or follow directions, so instead of asking about their day right when they walk in, it helps to give them 20–30 minutes to reset. This could be quiet alone time, a favorite snack, some movement like jumping or stretching, a cozy, dim space, screen time used as a calming tool or noise-canceling headphones.

A predictable routine can also reduce anxiety and decision fatigue. Visual schedules or checklists work especially well for children who struggle with transitions or executive functioning.

Even small environmental tweaks at home can reduce sensory overwhelm. Softer lighting, decluttered spaces, a quiet corner with pillows or blankets or calming sounds like white noise can help kids relax after a long day of stimulation.

Time outside can also reset the nervous system and give them the sensory break they need. Together, these practices help create a peaceful transition from school to home, making afternoons easier for both kids and caregivers.

A CALM PRESENCE CAN HELP YOUR CHILD REGULATE EMOTIONS

When big feelings show up, offering calm presence instead of correction makes a meaningful difference. During a meltdown, a child's brain is in survival mode, so reasoning or consequences won't help. What they need is connection: sitting nearby without pressure, speaking softly, validating their emotions and offering small choices, such as whether they want dimmer lights or headphones. This kind of co-regulation can help them feel safe enough to settle.

Understanding masking won't erase the hard moments, but with the right routines and expectations, you can create a home environment where your child can truly recharge, reconnect and be themselves. ■



Shasta County author Jennifer Arnold is the mom of four, two of whom have been diagnosed with multiple special needs. She hopes to raise awareness of many issues that parents of special needs children face on a regular basis.

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THIS IS TEHAMA



The ancient word “Tehama” once meant a place where rivers could be crossed. With our county’s rich currents of history, happenings and hope, this is our crossing place today – where we meet to celebrate our beautiful Tehama County.

YOU MATTER

FERNANDO VILLEGAS HONORS THE LEGACY OF KRISTINA CHESTERMAN IN TEHAMA COUNTY

“One item on Kristina Chesterman’s bucket list was ‘to save a life,’” Fernando Villegas, a health educator for Tehama County Behavioral Health, says. “Kristina saved my life and, through her legacy and my work in suicide prevention, I can only hope that more lives will be saved in the years to come.”

Despair and Redemption

In 2012, Fernando Villegas got what he considered a death sentence. “My nephrologist told me I would need to have a port inserted to start dialysis,” Fernando recalled. “I had been diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes at age 13 and by 2012 my kidneys were failing. I asked my nephrologist if I could be considered for a transplant.”

“This may sound strange, but as an older, Latino male, I struggled with the question, ‘Am I even worthy of a transplant?’” Fernando says. “I have been involved with the Latino Outreach of Tehama County, a local nonprofit 502(c)(3), since 1999 and this underserved population battles feelings of inferiority on a regular basis.”

Latino Outreach is a community organization based in Tehama County with a mission to uplift the local multicultural community through equitable access to services such as health, education and wellness resources. It strives to

connect individuals and families to services that improve quality of life, strengthen community capacity and build unity across cultures.



Fernando Villegas placed this reflective sign for Kristina at the accident site at the Big Chico Creek Bridge on Nord Avenue and Highway 32 in Chico. Fernando drives by every Sunday and hopes the sign brings awareness about a loving life lost due to drunk driving.

“My time with the organization helps spread the message that all people, no matter their heritage, are, of course, worthy of life,” Fernando says. “But sometimes today’s culture can make certain populations feel ‘less than.’ In my work at Behavioral Health and Latino Outreach, I want to serve in a way that helps everyone recognize their worth. The slogan I use most often is ‘you matter.’”

The Legacy of Kristina Chesterman: Saving Lives, Creating Family

The story of Kristina Chesterman, a Chico State nursing student who was killed by a drunken driver while riding her bike in 2013, is famous worldwide. “Kristina was an old soul,” her mother, Sandra, says. “I wasn’t even an organ donor yet, but Kristina signed up to be a donor as soon as she got her driver’s learning permit.”

Fernando Villegas was the recipient of Kristina’s pancreas and one of her kidneys. “I am Type O Negative and so was Kristina – we were a perfect match. But even after the surgery, I struggled with feelings of inadequacy and, out of the five recipients of Kristina’s organs, I was the last one to connect with her parents, Sandra and Dave.

“Kristina’s parents reached out before I did. When I received Sandra and Dave’s letter, I literally fell to my knees, remembering watching and listening to the local

You Matter: Fernando Villegas Honors the Legacy of Kristina Chesterman

news about the accident. They expressed a strong desire to hear from me and to get to know me. It was like Kristina was reaching down from heaven.”

“We are all family now,” Fernando says. “The donor recipients get together with Kristina’s family at least twice a year for fundraisers in honor of Kristina. We were also together recently when the Bikeway 99 Phase 5 Bridge in Chico was opened in memory of Kristina. Kristina loved adventure, but she would want people to be safe. The bridge provides safety for pedestrians and cyclists.”

