

San Joaquin County Office of Education

James A. Mousalimas, County Superintendent of Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

016-024: Ninth Annual Anti-Violence Symposium

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Ninth Annual Anti-Violence Symposium Reaches Out to At-Risk Youth

Best-selling author and filmmaker Antwone Fisher joins roster of motivational speakers at annual SJCOE symposium

More than 150 at-risk youth came to the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) Ninth Annual Anti-Violence Symposium to learn from the real-life experiences of a line-up of motivational speakers.

Hosted by SJCOE Foster and Homeless Youth Services, the annual event invites young people and the educators and other professionals focusing on improving the lives of the county's youth to talk about issues such as violence, gangs, drug-addiction, low self-esteem, and other risks the youth may face. The presenters who came to speak have encountered some of those same challenges. They shared their personal stories about struggle, perseverance, and how they overcame obstacles to succeeding in life.

The stories provide examples about how young people can change their lives and that there are teachers, counselors, social workers, therapists, and others who can help them, said Mark Yost, director of SJCOE Homeless and Youth Services.

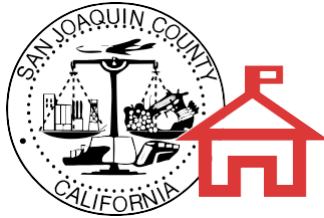
"We're trying to provide them with a path that facilitates change. That's the goal. We want to provide them the resources so they can stay on the path to success, and not just in academics," Yost said. "There are all kinds of people willing to provide support."

Keynote speaker Antwone Fisher is a film director, screenwriter, and best-selling author. His life story is a tale of struggle followed by success that was the inspiration for the movie *Antwone Fisher*, written by Fisher, himself, and directed by Denzel Washington. Fisher also visited San Joaquin County Juvenile Hall to meet with students at the SJCOE's **one**.John F. Cruikshank Jr. School.

At the symposium, Fisher was joined by three other speakers who shared stories of tragedy and triumph: Jared Scott Salas, Jorge Gonzalez, and Veronica Etier.

The symposium was held at the SJCOE's Wentworth Education Center in Stockton. San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools James Mousalimas also spoke at the event, noting that young people are often the victim of violence.

"If we are going to make a difference in our community addressing the issue, then it has to start with you, the young men and women in our community," he said. "That's what this day is all about."



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About the San Joaquin County Office of Education:

San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJC OE) provides educational leadership, resources, and services to support schools throughout the county. With its highly regarded programs, innovative staff and community partnerships, SJC OE ensures that every student in San Joaquin County has the opportunity of a quality education. For more information, visit www.sjcoe.org.