



GEAR UP IOWA

Issue 2
Fall 2015

Family Newsletter

What is GEAR UP Iowa?

GEAR UP (which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a program made possible through a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education aimed at preparing students and families academically, financially and inspirationally to enroll and succeed in college.

Beginning in Fall 2014, this seven-year project supports nearly 6,300 students beginning in 7th grade and follows them as they progress through school. GEAR UP Iowa is a long-term partnership between Iowa College Student Aid Commission, 12 school districts and nearly 40 institutions of higher education and community-based organizations.

For more information, visit our website:
www.gearupiowa.gov

GEAR UP Scholarships

Congratulations!
**Your student has been selected to receive
the GEAR UP Iowa scholarship!**

The cost of college can keep students from education after high school. **The GEAR UP Iowa scholarship will help overcome some of the financial barriers faced by many students and families.**

Your student is one of the nearly 6,300 students at 12 Iowa school districts selected to participate in GEAR UP Iowa. This program helps students and families prepare for higher education through different services and activities. **GEAR UP Iowa scholarships, for use toward college or other postsecondary education, will be available for all participating students after their graduation from high school in 2020.**

Students will receive at least \$600 per year for up to 4 years (\$2,400 total). In order to

receive the scholarship, students need to be enrolled at a community college or university and take the first scholarship disbursement before age 22. Students must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen in order to receive the scholarship or any other federal financial aid.

Encourage your student to do well in school, participate in extracurricular activities and take advantage of all GEAR UP Iowa services. Good grades and community involvement can help open further opportunities and scholarships for your student. GEAR UP facilitators will be working closely with your school and your student this year and in the years to come!

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Iowa!

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Alumni Success

Taylor Hills
Columbus Junction High School
GEAR UP Iowa Alum

College: St. Ambrose University
Major: Public Relations

First Year Highlights: Dean's List 1st and 2nd semesters, Cross Country and Track teams winning conference titles

College Activities: Cross Country and Track, KALA Radio Station (Campus Radio), Resident Assistant, Communications Club and Phi Eta Sigma honors program

Words of Wisdom & Encouragement: "When making college decisions make sure you are listening to your heart. **Your decisions should be based on your wants/needs and these are different for everyone.** Visit as many colleges as you can in order to find your perfect fit! This is the easiest way to insure you will be happy with where you end up."



Each issue, GEAR UP Iowa recognizes the success of program graduates and their accomplishments beyond high school.

GEAR UP Iowa Facilitator Corner

GEAR UP Iowa Facilitators work with school districts to offer support for students, families and school staff working with GEAR UP Iowa. By assisting with programming at schools, Facilitators help ensure students learn about their educational options, graduate from high school and move easily into their education beyond high school. This issue, they discuss how they found their career passions:

Flor Slowing, M.S. International Development, Iowa State University
Denison, Perry & Storm Lake

"My high school offered many volunteer opportunities. As I was volunteering in a local hospital, I realized how much I enjoy working with people and I started to develop a passion for health education and community outreach."

Nathan Svare, B.S. Psychology, Bemidji State University & M.S. Social Responsibility, St. Cloud State University
Fort Dodge, Clinton, Columbus Junction & Davenport

"As a first-generation college student, I had a lot of support from teachers, coaches, family and the community in my pursuit for a higher education. I've always wanted to pay it forward and now I have the opportunity to do that. I am passionate about assisting students, in particular first-generation students, because I want them to know that adults care about their success and we are willing to assist."

Tiffany Berkenes, B.A. K-12 Art Education, Simpson College
Des Moines & Marshalltown

"When I was a child, I loved coloring and 'playing school.' Thankfully, both art and helping people align with my strengths, so it made sense to combine the two passions and become an art teacher. I stayed involved in both interests throughout school and eventually majored in art education. Following a year of teaching, I have since worked in education with a focus on another passion: **empowering underrepresented students and families to succeed**, and I am an artist by hobby."

Denise Riley, B.S. Child, Adult & Family Services, Iowa State University
Cedar Rapids, Ottumwa and Sioux City

"Figuring out what I didn't like was an important part of finding my passion. Through various life experiences such as job shadowing and volunteering, I've found a career where I can help support students on their paths to success."

School Spotlight: Fort Dodge Middle School

Approximately 25 GEAR UP Iowa 7th graders from Fort Dodge Middle School attended a two week summer program in June.

This summer program, provided using GEAR UP Iowa funds, allowed students to participate in hands-on STEM activities including constructing water rocket launchers and cardboard furniture. They also used 3-D computer modeling and experimented with electric wiring to make a bug.

Students also had the opportunity to visit the Science Center of Iowa. At the end of each day, students were given time to reflect on what they had learned and how they will apply their knowledge in the future.

The goal of this summer program was to help students see the value of getting a good education. John Newman, summer program coordinator and science teacher at FDMS said: **"We hope that students will realize that a solid foundation in education will provide them with the skills needed to do things they don't realize they're capable of doing."**



Parent Tip

Regularly discuss college and career dreams as early as possible. Be supportive and seek extracurricular activities, camps and classes that foster growth and exploration of your student's goals.

Many organizations offer scholarships and financial assistance for summer programs & extracurricular activities.

Turning Passions Into Future Plans

With hundreds of college majors and career options, students can easily get overwhelmed planning for their future. Together, we can help students discover what they enjoy and love and show them how to turn those things into a lifelong career. Passion is at the heart of choosing what a person wants to do each day in their life after college. If a person truly loves what he or she does, it won't feel like work.

If students can recognize their passions as well as their talents, skills and values, they can look for opportunities to further develop them.

Encourage students to try a variety of extracurricular activities or volunteer experiences at school or in the community. Then ask them to reflect on what they liked or didn't like about each. Some questions that will help them think about their passions include:

- What makes you happy?
- What motivates you?
- What do you like about your favorite classes?
- Who do you look up to (friends and family, historical figures or celebrities)? Why do you look up to them?
- What accomplishment has made you most proud and why?
- If you could do any job for a day, what would it be and why?

Connect your student with a college student or other adult mentor with similar passions to learn more.

Students who have a passion for what they're doing and studying are more likely to stay involved and succeed more in school. That success increases the chances of graduating college and finding a satisfying career!

Myth vs. Reality

Myth:

You should know what you want to do for the rest of your life before choosing a major.

Reality:

While it is important to start exploring careers at an early age to fit your interests and talents, an estimated 20% to 50% of students enter college undecided on their major. Additionally, 75% of students will change their major at least once before graduation.



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GET CONNECTED

Khan Academy is a free service that offers learning exercises, instructional videos and a personalized dashboard for students and parents to study at their own pace in and outside of the classroom. Students can practice subjects such as math, science, computer programming, history, art history, and more! Their math missions guide learners from kindergarten to calculus. Khan Academy has worked with NASA and the Museum of Modern Art for special features.



"You only have to know one thing: You can learn anything!" – Khan Academy

Khan Academy
www.khanacademy.org
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Attention parents!

Please take a few minutes to take our GEAR UP Iowa survey!

English: tinyurl.com/GUIParents2015

Spanish: tinyurl.com/GUIPadres2015

Si desea leer este boletín en español puede visitar:
www.gearupiowa.gov

Welcome to GEAR UP Iowa!

Congratulations, your child is a GEAR UP Iowa student!

Look inside this newsletter to learn how nearly 40 partnering institutions of higher education and community-based organizations are working to improve student success in 12 school districts.

GEAR UP Iowa is a program of:



IowaCollegeAid.gov
Because College Changes Everything