“One of Kristina’s dreams was to be a nurse with Doctors Without Borders,” Kristina’s mom, Sandra, says. “Kristina loved to travel and her dream now lives on in the Kristina Chesterman Memorial Clinic in Nigeria. All the fundraising efforts have made this possible. Offering help to others, both physically and mentally, was so important to Kristina.”

Connection Can Be Lifesaving

Fernando has worked for Tehama County Behavioral Health as a health educator since 1999, and Kristina’s legacy has only strengthened his work. Fernando

noticed a post-COVID increase in mental health crises in the younger population. “Social isolation has been a major contributor to this. This simple phrase can be lifesaving; ‘I am here for you.’ Nobody should be alone in their suffering,” Fernando says. “We are all connected.”

“Speaking of connection,” Fernando reflected, “Kristina loved hummingbirds. I am constantly attracting hummingbirds and I like to think that is because of Kristina living on through me. This gives me the strength to help people in their time of crisis.”

Meet Fernando this spring when Latino Outreach hosts their free health Fair at Woodson Elementary School in Corning. Check North State Parent’s online calendar for the date. ■

If you or someone you know is considering suicide or has suicidal thoughts, help is available by texting or calling 988 (California Suicide Hotline).



Kate Hiller is passionate about sharing mental health resources in Northern California, as she has personally lost family members to suicide.



Fernando works as both a Health Educator for Tehama County Behavioral Health and a liaison for the Latino Outreach of Tehama County. He hopes the work he does will be a living legacy to Kristina’s life.



Kristina’s father, Dave, attended the opening of the Kristina Chesterman Memorial Hospital in Nigeria.

Siskiyou County News

DS LASER ENGRAVING:

A SISKIYOU COUNTY GEM

Are you considering an exceptional engraved gift for a special someone? Do you need a thousand custom engraved items for a big event? Are you concerned about quality, durability and sustainable materials? Do you want to work with a real person (not a chat bot) to get your custom design just right? Dustin and Sarah Steger have crafted a unique business, DS Laser Engraving in Mount Shasta, which can deliver all that and much more.

GROWING A BUSINESS FROM A SIMPLE IDEA

Dustin and Sarah's business adventure started over eight years ago when Dustin was making a job transition and got to thinking about what he wanted to do next. "I loved the concept of 3D printing," he says, "and I started researching it online."

"He ended up getting a 3D printer and added a laser diode that can engrave very thin pieces of wood," says Sarah. "So he started making wood stickers."

A friend invited Sarah and Dustin to share her booth at a local fair and the stickers sold like hot cakes. "It just took off from there," says Sarah.

Dustin and Sarah worked out of their home, expanding their product line and vending at fairs until COVID forced them off the fair circuit and encouraged them to beef up their website and increase their online presence. They continued to grow and in 2023 opened their beautiful retail space at 210 High Street in Mount Shasta, moving their production facilities from their home to a spacious shop at the back of the store. They now work with customers throughout the U.S. to create custom engraved products in a wide variety of materials including glass, acrylic, wood, slate, ceramic, stainless steel, copper, gold, silver and even fabric.

CRAFTING A GEM OF A LOCAL BUSINESS

"The key to our success," Sarah says, "is what I call 'bulk customization.' We'll do custom designs for anything from a one-off Valentine's Day gift to an order of two thousand items." From etching a wedding photo onto stone, wood, acrylic or metal, to printing full color designs on just about

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Fern, 3 1/2, and Opal, 9 months, are birthday twins (born on the same day and month) and work side-by-side with their parents Dustin and Sarah in their family business. Photos by Pamela Newman

any hard material or apparel, they are continually increasing their products and services. They can even do vehicle decals; both adhesive and magnetic. But what makes DS Laser Engraving a regional gem is the personal attention and design help they provide customers who come to the store. "We'd like local customers to know that, although you can order laser cut items from other companies online," Sarah says, "a unique service that we offer is to work with a customer one-on-one in our shop to make sure they get exactly what they want."

And when you work with Sarah and Dustin in person, you can make sure you are getting a quality product. "How many times have you ordered something online and when you received it you saw the quality and said, 'Now I know why it was only \$9.99,'" says Sarah.

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS ARE THE NAME OF THE GAME

Local businesses like Mount Shasta Pharmacy, Lauer Electric, Ramshaw's, Mount Shasta Avalanche Center and Mountain Medics trust Sarah and Dustin to provide high quality, professionally engraved custom products, from engraved name tags to industrial electrical tags to event swag.

But what local customers really appreciate is that DS Laser Engraving uses renewable materials whenever possible, choosing wood, metal or granite over plastic or acrylic materials. "We want to create custom high quality lasting pieces that people can cherish and have for a long time," Dustin says. "And every purchase plants a tree," Sarah adds. "We donate a percentage of our annual income to the National Forest Service to plant trees." And best of all, purchase dollars stay local!

