



**Event:** Kern Leaders Academy Celebrates 2024 Graduates at Commencement Dinner - **Photo Attached**  
**For Immediate Release: Thursday, November 20, 2024**

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

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### **Kern Leaders Academy Celebrates their 2024 Graduates Ten (10) Aspiring Leaders Complete 72-Hour, Rigorous Training Program**

Bakersfield, CA – Ten (10) aspiring community leaders celebrate the completion of Kern Leaders Academy's 72-hour community leadership program. Over the past 9 weeks, class members have undergone extensive training under the direction of prominent faculty members and community leaders. Thanks to the training and education gained from the program, these individuals are better equipped to serve our community by being prepared on how to face difficult issues that face our county.

The recent graduates who come from a variety of business and service backgrounds were prepared to elevate their leadership skills to invest back into our community. The Kern Leaders Academy is an innovative community leadership program that aims to cultivate visionary leaders who understand the importance of a robust business environment for a thriving economy and a vibrant community. The Academy offers education and training to civic, professional, and business leaders with exceptional leadership potential, equipping them with the skills and vision needed to address the challenges faced by Kern County creatively. The program is conducted by the Kern County Taxpayers Education Fund.

Kern Leaders Academy's Executive Director, Michael Turnipseed says he's pleased with the growth he's seen in the past 9 weeks. "When recruiting, individuals are carefully chosen to participate in this program. Our county faces several challenges, and we need to create a powerhouse of leaders who are equipped to listen, analyze, and act accordingly. I am happy we were able to work with promising individuals who elevated their skill set and are now better equipped to lead our community and create a positive difference. On behalf of the faculty and staff at Kern Leaders Academy, we congratulate the resilience and achievements demonstrated by the 2024 class."

The KLA Class of 2024 honored its graduates at a dinner at Bakersfield Country Club on Wednesday, November 13, 2024.

**(Continued on next page)**



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Graduates are:

- **Carter Beardsley;** High School Senior, Region 8 President, California Association of Student Councils
- **Bobby Chalhoub;** Realtor, Bobby Chalhoub Real Estate
- **Stephen Eyherabide;** Attorney, Klein, DeNatale, Goldner, Cooper, Rosenlieb & Kimball, LLP
- **Jake Hall;** Senior Director of Contracting and Quality Performance, Kern Health System
- **Hector Manuel Hernandez Lopez;** Co-Founder/Exec. Director of Centro de Unidad Popular Benito Juarez, Inc.
- **Daniel House;** Waste Acceptance, Clean Harbors Buttonwillow LLC
- **Abby Lehnig;** Kern Regional Director at California Policy Center
- **Mercedes Mayers;** Outreach Program Supervisor, City of Bakersfield's Office of Violence Intervention & Prevention
- **Ilene Parra;** Director of Client Services, The Open Door Network
- **Dess Perkins;** Advocate, author, business owner and educator

The 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 2024 Kern Leaders Academy included Adventist Health Bakersfield, Chevron, Heise Media Group, Kern County Taxpayers Association, Kern Family Health Care, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Wonderful Orchards, WZI, Inc.

**If you are interested in applying for the 2025 Kern Leaders Academy or wish to become a sponsor, please contact: Michael Turnipseed: 661-322-2973 / email: [Kerntax@kerntaxpayers.org](mailto:Kerntax@kerntaxpayers.org)**

**(Graduation photo attached)**

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