

HIGH DESERT COLLEGE COLLABORATIVE: INSPIRING ASPIRATIONS AND PROMISING FUTURES

“Hi, I just wanted to give you an update about the Bio Chem Camp at BYU that I went to. When I was there we did different experiments, but my personal favorite was about DNA mutation. While at camp I have made a lot of friends and I was really happy that I was able to use the HDCC scholarship money for the camp. Thank you for this opportunity.”

-7th grade student, Glens Ferry School District

High Desert College Collaborative (HDCC), established in 2020, is a nonprofit program affiliated with Sun Valley Community School with a mission to inspire the youth of rural Idaho to pursue educational opportunities beyond high school to build a brighter future for themselves and their communities. Founded and directed by Bayard “Bags” Brokaw, a longtime educator and former Cutthroat teacher, administrator, and college counselor, HDCC presently collaborates within nine school districts – Bliss, Camas County, Carey, Dietrich, Glens

Ferry, Hagerman, Shoshone, Richfield, and Wendell -- and has partnerships with Boise State University’s College of Education, College of Southern Idaho, and the Idaho College Savings Program.

When Bags approached SVCS about sponsoring HDCC four years ago, Head of School Ben Pettit and the Board of Trustees enthusiastically supported HDCC’s vision, recognizing that SVCS’s strategic initiatives regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and community outreach were nicely aligned.

HDCC aims to inspire,

connect, and celebrate the innate excitement and enthusiasm found in younger students (grades 5-8), and to build student aspirations for college across the spectrum of trade, vocational, two-year, and four-year programs. HDCC engages students to be active participants in their own education, offers scholarship funds, and promotes the essential habits of effort, motivation, and character as core tenets in accessing higher educational opportunities. As Bags states, “By supporting earlier and equal access to educational information beyond

OPPOSITE: Ben Pettit (left) and Bags Brokaw (second from right) at Bliss Awards Assembly 2023



high school, students can better appreciate the link between their current education and their future goals. We cannot ask children to aspire to what they don't know, or don't have a reference point for."

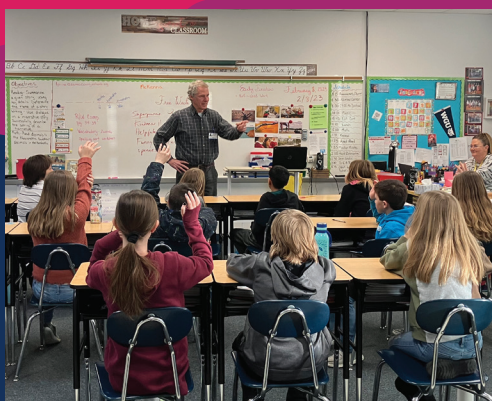
To accomplish its objectives, HDCC conducts winter workshops in its member schools where middle schoolers can talk about their hopes and dreams after high school and discuss their perspectives on what college means to them at this point in their development. HDCC brings in college student voices from BSU and CSI to discuss these topics and share

their personal journeys while middle schoolers ask specific questions and receive feedback from them. In commenting on the value of linking college students with middle schoolers, a 7th grade teacher from Wendell Middle School wrote, "I had many students say how much they enjoyed listening to what each of you had to say--and how much they too would like to be college student-athletes one day! Thank you for sharing that some parts of starting a new journey are scary, and some are very rewarding--it helps to hear about real experiences from real people.

Please keep encouraging those younger than you--you DO make a difference!"

And from a 6th grade teacher at Shoshone Elementary, "I wanted to thank you for sharing this opportunity with our students. The discussions we had today about their aspirations for college and their careers was fabulous and the students were more enthusiastic than I had ever imagined. The questions they asked were eye-opening. So

many of my students were asking about other scholarship opportunities. We talked about scholarships, college tuition, help with money for after high school programs, and they started researching majors that would help them build a career they might want. I really had no idea that so many of them had questions of all different kinds that they had already come up with in the 6th grade about college and careers."



PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF HDCC

After the workshop season, students are invited to apply for a HDCC Promising Future Scholarship of \$125. In many schools, the scholarship application is now required by class teachers and is being used as an authentic English/Language Arts writing assessment. For a first-year scholarship applicant, s/he is asked to respond to the following questions: (a) What do you enjoy doing today that might make a great career for you in the future? (Think academic interests, extracurricular activities, hobbies, family work/chores and activities, community involvement.) Why do you think it might be a great career for you? (b) Using our HDCC college/majors resource posters, identify one or two colleges (trade, vocational programs, two-year or four-year colleges or universities) that

might help you prepare for your career or future interest and cite three courses you would take. As one 8th grade student from Glens Ferry wrote in her application, “College has become important to me and this (scholarship) essay helps me think about what is important and what I can do to help myself with that. This also makes me really think more about what I do in the future and make sure I have it all planned out in high school.”

And a 6th grade teacher at Shoshone Elementary said, “I have assigned the application essay as a classroom narrative writing assignment. There were actually no complaints (as a teacher I am sure you know how rare that is), especially when an essay has been assigned. They went right to work on researching careers, colleges, and courses. As a teacher, it was amazing and

fantastic how much energy they were all putting into the assignment.”

In its first three years, HDCC has honored 432 students at year-end assemblies with Aspirational Scholarship Award certificates inscribed as follows: “In recognition of effort to do well in school, effort to pursue education beyond high school, effort to reach your dreams.” Scholarship money can be redeemed for three purposes: To open up a tax-free 529 Educational Savings Plan, which is specifically designed to help families save for any kind of college and/or federally registered apprenticeship programs. To help with

ABOVE (left to right): Wacey Williams (BSU) conducting workshop; Camas School student workshop; BSU/CSI zoom with students. OPPOSITE (left to right): Wendell Awards Assembly 2023; Kevin Lancaster, superintendent at Bliss, and Bags, KMTV Interview



a special program, camp, or relevant purchase during middle school or high school connected with one's aspirations, and to help with tuition and/or book costs in college after one graduates from high school.

HDCC has actively encouraged student winners and their families to open up a college savings account through the IDeal College Savings Program. Bags reports, "There is no better bang for your buck than using one's scholarship money for opening up a 529 account, particularly for students in middle school. The national data on the influence of a Child Development Account (CDA) as it pertains to pursuing education beyond high school is very compelling. Many states (and cities like San Francisco

and New York) have financed CDAs for children at birth or when they enter kindergarten with a modest investment (\$50 to \$100), and time has proven that these early investments have paid dividends downstream in furthering children's education."

As HDCC launches its fourth year, it is clear that HDCC and SVCS's partnership is making a difference in the lives of students and families from our neighboring farm and ranch communities. HDCC exemplifies how SVCS's mission of "leading impactful, purposeful lives" can be shared with a broader audience, one that values the future of all students in Idaho. Bags states, "We not only have a rich history in athletics with several of our collaborative school communities, but many members of the Wood River Valley's service and

managerial work force travel daily from these communities. Building and supporting student aspirations to pursue credentials and skills beyond high school will greatly benefit Idaho's future economic vitality.

Tim Perrigot, Wendell School District Superintendent, offered the following on the value of HDCC's collaboration within their school community. "We are a rural school district located in southern Idaho. Over 50 percent of our student population is Hispanic/Migrant, 55 percent of our elementary students are English Language Learners, and 73 percent of our students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. Agriculture is a strong presence in our area, and a large percentage of our students' families are employed with local farms and food processing plants. Our students, paraprofessionals, and teachers are collaborating

to create a culture of success in our district. We have made great strides. Thank you HDCC for helping to improve our community by motivating our students to be their best. The greatest benefit of HDCC is that it creates opportunities for students in Wendell. Opportunities that were not available prior nor previously considered by students. The belief they can go to college someday or a technical school. The idea that they have a chance. Awesome!"

For more information or to contribute to HDCC, you can visit its website at highdesertcollegecollaborative.org. Donations to HDCC are tax-deductible through SVCS. +