

**Event:** Eight Kern County Professional Honored at Kern Leaders Academy 2021 Commencement

**For Immediate Release:** Friday, November 19, 2021

**Contact:** Marlene Heise, 661.323.8594, [marlene@heisemedia.com](mailto:marlene@heisemedia.com)

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### **2021 Kern Leaders Academy Commencement Eight Aspiring Leaders Graduate from Intensive Program**

All leaders prevail even during uncertain times, and eight Kern County professionals demonstrated resilience with the completion of Kern Leaders Academy's intensive training program. Kern Leaders Academy is proud to announce the graduation of its 2021 class. The recent graduates who come from a variety of business and service backgrounds are prepared to elevate their leadership skills especially during a time in which leaders in our community are needed the most. KLA is designed to assist in the development of visionary community leaders who recognize that a healthy business climate leads to a strong economy, which is necessary for a vibrant community. The program is conducted by the Kern County Taxpayers Education Fund.

"This class benefited greatly from the wisdom of the dynamic faculty made up of senior leaders from major companies and industries in Kern County. The program provides real-life experiences that apply to current challenges facing Kern County. In turn, Kern County's future business and civic progress will be greatly enhanced by these up-and-coming visionary leaders. Kern Leaders Academy is proud of this class's efforts and achievements and looks forward to continuing to provide education and training opportunities to leaders in our community," commented Mike Turnipseed, Academy Director and Executive Director of Kern County Taxpayers Association.



*Left to right: Jim Wheeler, Lori Pesante, Karina Moreno, Eric Arias, Michael Turnipseed, Ronda Newport, Kevin Oliver, Debbie Teofilo, Alex Garcia*

The KLA Class of 2021 honored its graduates at a dinner at Bakersfield Country Club on Wednesday, November 17, 2021. Graduates are:

- **Eric Arias**, Bakersfield City Council
- **Alex Garcia**, Wasco City Council
- **Karina L. Moreno**, Business Manager for The Kern County Assessor-Recorders Office

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- **Ronda Newport**, Immediate Past President of the Bakersfield Association of Realtors®, current President of the Bakersfield Association of REALTORS® Charitable Foundation along with serving as a Director for the California Association of Realtors® and National Association of REALTORS®
- **Kevin Oliver**, Managing member REI Group LLC
- **Lori Pesante**, Director of Civic Engagement and Government Relations at the Dolores Huerta Foundation
- **Debbie Teofilo**, Owner of The Lodge at Painted Rock
- **Jim Wheeler**, Executive Director of Flood Bakersfield Ministries, Inc.

The KLA program requires commitment and study on behalf of both the participants and faculty. Kern Leaders Academy has exceeded expectations as an innovative educational program. Graduates studied topics in ethics, critical thinking, the economy, education, healthcare, public relations, social issues, communication, leadership, the electoral process and became well versed on important topics in federal, state, regional and local governance.

Sponsors of the 2021 Kern Leaders Academy included Adventist Health Bakersfield, Chevron, Heise Media Group, Kern County Taxpayers Association, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, PAS Human Resources Consultants, The Donna Carpenter Fund, Wonderful Orchards, WZI, Inc.

**If you are interested in applying for the 2022 Kern Leaders Academy or wish to become a sponsor, please contact: Michael Turnipseed: 661-322-2973 / email: [Kerntax@kerntaxpayers.org](mailto:Kerntax@kerntaxpayers.org)**



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