Seniors Set to Graduate from High School

Grand Island MEP staff were pleased to announce that nine migrant students are on target to graduate from Grand Island Public Schools. Three of the students earned their diplomas in December, and the remaining six intend to graduate in the spring.

The students attribute a large part of their success to MEP facilitator, Javier Rendon. Javier closely monitors the educational progress of migrant students at Grand Island Senior High by checking attendance, performance, and grades; locating community resources and services; and communicating consistently with parents. The hopeful graduates express that Grand Island's MEP staff led them to graduation by pushing them to go forward and be successful at school.

After high school completion, this dedicated group of students plans to obtain college degrees, become nurses, and/or work to support their families. They advise others to pay attention, take advantage of this opportunity, go to class, and do not give up. Their message to MEP staff, “Don’t give up on students, in reality there is something deep that they hold, it just takes time to open up.”

The Gates Millennium Scholar is...

Our very own Moo Say, a former migrant and refugee graduate from Omaha North Magnet High School. The Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program selects 1,000 students nationwide to receive a “good-through-graduation” scholarship to any college or university of their choice. Students are eligible to be considered for the GMS if they meet the list of eligibility criteria; which includes the following: attaining a cumulative high school GPA of 3.3 on an unweighted 4.0 scale and demonstrating leadership abilities through participation in community service, extracurricular or other activities. The Omaha graduate was selected from a pool of 24,000 applicants to receive this prestigious scholarship.

Before relocating to Nebraska, Moo Say was a Karen refugee living in a refugee camp on Thailand’s western border with Myanmar. With the resettlement efforts of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Moo Say’s family was resettled in Omaha in 2010. Her tremendous effort to her academics has made her a role model to migrant and refugee students in Nebraska and the nation. The Omaha graduate is currently studying to become a mathematics teacher at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Her ultimate career goal is to become an education professor.

Mentors Support Migrant Student Literacy

The Crete Migrant Education Program has been involved in a twelve year collaboration with its local public library to provide a summer reading experience for migrant students. In this program, community mentors were paired with migrant children to read to and with them. The mentors include city employees, police officers, young adults, Library Board and Friends of the Library members, and former migrant youth. During the month of July, mentors and students met at the library two days a week to read together.

The Crete Library and MEP designed this mentorship program to extend learning gains during the summer by improving their literacy skills. According to parents, the summer reading program has helped their children not only become more successful at reading, but it has ignited their passion for reading. The program has even expanded to involve parents through an at-home reading program called, “Storytime.” Both the summer reading program and the “Storytime” parent program continue to grow readers and promote family literacy.
Finding transportation, coordinating with students in remote locations, and providing tools for instruction were just a few of the challenges that the recruiters from ESU 13 faced so that four very determined Out-of-School Youth (OSY) could accomplish their dreams.

Recruiters/liaisons, Mona Tarin and Jaymie Hilliard mentored Kephanie, a young mother from Mullen. By providing Kephanie with access to the I-Pathways General Education Development (GED) courses, she was able to prepare for the test from her remote home in the sand hills. Justin, an OSY bicycling nearly two miles a day to work, was supported by recruiter/liaison, Rosie Cobos. Not only did Rosie continually motivate Justin as he prepared for the GED on a Galaxy tablet, she even personally drove him to the GED testing site. Both OSY passed the GED in December. These students acknowledged that the internet access, transportation, and advocacy of their MEP recruiters were crucial to their GED completion.

The celebrations continued as Jorge and German, both OSY from Ogallala, received scholarships to an intensive High School Equivalency Program (HEP) at the University of Oregon. The students will attend the course for 10 weeks (Jan-March) taking their GED tests on the last day of the program. The scholarship includes room and board at the UO campus dorms, individualized instruction, and career counseling. The MEP provided mentoring, referral to the HEP program, and transportation to Oregon. The staff at ESU 13 looks forward to welcoming the anticipated GED graduates home in March.

For Your Information

MOO SAY http://lirs.org/rebuildinghope0712ed2/
LUTHERAN FAMILY SERVICES OF NEBRASKA http://www.lfsneb.org/
UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM http://www.methodistcollege.edu/upward-bound
GATES MILLENIUM SCHOLARS PROGRAM http://www.gmsp.org/
CRETE PUBLIC LIBRARY https://www.facebook.com/crete.ne.library
HEP OF OREGON https://education.uoregon.edu/rou/high-school-equivalency-program
GED NEBRASKA http://www.education.ne.gov/ADED/
AVENUE SCHOLARS FOUNDATION http://www.avescholars.org/

Sources Cited