It takes hard work and dedication to consistently provide excellent products and customer service. But Dustin and Sarah's love of their work and their joy in meeting and exceeding customer expectation is evident in all they say and to. "I am so blessed," says Dustin. "I love the variety of projects I get to work on every day."

In a world in which personal customer service is becoming scarce, big box store employee turnover often leads to sales associates with little experience or knowledge of products, and ordering online often means no customer service at all and purchasing a "pig-in-a-poke" (as my mother used to say), local businesses like DS Laser that provide excellent products and customer service, whether customers purchase from their online store or come into their shop, are true treasures and in demand more than ever.

Stop in their store, open Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm at 210 High Street, Suite D in Mount Shasta, find them online at dslaserengraving.com or call (530)710-1843. They have items in the store that are already engraved, blanks you can have custom engraved and you can bring in items of your own to have engraved. ■



Stacey founded and owned a custom design and manufacturing business for 17 years and so appreciates all it takes to start and run a successful small business.



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Happy Valentine's Day!

PARADISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL *RISES* FROM THE *ASHES* OF THE CAMP FIRE TO WELCOME STUDENTS FOR THE 2026/27 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Ridge continues to regrow after the devastation of the 2018 Camp Fire. A crucial element of restoring community services as well as lost structures is the rebuild of Paradise Elementary School following its loss in the Camp Fire.

The oldest school in Paradise, it was originally built in 1940 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Since last June's groundbreaking ceremony for the new campus, the construction is progressing according to schedule, with the goal of welcoming students for the 2026/27 academic year, says Betsy Amis, Superintendent of Paradise Unified School District.

PARADISE ELEMENTARY REBUILD STIRS STRONG EMOTIONS

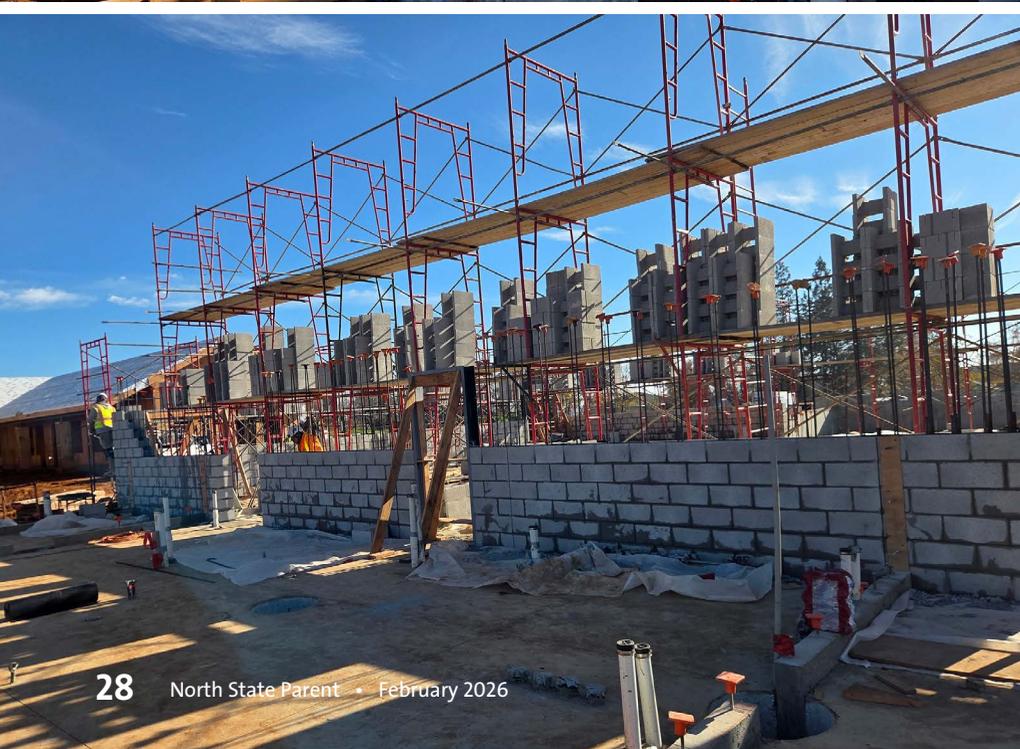
The groundbreaking ceremony was an emotional day for Camellia Horne, bringing tears to her eyes. Her family has a long history with Paradise Elementary School. Three generations have attended, starting with her father when his family moved up to Paradise in the 50s and continuing as both Camellia and her son attended the school – and Camelia returned to be a kindergarten teacher. “I loved that school. It was my favorite school as a student and a favorite as a teacher.” she says. “Mr. Harms was the principal when I was a student; he was absolutely wonderful.”

