



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Bonita Unified Activities Director Honored with CADA Spirit Award

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – By the time San Dimas High School Class of 2003 graduate Lisa Carson received her diploma, she was already planning her return to the campus she loved so much. As an Associated Student Body (ASB) student leader, Carson realized that school spirit and guiding future Saints toward a path to success was her future.

Carson fulfilled her destiny when she became San Dimas' activities director and ASB advisor in 2011. Following in the footsteps of her mentor, former San Dimas High activities director and current Ramona Middle School principal James Ellis, Carson has balanced academic rigor with powerful school spirit, a commitment that has earned her the 2026 Bob Burton Spirit Award from the California Association of Directors of Activities (CADA).

"I always wanted to be the next Mr. Ellis. I thought that was the best job in the world," Carson said. "I went off to college but never left San Dimas, that's how determined I was to come back. There is so much that goes into being an activities director, and so much has changed in 15 years. I am very proud of my work with CADA, and so honored to receive the Bob Burton Spirit Award."

As San Dimas High activities director, Carson, who also teaches math, works with student leaders to create events throughout the school year, including high-energy pep rallies and theme days. With so many leadership students already navigating full schedules of academics, athletics, and other extracurricular activities, the job can be challenging. Focusing on inclusivity, service and Saint pride, Carson instills key values to her students.

"Students lead incredibly busy lives, but it's important for them to learn how to become leaders, and how school processes work," Carson said. "I like the class council to be student-run, with all of the decisions coming from my leaders. It's their school, and their money. They should be the ones to decide where the money goes and what activities are chosen."

MORE



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The biggest school activity by far is the annual San Dimas High Clash, a competition that pits one class against the others, from freshmen to seniors. More than half the student body participates in Clash, which consists of a series of games and challenges as classes try to rack up as many points as possible. In Clash, being an upperclassman does not always guarantee success, as freshmen and sophomore classes have come together to win the coveted Clash trophy, one reason the competition is so successful, Carson said.

"One of the things I have learned in 15 years is that students are so busy in the afternoon and evenings, that it's hard to get them to come to afterschool events, so we try to do more things during the school day," Carson said. "For me, the ideal student leader is one who has passion for school spirit, is comfortable around their peers, and who truly enjoys seeing people have fun at events."

In 2025, San Dimas High School was presented with CADA's Outstanding Leadership Program Award (OLPA), presented to California high schools for going above and beyond in building community and promoting student voices. Carson has been a member of CADA for 15 years and has served on its board.

The Bob Burton Spirit Award is presented in honor of the late Bob Burton, who served for 30 years as Fallbrook High School's activities director, gaining national attention for his approach to boosting school spirit.

"CADA is so important for me. It's great to be able to meet with fellow teachers and ASB advisors and share ideas," Carson said. "I'll never forget coming to my first CADA conference in 2012 and seeing all the legendary activities directors. I am honored just to be considered for an award. I'm so grateful for their support, the support of my administrators and school staff, and my wonderful students."

PHOTO CAPTION:

BUSD_CADA_CARSON: San Dimas High School activities director and ASB advisor Lisa Carson was honored with the 2026 Bob Burton Spirit Award from the California Association of Directors of Activities.

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