

FEBRUARY
2014

NEBRASKA MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

CELEBRATING MIGRANT YOUTH SUCCESS

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.

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 other migrant students, often facing the same challenges of high mobility, language barriers, and financial struggles, 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.”



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.

2 GED GRADUATES + 2 HEP SCHOLARS = 4 SUCCESSFUL OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

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/liasons, Mona Tarin and Jaymie Hilliard mentored Kephania, a young mother from Mullen. By providing Kephania 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/liason, 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.

Migrant Projects featured in the January edition:

- Grand Island
- ESU 13
- Omaha
- Crete



To feature student success from a local MEP project, please contact Lindsay Ickes at Lindsay.ickes@nebraska.gov

AVENUE SCHOLARS IMPLEMENT MENTORING THROUGH READING PROGRAM

Academic Scholar Foundation (ASF) students from Omaha South High School participate in their third year of the “Learning Together” partnership with third grade students at Spring Lake Elementary.

Each Avenue Scholar, including Omaha MEP students, is paired with one or two Spring Lake students—their mentees, to read together every Wednesday. During these sessions, the ASF students assist elementary children as they read a pre-selected passage. The ASF students then check their mentees comprehension by asking questions and discussing what they read.

According to Juan Cangas, the “Learning Together” program director, “This is a very good vehicle for students to improve their own reading. I love the mentorship aspect of the program. They learn to become leaders.” The ASF students are building skills they can continue to utilize as mentors and leaders in the community.

What do the third graders at Spring Lake think about the program? ESL Resource Teacher at the elementary school, Sabrina Young, says, “It’s an absolutely incredible program. Our kids love it. They really look forward to it. The mentors are strong role models.” Truly the “Learning Together” program is a beneficial partnership to all.



FYI 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>
HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY PROGRAM <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/hep/index.html>
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