



WINTER 2025

#TUHSD  
STRONG

NEWSLETTER



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Thanksgiving Day Dinner 2025

District Angel Tree

The Education Exchange 2.0

VFW Celebrations

Tolleson Mariachi at State Capitol

Employee Spotlights

New PR Request Form

Callahan Care

TUHSD in the News

Social Media Recap

*Happy Holidays!*





# *Thanksgiving Day Dinner 2025*

## **A Joyous Celebration of Community**



The 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Thanksgiving Day Dinner was a resounding success, bringing together an impressive number of attendees and showcasing the true spirit of community and togetherness.

As in past years, this year's dinner was well-attended with hundreds of community members coming together to share in the festive spirit. The event ran from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day, ensuring that everyone had ample time to enjoy the delicious meal and the company of their fellow attendees.

### ***A Unified Effort of Volunteers***

One of the most remarkable aspects of the event was the incredible turnout of volunteers who dedicated their time and energy to make the day special. Students from Tolleson Union High School enthusiastically participated, eager to give back to their community. This diverse group of volunteers demonstrated a strong spirit of service and collaboration, making the event a collective effort. Volunteers helped with serving food, cleanup and organization. This year the event had a new addition with The Tolleson Union High School JROTC who presented the colors at the start as well as performances by the Mariachi band and dance team.

**TOLLESON UNION HIGH SCHOOL**



### ***Extending Hospitality Beyond the Event***

Understanding that not everyone could make it to the school, the organizers thoughtfully arranged for meals to be delivered to community members who were unable to attend. Additionally, guests were encouraged to take plates home, ensuring that the generosity of the event extended beyond the school's walls. This gesture of kindness highlighted the inclusive nature of the dinner, making sure that no one was left out of the celebration. Thanksgiving Day Dinner was more than just a meal, it was a testament to the power of community and the importance of coming together to support one another.



# Seven years of the Angel Tree

For years now, staff at the District Office have fulfilled Angel Tree wishes for our students. This season we teamed up with Geodis, a local e-commerce company, to give even more.

Typically, the district works with our school social workers to provide 20-25 students with gifts for the holidays. The partnership with Geodis nearly doubled our ability to give – 40 students received packages.

Students remain anonymous but provide a list of wants. Volunteers shop from those lists then wrap the presents and deliver them to DO, where they are then distributed to students.

“The Angel Tree was my favorite part of the holiday season,” said Lisseth Ramirez, a former member of TUHSD’s Human Resources team and current Geodis employee. “I was always first in line to try to get an Angel every year. When I moved over to Geodis, I found that same holiday spirit with my new team.”

Lisseth mentioned the project to her manager, who encouraged her to reach out to TUHSD.



**What did students want this year? A lot of needs.**

“I know one of the top items that we saw this year was socks,” said Lena Bradley, an operations manager at Geodis. Clothing gift cards and food requests were also high on the list.

“It’s nice to accommodate them with not only their needs but their wants too,” said Angela Williams, district receptionist. She added the employees made sure to gift special items, too.

“Of course we want to give people things they need, but it’s also exciting to receive something that you just want,” Lisseth said. “Maybe you don’t need that, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t have that.”

We are thankful for everyone who helped make the Angel Tree project a success and we are grateful to our new partnership with Geodis, too!





# ● THE EDUCATION EXCHANGE PODCAST SEASON 2

The second season of The Education Exchange Podcast is off to a fantastic start! If you haven't tuned in yet, you can catch our weekly episodes at

[www.tuhsd.org/podcast](http://www.tuhsd.org/podcast) or visit our YouTube Channel to watch and listen at

[www.youtube.com/@TUHSD214](http://www.youtube.com/@TUHSD214). Podcasts air every Thursday (that school is in session) at 9 a.m.



On this season of TEE, the focus is on the voices and stories of our schools, students, staff, clubs and groups. Be sure to check out our recent episodes featuring the Westview Theater Program and the Copper Canyon Marching Band.

We have some exciting episodes lined up for next semester, including an engaging discussion with West Point's MCJROTC, a conversation with our Unified Programs, an interview with a student beauty pageant winner and much more!



