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**CONTACT:** Lauren Creiman, (909) 833-9853

## **Bonita Unified Celebrates 2025 Employees of the Year for Dedication, Impact**

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** – Three Bonita Unified employees, known for guiding students in the classroom, supporting athletes on the field, and cultivating creative environments, were celebrated as the District’s 2025 Employees of the Year for their lasting impact across the District and their school communities during the Board of Education’s April 9 meeting.

Bonita High School teacher, athletic director, and coach Darren Baumunk was honored as the District’s 2025 Certificated Employee of the Year; Mary Udria, a certified occupational therapy assistant in Specialized Services, was named as the Classified Employee of the Year; and Bonita Center for the Arts theater manager Melissa Stone received the Management Employee of the Year award.

“At Bonita Unified, our strength lies in the dedication and heart of our people,” Bonita Unified Superintendent Matt Wien said. “Darren Baumunk, Mary Udria, and Melissa Stone exemplify the impact that passionate, student-centered educators and staff can have. We’re grateful for their service and proud to celebrate the difference they make each day.”

All three honorees were commemorated with heartfelt speeches, photos with their loved ones, and tearful acceptance remarks during the Board meeting. Before the Board’s recognition, they were surprised on March 26 at their respective school or department sites, where they were greeted with banners, bouquets, and cheers from colleagues, administrators, and students. The Employee of the Year celebrations will culminate with the District’s annual recognition event on Wednesday, April 23.

Baumunk, a Bonita Unified alumnus, has worked in the District for 20 years. He teaches physical education, coaches softball, and serves as the athletic director at Bonita High, where he strives to instill values of teamwork, perseverance, and character in his students on and off the field.

“Darren has an infectious energy that inspires pride and unity, making school events both vibrant and memorable for students, staff, and community members,” said Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Kevin Lee, who introduced each honoree during the meeting with remarks drawn from nomination letters submitted by their colleagues. “His spirit, commitment to students, and support of the District community truly embody what it means to be a dedicated educator.”

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# BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

Stone has been instrumental in elevating the Bonita Center for the Arts into a hub of creativity, hospitality, and excellence since 2022, supporting hundreds of District and community events each year. With more than a decade of stagehand experience across multiple districts, she brings both technical expertise and a passion for the arts to her position, and was lauded for providing leadership that ensures students and staff have a professional space to showcase their talents and shine.

“Melissa’s radiant warmth and positivity drive her staff to perform their best,” Lee said. “She is what makes them the best crew in Southern California.”

Since joining the District in 2012, Udria has supported students across multiple campuses in her role as a certified occupational therapy assistant, using her expertise to foster inclusive and accessible learning environments. Lee noted that her work has helped students build essential skills for academic and social success, while also empowering educators with tools and strategies for support.

“Mary is great at listening to a concern, talking through possible solutions, and helping to implement tools to assist students in learning, and all of this work is done with kindness, motivation, and inspiration,” Lee said.

### PHOTO:

**BUSD\_EMPLOYEES\_2025:** The District recognized its 2025 Employees of the Year during the April 9 Board of Education meeting, naming Bonita High athletic director Darren Baumunk as its 2025 Certificated Employee of the Year; certified occupational therapy assistant Mary Udria as the Classified Employee of the Year; and Bonita Center for the Arts theater manager Melissa Stone as the Management Employee of the Year.

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