

## Tonya Paul Class of 2024



Tonya graduated from Las Plumas High School (LPHS) in 1987 and was on the Honor Roll her freshman and sophomore years. She was highly active in sports, playing golf her freshman year, softball her sophomore and junior year and was a wrestling statistician for 2 years. She was a Block LP member and a cheerleader as a freshman. Also, highly active in ASB activities, she was a football Homecoming candidate as a sophomore, class secretary in her freshman, sophomore, and junior years, and on the Spirit Week Committee all four years, maintaining a 3.5 grade point average

Prior to her junior year, she started her first job at Country Smorgy working there for several months. She then applied for a job at the newly opened Photomagic One Hour Photo in Oroville. She did not get the job, but the owner, Shirlee Burch-Stevens took a great interest in her and took her under her wing until she graduated.

Following graduation, she attended Butte College while continuing to work full-time for Photomagic till 1991. In 1991 she opened Tonya Paul Photography, a business she continues to operate today.

Also, in 1991, she was hired by the Oroville Mercury-Register as a photojournalist, a position she held for 15 years, photographing Las Plumas and Oroville High School sports, covering school and community events including the Blues Festival, Feather Fiesta Days, the Hmong Cultural Festival, Martin Luther King Day, Hooked on Fishing, and many others.

In 2006 Tonya was employed by the Butte County Office of Education (BCOE) as a CTE Digital Photography teacher, a position she continues to hold today. In addition to teaching classes for Oroville High, she was the class advisor to the Class of 2012 & 2019, she supervised football and basketball homecoming events and was a cheerleading advisor. In 2014 she was awarded BCOE Teacher of the Year.

In the years 2014 - 2016, she also served as REACH advisor, where she assisted in reaching social, emotional, and academic goals. In 2014 she was awarded REACH Advisor of the Year. She was also heavily involved with these student groups in their fundraising projects. In 2016 she was transferred to Hearthstone School and has been the prom advisor and continues to donate portrait photography and silent auction items to the school.

Shirlee Burch-Stevens, Tonya's mentor writes in her letter of support, *"In 1990, I was beginning to be booked to travel across the world consulting with other one-hour photo labs and companies to add very lucrative portrait studios and produce high-quality portraits in just one hour. I traveled across the USA, then Canada, Mexico, and finally, a large photographic company in New Zealand asked me to consult to add portrait studios to all their camera stores*

*and one-hour photo labs across their country. Unfortunately, I had a family situation that mandated I return to the USA. Tonya and the owner had met and when I suggested Tonya finish the training, he did not hesitate. Tonya was hired, got her passport, and was on her way to teach and help install portrait studios and train staff across New Zealand. She was stellar.”*

*Tonya Paul is one of the most extraordinary self-made humans I have ever met or had the opportunity to work with. She is a wonderful example of how to overcome extreme adversity from an incredibly young age, not let it define you, and then go on to make your life’s work (your True North), helping others in a field you love. She is deserving of any accolades we can bestow.”*

While an employee at the Oroville Mercury-Register. Tonya received the Donrey Media Photographer Award. In 2014, she was named BCOE Teacher of the Year and that same year named REACH Advisor of the Year.

As an Oroville native, Tonya has given extensively and continues to give to her community. She has been involved in the planning of both LPHS and LPHS/OHS class reunions since 1997. She has donated portraits for students, school athletic teams, the SPCA, and other organizations, as well as donating extensive support to the local Fraternal Order of Eagles.

Tonya makes her home in Oroville.