We are always looking for guests! If you would like to recommend a student, group, teacher, staff member or other topics we can discuss on the podcast, please let us know! Your suggestions can be emailed to [publicrelations@tuhsd.org](mailto:publicrelations@tuhsd.org).





# VFW Post 40 Recognizes TUHSD Staff and Students

Recently, VFW Post 40 revealed its winners for 2025-2026 across various categories, including Teacher of the Year and the Voice of Democracy Essay Contest.

There were three winners from our schools. VFW Post 40 recognized West Point teacher Garrett Cardoza as Teacher of Year (High School). They also recognized University High School student Jayden Konki who placed first in the Voice of Democracy essay contest and Westview student Makayla Gutierrez who received fifth place.

Each Teacher of the Year recipient will be awarded a plaque and a check made out to them. Essay contest winners will receive a gift card along with a certificate.

Congratulations to all and thank you VFW Post 40 for recognizing these incredible people!



## Tolleson Mariachi plays at State Capitol Christmas Tree Ceremony.

The Tolleson Union High School Mariachi had the fantastic opportunity to perform at the State Capitol during the Christmas Tree lighting ceremony hosted by Governor Katie Hobbs. Before the lighting of the tree, which took place in the State Capitol building, the Tolleson Mariachi entertained the audience with several songs. Numerous media representatives were present to capture our talented mariachi students as they performed for the Governor and other esteemed guests.





# MEET MARQUITA LAGARDE

We are pleased to welcome Marquita Lagarde to the TUHSD family. Lagarde joined TUHSD as a Spirit Social Worker in June 2025.

Prior to joining the district she worked at Roosevelt School District, where she served as the lead clinical mental health provider.

“

**IT'S UNIQUE IN THE WAY THAT A LOT OF OUR KIDS WHO NEED THOSE SERVICES, SPIRIT HAS BUILT THAT INTO THEIR PROGRAM, AND SO I'M ABLE TO CAPTURE MORE KIDS THAN IF I WERE TO WORK IN PRIVATE PRACTICE.**

”



Lagarde lives in the West Valley, but is originally from Los Angeles, where she received a bachelor's degree at Cal Poly Pomona and masters from Loma Linda University.

Outside of work a few of Ms. Lagarde's favorite activities are traveling and going to concerts. Her most recent travel destination was Saint Martin.

"I've seen Beyonce live at least 12 times. I'm a huge Beyonce fan," Her favorite Beyonce albums are 4, Lemonade, and Renaissance.





# MEET ALICIA ROBINSON



*We are excited to welcome Alicia Robinson as a new administrative assistant for Adam Schwartz, the new executive director of school leadership. She joined the TUHSD team in June.*

*Before becoming a member of the team at the district, she worked at Westview High School for a little over a year, and at Agua Fria High School as office manager for six years.*

*Those seven years of experience gave her a wealth of knowledge about how the schools in our district operate, and the responsibilities of all our staff.*

**“ I REALLY ENJOYED MY PAST YEAR AT WESTVIEW. I WAS SAD TO LEAVE, BUT I’M LEARNING A LOT IN MY NEW ROLE AND I’M EXCITED TO SEE IT CONTINUE TO GROW AND HELP EVERYONE OUT. ”**

*Robinson grew up in Somerton, Arizona, and after graduating from high school she moved to New York City and spent 17 years there working in various fields, including education.*

*One of those positions was at a preschool for children with autism, which she said helped grow her love for working in education.*

*Robinson returned to Phoenix in 2013, and now has a family of her own with her husband and an eight-year-old daughter.*





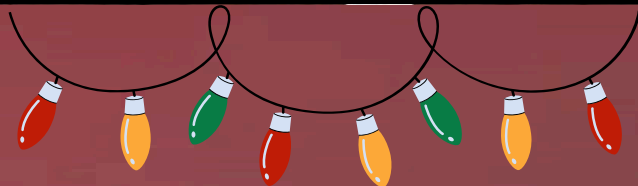
MEET

# MAXWELL NICKELSBURG

*Hello everyone! I am Maxwell Nickelsburg, Intern with the PR & Marketing team here at TUHSD.*

*Right now I am studying Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, and minoring in Political Science. I'm planning to graduate with my bachelors degree in May 2026. Eventually, I would like to attend graduate school, but I'm not sure yet what I would like to study.*

*I was born in Phoenix in 2004 and have lived here ever since. I attended the Kyrene School District for elementary and middle school, and went to the Tempe Union High School District afterwards.*



*Outside of work and school I love to read books, watch movies, and go out with my friends. Some favorite books of mine include East Of Eden, V., and Three to Kill.*

*I had a great time working with everyone and I appreciate all of you. I learned so much in my time here and I am very grateful for the opportunity to work at this amazing school district.*





# MEET

# CORTNEY GEORGIA

We are pleased to welcome Cortney Georgia to our Tolleson Team. Cortney has been with us for about six months now in our HR Office.

