



# Family Newsletter

## Involvement Builds Experience, Skills

Getting involved with extracurricular activities as students start the next phase of their education helps them learn more about themselves and develop new skills.

Volunteering, participating in sports and clubs or just doing something that interests them allows students to gain experiences and help build their resumes for college applications and scholarships.

### Extracurricular activities include:

- School Activities  
Sports teams, music, speech/debate, leadership groups, STEM clubs, drama and academic clubs
- Community Activities  
Club sports teams, community theater, faith-based groups, 4-H clubs or other youth leadership groups
- Volunteering  
Helping at charity events, giving time at local nursing homes or participating in an activity of interest
- Work  
Part-time jobs after school or on weekends, babysitting and internships

Community involvement and extracurricular activities go a long way toward showing admissions officers a student's potential and interests. However, throwing together a bunch of activities in an attempt to impress colleges can be a lot of work for little reward. **Follow interests, but don't overcommit.** Colleges are more interested in students who are engaged with the world around them.

**One final tip:** Keep track of activities as students move through high school. When senior year rolls around, it will be easier to complete college applications.

### 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 over 7,000 students and follows them as they progress from 7th grade through high school graduation. 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](http://www.gearupiowa.gov)

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### Connect with us!

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-  [@GEARUP\\_Iowa](https://twitter.com/GEARUP_Iowa)
-  [GEARUPIowa](https://www.instagram.com/GEARUPIowa)
-  [gearup@iowa.gov](mailto:gearup@iowa.gov)

# Alumni Success

**Derek Solis**  
Sioux City North High School  
GEAR UP Iowa Alum

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



**College:** Iowa State University

**Major:** Mechanical Engineering

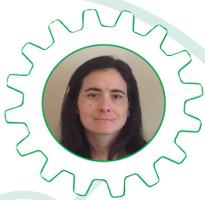
**College Activities:** President of Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity Inc. and Treasurer of Latinx Student Initiatives

**College Highlight:** Getting to know new people and learning all the different backgrounds people may have.

**Words of Wisdom & Encouragement:**  
Although things may seem tough at times, one must remember that anything worth having must be worked for and there are always better days. Todo se puede! (Anything can be achieved!)

## GEAR UP Iowa Facilitator Corner

GEAR UP Iowa Facilitators work with school districts to offer support for students, families and school staff. 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. In this issue they discuss ways they were involved in high school:



**Flor Slowing**, M.S. International Development, Iowa State University

**Denison, Perry, Storm Lake and Marshalltown**

During my high school years, I participated in a program in which we visited public hospitals to offer literacy classes to patients and their families. This experience helped develop my interest in healthcare related careers. **It is important to choose a few activities that are related to your interests rather than being involved with multiple activities.** Colleges want to know who you are and what you can do. Your extracurricular activities are a perfect way to show them your commitment, determination and passion for learning.

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

I went to a small school, so I was involved with almost every extracurricular offered. One that stands out was my involvement with FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America). Through my involvement with FCCLA I was able to **build leadership skills** through positions I held and enjoyed organizing annual events such as the community blood drive.



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

In high school, I was a member of the National Honor Society (NHS). NHS provided me opportunities to further develop my leadership skills and volunteer my time in the community. I was elected President of NHS my senior year of high school. One of the more meaningful volunteer opportunities that I had was to mentor and tutor a few elementary students during their lunch time. I always knew I wanted to be an educator and **that experience solidified that education would be a component of what I do in my life.**

# Student Summit Highlights GEAR UP Iowa Leaders

Approximately 50 GEAR UP Iowa students from nine school districts moved into the dorms at Grand View University this past June to attend the first GEAR UP Iowa Student Summit. The students explored college and career opportunities and participated in the following activities to help them grow as student leaders as they enter ninth grade:



## Parent Tip

It's important for students to take advantage of school and community activities, but make sure they aren't overwhelmed with too many activities. Look into carpooling with other families if transportation issues or time constraints are preventing your student from participating in extracurricular activities.

- Listened to motivational speaker, Liz Nead, talk about climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro
- Learned about the attributes of a good leader from Alan Feirer
- Took a career inventory and learned how to match their skills to careers
- Explored careers by hearing speakers from IowaWORKS of Central Iowa and the Facebook Data Center and visiting worksites at UnityPoint Health and Accumold
- Toured Grand View University's campus and lived in the residence halls for 3 nights
- Worked with 6 student mentors from 4 different colleges
- Received an inspirational send-off message from Joshua Barr, Director of the Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission

Students left **empowered and excited** to apply what they learned as student leaders back in their high schools and communities. Find more pictures from the event on Instagram (@GEARUPIowa) and Facebook (GEAR UP Iowa), using #GUISummit.



# GEAR UP WEEK 2016

September 19-23

## Celebrating National GEAR UP Week

GEAR UP programs, schools, families and partners across the country are joining together to celebrate National GEAR UP Week September 19-23.

This week-long celebration will highlight the positive impact GEAR UP has on students, families and communities in Iowa and around the country.

The GEAR UP initiative was signed into law in 1998 with the mission to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

GEAR UP provides **early college awareness and support** activities like tutoring, mentoring, academic preparation, financial education and college scholarships to improve access to higher education for low income, minority and disadvantaged first-generation students and their families.

Please join us in the celebration by following us on social media using #OneInAMillion, #GEARUPWorks and #IAMGEARUP. We'd love to hear your story about how #GEARUPWorks for you!



A Program of Iowa College Aid

430 East Grand Avenue, FL 3  
Des Moines, IA 50309-1920

## Get Connected

Raise.Me makes it possible for students to earn scholarship money from colleges starting as early as 9th grade.

Received an A? Earn scholarship money.

Joined a team or club?

Earn scholarship money.

Volunteered in your community?

Earn scholarship money.

So far, Raise.Me students have earned an average of \$19,000 in micro-scholarships from over 180 colleges! Several colleges in Iowa have partnered with Raise.Me including the University of Iowa with their "Iowa for All 99" program.

Students can create a free account and start earning their own micro-scholarships at Raise.Me.

Si desea leer este boletín en español puede visitar:  
[www.gearupiowa.gov](http://www.gearupiowa.gov)



Raise.me

[www.raise.me](http://www.raise.me)

Twitter: @RaiseLabs

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## Welcome to GEAR UP Iowa!

Congratulations, you are part of GEAR UP Iowa!

Look inside this newsletter for information on GEAR UP Iowa programs at schools around the state, plus tips and advice for helping improve student success.

GEAR UP Iowa is a program of:



[IowaCollegeAid.gov](http://IowaCollegeAid.gov)  
Because College Changes Everything