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The architect's rendering of the planned new Paradise Elementary School campus showcases the modern, future-forward learning environment envisioned through community input.



The PES rebuild, to be accomplished in phases, is eagerly awaited by Paradise parents who see it as an essential component of the community building back after the devastation of the 2018 Camp Fire. Photos provided by Paradise Elementary School.



Camellia has fond memories of running down the stairs to the cafeteria that had a “wonderful stage. It was something special. “Even though the school will not be what is used to be, it is neat to see the growth. Modernization and change are what life is about.” She currently job-shares with another kindergarten teacher at Pineridge Elementary school in Magalia.

“I look forward to the opening ceremony. I absolutely plan on attending.” Asked if she thinks it will be another emotional day for her, she replied “My husband would say that I will cry again.”

COMMUNITY INPUT FACILITATES THOUGHTFUL PLANNING

The rebuild project, originally planned in two phases, may now be split into three, pending state funding. Phase one, the current phase of construction, will complete classrooms for transitional kindergarten, kindergarten and grades 1-6. It also includes the administration and multipurpose building, library/STEM wing and early education buildings.

Paradise Unified School District currently serves 1,825 students, representing approximately 53.4% of the district’s total student enrollment before the Camp Fire. The district conducted an interest and preference survey for families who live within the Paradise Elementary School (PES) boundary - the same boundaries that were in place before the Camp Fire.

“Because the first phase of the school can accommodate approximately 200 students, we are using this survey to help guide enrollment decisions.” said Amis. “While we wish we could enroll all students living within the PES boundary, that will not be possible until Phase 2 is completed.” Families will be notified once enrollment decisions are finalized

Teacher selection took place in late January and early February. A survey was distributed to teachers to determine who would be interested in voluntarily moving to the new school. “This process allows us to staff the school thoughtfully and ensure a strong match between teachers, grade levels and the new campus.” says Amis.



FAMILIES EAGERLY AWAIT PARADISE ELEMENTARY OPENING

The Galla family is eagerly waiting to know if they will be able to enroll in the new school. Staci Galla says she is hoping their 6-year-old son will be able to attend PES for first grade. He is currently enrolled at what was formerly Ponderosa Elementary School and is currently named Paradise Ridge Elementary School. “The teachers are great, but the school is extremely overcrowded. It has reached a capacity of over 500 students. It can be very overwhelming, especially to the younger students. Plus, the drop off and pick up is a nightmare with so many cars blocking Pentz Road.”

Galla had volunteered to help advocate for the school bond that failed to pass to help provide funding for the rebuild. “We were told that the school district originally thought they would have about 10 years before the new school would be needed. However more families have moved back than expected and after only six years we are in dire need of this second elementary school.”

PARADISE ELEMENTARY CAMPUS DESIGN ENCOURAGES FUTURE-FORWARD LEARNING

The new campus is designed with a focus on creating safe, engaging and future-forward learning environments and will include a central courtyard, an outdoor stage plaza and a total of 32 classrooms, a learning resource center and special education spaces. Outdoor learning areas have also been thoughtfully incorporated to encourage collaboration and exploration beyond the classroom. Additional site improvements include a reimagined main entrance with streamlined drop-off and parking, as well as recreational facilities, such as soccer fields, a baseball field, hard courts and playgrounds with shade sails.

Phase two, which covers the wing beneath the current construction, could finish by August 2027. Phase three might be completed by August 2029 or 2030. Both phases are uncertain until additional funding is confirmed and final timelines are set.

The loss of the original school to the Camp Fire was deeply felt throughout the community. However, the growing demand for a new elementary school – driven by the steady return of families to the ridge – is a promising sign of renewal and resilience. This focus on building and adding to educational facilities underlines the community’s commitment to providing quality learning environments for its children and reflects the ongoing efforts to rebuild and strengthen Paradise for future generations. ■



Pamela and her family experienced the tragedy of the Camp Fire, losing both their family home and her business on Almond Street. They are hoping their rebuild will be completed in 2026 and are looking forward to moving back home.

This mural originally created in Paradise after the Camp Fire is called “Beauty Among the Ashes.” Chico native Shane Grammer created murals that all share the theme of resilience and hope. He has started a foundation called the Art Through Hope Foundation where he intends to bring peace to those affected by tragedy.



Pine Ridge School

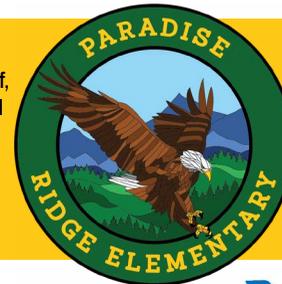
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With the reopening of Paradise Elementary School, Paradise Ridge will continue as its own elementary school, restoring two elementary schools within Paradise Unified and honoring pre-fire attendance boundaries.



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