This is her first position in TUHSD, but she started her career at Higley High School, where she taught for one year before moving to Phoenix Union.

"I served in Phoenix Union for 19 years," she said. When asked what she liked about working for the Tolleson Union High School District, Cortney said that it was "the people!"

**“ I HAVE ENJOYED GETTING TO KNOW THE STAFF IN MY OWN DEPARTMENT, AS WELL AS OTHERS WHO WORK AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE. IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE WORKING WITH ALL OUR SITE LEADERS TOO,” SAID CORTNEY. “THERE IS SO MUCH TALENT IN THIS DISTRICT! I AM GRATEFUL TO BE HERE. ”**



Cortney makes her home in the part of Phoenix that is considered midtown. However, Cortney has also lived in Mesa, Gilbert, Tempe and Scottsdale. "I'm an East Valley gal," said Cortney. "This is the furthest West I have worked!"

Indeed, she is an East Valley girl, having grown up in Mesa and graduating from Mesa High School. Cortney also lived in Tacoma, Washington and, fun fact, she was born in Rimini, Italy.

As she states it, Cortney's family consists of two amazing "bonus" kids – Gracie, who is a junior at Camelback High School in the Montessori College Preparatory, and Brando, who is in 8th grade at Madison No. 1. Cortney adds that she also has a French Bulldog, "Chandler," who is her baby, too.

As far as time spent out of work, Cortney values any time she can spend with her family and friends. She also loves traveling (especially to Ireland), reading, running, and of course, eating.

Welcome aboard Cortney!



MEET

# SANDRA FABIAN

*We are happy to introduce Sandra Fabian who “joined the incredible Tolleson Union High School District in July 2025” as the CTE Work-Based Coordinator.*

*She previously worked for the Yuma Union High School District and Paradise Valley Unified School District.*

*“I am energized by working with amazing leaders and colleagues throughout the district, especially in the CTE and OLAS departments,” she said.*



**“ EXCELLENCE IN EVERY ENDEAVOR IS MORE THAN A TAGLINE - IT'S THE CREED BY WHICH EVERY INDIVIDUAL LIVES. I SEE THE OPPORTUNITIES THEY CREATE FOR STUDENTS, THE SUPPORT THEY PROVIDE FOR STAFF AT EVERY LEVEL, AND THE PASSION WITH WHICH THEY DO IT. ”**



*“I am also fortunate to witness student growth as they focus on their careers,” added Sandra. “I was impressed by one of our many internship students who arrived enthusiastically at his interview.” Sandra explains that the student’s teacher met him in the workplace parking lot and looked at him with awe as she asked, “Did you ride your bike all the way here in this heat?” The student smiled broadly and said, “I could have had a ride, but I want to be self-reliant. I have to make sure I can make it to work every day without relying on anyone else.” The teacher asked, “How long did it take you?” He answered humbly, “Well, this time it took 40 minutes. I had to turn around three times when I went down streets that didn’t go through.”*

*Even with all that, he still arrived 10 minutes early to his interview. Commitment. Resilience. Excellence in Every Endeavor.*

*As for the places that Sandra has lived in, she notes that she currently lives in the North Valley but has lived in Yuma and Indiana, which is where she grew up. Northwest Indiana, to be exact.*

*Sandra shares that she has a wonderful stepson who is proudly serving in the Army and is stationed in Korea. Sandra said she loves uplifting others.*

*“It is a gift to have a job in which I find opportunities that benefit the students and the community,” she said. “I hope that when students experience a positive life-changing event in the course of their internship, that they carry the memory in their hearts and continue to seek ways to pay it forward. Our world is a better place because of good people who live a life of gratitude and generosity, and I get to witness such evidence every day.”*

*Well said Sandra, and welcome to the Tolleson Union High School District.*





**DO WE NEED  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
DESIGN  
OR  
VIDEO**

**HELP?**

Our PR and Marketing team is here to serve and support all of the exciting projects and ideas that you have to promote and showcase our district. As the number of these projects continues to grow, we want to ensure our PR Team is dedicated to each task that is brought our way, and that your project or idea is given the valuable time and energy it deserves. That is why we are excited to share our **work order request form**, first launched and presented at our PD Day presentation in late September.

