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## Community

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### Top ten educators honored By Michelle Knight knight@theacorn.com

The Ventura County Educators Hall of Fame will induct its first 10 educators at a dinner event the public is welcome to attend on Oct. 6 at Oxnard's Lobster Trap restaurant.

Darrin Parrent, the Camarillo businessman who founded the hall of fame earlier this year, said his idea to establish a way to honor educators was a simple one.

"Educators don't get a lot of kudos . . . selflessly, they give a lot," he said.

While other professions honor their best, there wasn't a way for the public to show their appreciation for outstanding teachers and administrators, he said.

"They should receive credit or thanks- that's what we're doing this for," Parrent said.

Jeanne Adams, a Cal State Northridge professor and administrator who began her education career in Oxnard, said no one questions laying accolades at the feet of sports figures. Despite it being an almost universal experience to have known a special educator, there hasn't been a way to honor them, she said

"There's extraordinary teaching talent in our community," Adams said. "Darrin's idea was an exceptional one. People wondered why it wasn't thought of before."

Adams said there are literally hundreds of potential honorees yet to be acclaimed.

Among the inductees are home-grown James Cowan, former Ventura County superintendent of schools. Cowan was instrumental in establishing the first Regional Occupational Programs in the state and securing the site for the Ventura County's own program at the Camarillo Airport.

He helped establish the countywide science fair, academic decathlon, mock trial and Top Scholars Awards programs. After 38 years in education and six terms in office, Cowan retired in 1993.

"I feel quite honored," he said. "There are so many people who are qualified to fill that role. . . . I view it as being a compliment to all the people I worked with."

Rose Wisuri's 31 years of education experience runs the gamut, from Moorpark kindergarten teacher to elementary school principal to assistant superintendent. She helped bring in critical government funding that helped district programs to flourish.

"It's such an honor," said Wisuri, who retired in 1990. "I'm very thrilled they're doing something like this to recognize educators."

Elmont Michaelson, the first principal of Rio Mesa High School, saw the school's initial 642-student population swell to more than 1,800 during his nearly 20-year tenure. Also during that time, Rio Mesa was recognized for several programs and nominated as a California Distinguished School.

For 34 years, Marilyn Bjork taught at one school- Los Altos Middle School in Camarillo. Included among her many accomplishments during those years are coaching to victory the Camino Real Speech League and helping launch the speech program at Moorpark College.

Education Consultant and former California Lutheran University professor Barbara Wagner has seen the classroom from a teacher's perspective, schools from a principal's point of view and school districts from an assistant superintendent's standpoint.

She helped develop innovative programs for students and parents during her years as an administrator in the Pleasant Valley School District and received numerous awards for her talents, including outstanding administrator and Camarillo's Woman of the Year.

Other inductees include Javier Gomez, Wilma Turchik and former Oxnard teacher and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell. Thomas O'Neill and Lynnell Hankins will also be inducted posthumously.

To purchase the \$25 ticket to the event that includes dinner, visit the Ventura County Educators' Hall of Fame website at [www.vceh.com](http://www.vceh.com) or call Darrin Parrent at (805) 482-1492.