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CALIFORNIA TEACHER CORPS HONORS FRESNO COUNTY MATH TEACHER AS EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Former software engineer awarded for commitment to serving in CA's high-need public schools

Napa, CA – The California Teacher Corps, the statewide organization representing California's alternative route to certification programs, today announced that it is awarding a high school math teacher from Fresno County, Baljit Singh Gill, with its first annual Michael McKibbin Outstanding Educator of the Year Award. The award honors an exemplary second-career professional who pursued teaching through an alternative certification program and is now serving in a high-need California public school. The award will be presented at the California Teacher Corps Conference on February 11 in Napa, CA.

Gill, who came to the United States as a young child from India and grew up in the Bay Area, is a former software engineer and banking manager who decided to pursue teaching as a second career and earned his credential through National University, a California Teacher Corps program. Gill teaches math at Caruthers High School, which serves 570 students, with one-third of whom are English language learners and more than 80 percent receive free and reduced lunch. In the classroom, Gill uses his prior career to link math to real-world problem solving – connecting learning with the technical skills his students will need after graduation.

“We are thrilled to recognize Baljit Singh Gill as the first recipient of the Michael McKibbin Outstanding Educator of the Year Award,” said California Teacher Corps President Catherine Kearney. “Gill’s spirit and commitment to his students, school and community is representative of the more than 55,000 California Teacher Corps teachers who have left the comfort of their careers to serve in high-need public schools throughout the state. The right teacher makes all the difference in the classroom, and Gill is the right teacher for the Caruthers community.”

Gill has also taken on several leadership roles within Caruthers High School, including freshman class advisor, varsity track coach, Punjabi club advisor, home hospital teacher, junior varsity basketball coach, and is a member of the high school’s technology committee. He has participated in a teacher leadership grant through the Fresno County Office of Education and the Fresno State Foundation, which is a grant to build future teacher leaders. He has also conducted workshops that introduce veteran teachers to teaching software that complements the math curriculum, and presented alongside Fresno State University professors at the California Math Council for Southern California.

“I am honored to accept this award,” said Gill. “Every day, I am reminded that there is no greater commitment to the future of our country than to teach. As a teacher and coach, I provide for my

students in every way possible both inside and outside the classroom. I changed professions to become a teacher to be able to do more and have a positive impact on the lives of young people. It is one of the best decisions I have ever made.”

The California Teacher Corps was formed to meet the future demand for teachers in the state’s public schools, particularly in its underserved communities. Teacher Corps programs recruit and train second-career professionals, and other content experts, to serve in hard-to-staff schools, as well as to meet the critical need for math, science and special education teachers. In past years, 50 percent of California’s new math teachers were placed from Teacher Corps programs.

The Michael McKibbin Outstanding Educator Award is named in honor of Michael McKibbin, a strong advocate for alternative route to certification programs in California. McKibbin was instrumental in establishing and supporting the alternative pathway through more than two decades of working with the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

This award will be presented at the First Annual California Teacher Corps Conference, held in Napa, California on February 10 and 11. The conference includes panels, workshops, and featured speakers who will discuss opposing viewpoints on alternative certification and share best practices for recruiting and training the most qualified teachers. This is the first time under the leadership of the Teacher Corps that California’s educators, policymakers, and thought leaders will come together to address the educational challenges facing California since the California Teacher Corps was founded in 2009.

About the California Teacher Corps

The California Teacher Corps is a nonprofit organization established in 2009 with the goal of placing 100,000 highly-qualified teachers in California’s communities by 2020. The Teacher Corps provides a unified voice for the state’s alternative certification programs, effectively and proactively addresses teacher preparation issues facing California and recruits the best and the brightest professionals to teach in the public schools that need them most. CA Teacher Corps membership trains second-career teachers, and others committed to working in hard-to-staff schools, who have deep subject-area expertise and who remain in the teaching profession. For more information, visit the California Teacher Corps at www.cateachercorps.org.

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