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Miramonte's Kristen Plant named County Teacher of the Year



Kristen Plant Photo provided

School District) were named the 2021-2022 Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year.

With the county Teacher of the Year program dating back to 1973, Plant is the first-ever recipient of the award from the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) and Wilson is the fourth winner from San Ramon Valley Unified School District (SRVUSD) in five years.

Plant is a 19-year veteran at Miramonte High School and is currently teaching English and Visual and Performing Arts. A former speech competitor, she leads a nationally recognized public speaking and debate program which operates as both an academic elective and an extracurricular competitive speech and debate team. Plant is a graduate of Georgetown University and earned her teaching credential at Cal State East Bay.

She holds leadership positions in several associations including the National Speech and Debate Association and California High School Speech Association, and was named CHSSA Coach of the Year in 2016. She is also recognized as being a "tireless and compassionate advocate for racial

equity on her campus," AUHSD Associate Superintendent Amy McNamara said. "She is one of the teachers I most admire in the district: she is thoughtful, positive, steps up to leadership opportunities, and is always thinking about how to make Miramonte High School a great place for all students."

"As a public speaking teacher, Ms. Plant goes above and beyond to support her students," said Miramonte senior Isabelle Bennette, who also introduced Plant in the broadcast. "While in Public Speaking, I developed confidence and writing due, in large part, to Ms. Plant's guidance. She has been an incredible ally to marginalized student groups. Ms. Plant creates an atmosphere of empowerment, trust, and hope for all her students to grow and strive in."

Plant and Wilson will go on to represent Contra Costa County at the California State Teacher of the Year competition. The State Teachers of the Year are expected to be announced in mid-October. The county teacher of the year program is coordinated by the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE).

Orinda community park

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Council Member Darlene Gee said that she was very supportive of going forward to apply for additional grant money, and appreciated Schultz being present and offering comments. Miller suggested a joint workshop with the Parks & Rec Commission to get feedback from park users, and Council Member Nick Kosla pointed out that in the last iteration of the downtown precise plan there is a parklike area directly across from the park.

Mayor Amy Worth, in summing up, agreed that it is imperative to move forward on the park. She said that it is a fantastic park, serving a huge range of ages, from residents of the two nearby senior housing facilities to children. She added that the park is now 50 years old and was built with volunteers and fundraising. She agreed that the park's real estate is very tight, and that there is wisdom in not using it for another bathroom.

Worth attested that the bathrooms currently work, from her 40 years of experience taking little kids to the bathroom. She suggested that the park is a tremendous opportunity for private fundraising, in the same way that the community raised the money for the library.

"People just love their community," she said, "and with COVID we've realized how important public spaces are." She supported the idea of a joint workshop to bring in younger members of the community. She complemented Trimble and his staff for doing such a great job. "We want to do this so we can really raise community support," she concluded. "This is more than conceptual, it really addresses concerns." And personally, she added, "I want to lobby for benches for grandmothers and some landscaping for shade."

The city council approved the item to allow staff to obligate money by the required deadline.

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