Whether your project involves social media, graphics, or long-form video, you can express the details of your idea on the request form. You can also provide us with an estimated timetable and deadline for your project, so that we can effectively collaborate to meet your expectations.

This form can also be found on the **public relations** subpage of our website.

We thank you for your cooperation in teaming up with us as we work through this new process, and we look forward to bringing to life the amazing ideas you have.





# Callaha Closets

Partnership with Tolleson  
Union High School District

Last year, our district partnered with Callahan Care to retrofit areas of school campuses into donation sites (open closets) for students and families in need. The closets house clothes, toiletries, instructional items and other family resources upon request.

Please consider a nonprofit charitable tax credit donation to Callahan Care and designate your donation to our district. **100%** of your donation will directly support our school closets and our ability to provide resources to our students all year long. Donate here: [callahancare.org](https://callahancare.org).

List **Tolleson 214** as the district you are donating from!

Click [here](#) to learn more on how Callahan Care helps our students.



TUHSD 214

**Donate Now**

List **TUHSD 214** as the district  
you are donating from



**TUHSD**

# IN THE NEWS

Take a look at some of the positive news stories on local media in recent months involving our schools and our district.

**STUDENT-RUN  
PANTRY OFFERING  
SUPPORT TO PEERS  
IN NEED AT COPPER  
CANYON HIGH  
SCHOOL**



**TOLLESON  
SPIRITLINE GETS  
CREATIVE TO  
RAISE MONEY FOR  
ITS COMPETITION  
SEASON**



**REMODELED  
SOUTH  
GLENDALE  
WALMART  
OPENS ANEW**



**TOLLESON  
UNION HIGH  
SCHOOL  
DISTRICT TO  
HOST  
THANKSGIVING  
DINNER**







@tuhsd214



277 likes

LJCHS SOFTBALL PLAYER,  
ANAYA ROMERO,  
SIGNS HER LETTER OF  
INTENT TO PLAY FOR UTAH  
STATE!



@tuhsd214



378 likes

WEST POINT DRAGONS  
UNIFIED FLAG FOOTBALL  
WINS THE STATE  
CHAMPIONSHIP!



@tuhsd214



394 likes

THE KNIGHTS SLAY THE  
DRAGONS IN THE FIRST  
GAME OF THE SEASON!

# SOCIAL MEDIA *Recap*



@tuhsd214



137 likes

First of all, congratulations to  
our staff for receiving the A  
again!

UNIVERSITY HIGH  
CELEBRATES THEIR 7<sup>TH</sup>  
CONSECUTIVE A RATING!



@tuhsd214



272 likes

CCHS FOOTBALL PLAYER,  
JEREMIAH ADAMS CURRY, WINS  
THE INAUGURAL ARIZONA  
CARDINALS HIGH SCHOOL  
FOOTBALL BOYS DEFENSIVE  
PLAYER OF THE YEAR!



@tuhsd214



272 likes

WPHS UNIFIED FLAG  
FOOTBALL PLAYER, MALIK  
HARDEN, WINS THE  
INAUGURAL ARIZONA  
CARDINALS HIGH SCHOOL  
FOOTBALL HEART OF A  
CHAMPION UNIFIED  
PLAYER OF THE YEAR!

FOLLOW US!





# EXCELLENCE in every endeavor



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL



## EDITED BY:

JOSEPH ORTIZ

Director of Public Relations and Marketing

SARA CLAWSON

Public Relations/Marketing Specialist

AUDREY HERNANDEZ

Visual Communication Specialist

KILLIAN DAVIES

Video Production Specialist

ANTHONY SANCHEZ

Sports Content Creator

MAXWELL NICKELSBURG

PR & Marketing Intern