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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **At Popular “Casablanca Casino Night” Fundraiser, State Senator Shannon Grove Plays Key Role in Raising ~\$47,000 to Benefit Taft College’s Transition to Independent Living (TIL) Program**

Taft, CA – On September 7, 2019, adults with developmental disabilities who are learning independent living skills in Taft College’s Transition to Independent Living (TIL) Program gained needed resources from funds raised at the newly-revamped, movie-themed “Casablanca Casino Night” held at the West Side Recreation & Park District gym in Taft, California. The well-attended event raised ~\$47,000 after covering expenditures.

Director Aaron Markovits of the TIL Program at Taft College stated, “Most of the monies raised will fund vocational training scholarships for low-income TIL students. The vocational training includes wages and a vocational assessment for every TIL student who receives a scholarship.” Current TIL Student Sarah Malzhan addressed and greatly moved the crowd directly, “My life is forever changed because my parents encouraged me to participate in this special Taft College program.” Markovits continued, “Taft College’s TIL Program changes lives for students just like Sarah. We are grateful to be able to help more students with these new funds.”

A bus chartered from Bakersfield to Taft safely transported guests highly anticipating a night filled with fun, games, and auctions. Doors opened at 5:30 p.m. and a catered buffet dinner began service at 6:00 p.m. Music played by the Taft Union High School Jazz Band and libations flowed at the black jack and poker tables until almost midnight. KERO 23 Morning Show Anchor Alyssa Flores professionally emceed the entire night of festivities.

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### *TIL Casino Night, continued*

Competitive bids were taken on coveted items through both silent and live auctions. Senate Republican Leader Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield) brought down the house as Celebrity Live Auctioneer. "Taft College's Independent Living Program provides critical services to our community. The skills taught in this program are necessary to help members of our developmentally disabled community lead full and productive lives. It has been an honor to fight for this community in the Legislature, and I was excited to participate in an event that raised money for such a worthy cause," said Senator Grove.

Taft College and Taft College's Transition to Independent Living (TIL) Program would like to offer heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended and/or donated, valued businesses, the community at large, Senator Shannon Grove, KERO 23 Morning Show Anchor Alyssa Flores, as well as the cities of Taft and Bakersfield, for making "Casablanca Casino Night" possible. Plans are already in motion to bring back the event again next year.

### **ABOUT TAFT COLLEGE**

*Established in 1922, Taft College is one of the oldest California Community Colleges. Located in Western Kern County, Taft College provides continuous learning opportunities for over 12,000 students through more than 50 vocational and professional degrees, transfer programs, and certificates. These innovative programs are made available at a fraction of the cost of state and private colleges. Proud to transform the lives of highly-diverse students and adult learners, Taft College delivers vital pathways to advanced education and enhanced employment. In 2019, Taft College was ranked 5th best Community College in California by Niche.com. In 2022, Taft College will celebrate its 100th anniversary of student success.*