

ASPIRE: Program develops students' post-grad plans

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organization dedicated to financially supporting Sisters High School students with their post-secondary education or vocational training.

As Tim Ross, Sisters GRO board of directors chair, explains, "Sisters GRO provides a process that enables community members to support Sisters High School graduates. ASPIRE is a key part of this process since the ASPIRE mentors make sure that the students are applying for the best scholarships for their chosen career path. Without ASPIRE, many of our scholarships would not be awarded since students would not even be applying for them."

Due to the strength of this relationship, last year 70

donor organizations awarded over 115 different scholarships totaling over \$250,000 to Sisters High School students.

The continued success of Sisters High School's ASPIRE program depends on keeping and growing its excellent cadre of adult volunteer mentors. These mentors receive training and continued support from Kroytz and the ASPIRE program. Kroytz does his best, once a student submits the ASPIRE permission slip, to match students with mentors who have similar interests. Kroytz also looks at the skill sets of the mentors in determining an excellent match. Kroytz explains that for many students, "This is the first time they've had a peer relationship with an adult who is advocating for them."

The mentor then begins to explore post-high-school options with the student. Mentors help students with a college/career choice, the

application process, and discuss ways to pay for their future.

Ideally, Kroytz would like to increase the current number of ASPIRE mentors, which currently stands at 28, in order to not only ensure that each senior is matched with an ASPIRE mentor but each SHS junior as well.

What does being an ASPIRE mentor entail? To put it plainly, being an ASPIRE mentor means making a difference in a young adult's future. Kroytz says that he welcomes individuals who like to help teenagers and who possess a growth mindset. Mentors need to be flexible and have an encouraging attitude, and also believe that every student has a path, whether it's a two- or four-year college, the military, or vocational/trade school. Most current ASPIRE mentors have five students or fewer, and volunteer approximately 3 to 4 hours per month.



PHOTO BY RICK KROYTZ

Mentor Susan Parker and Ryan Waddell discuss post-high-school options during an ASPIRE session.

Meetings with students are completely flexible around when the mentor can meet during the school day.

Financial support of ASPIRE is welcome. One hundred percent of donated funds go directly to supporting the ASPIRE program.

Those interested in supporting the program or becoming an ASPIRE volunteer may contact Rick Kroytz at Sisters High School by phone at 541-549-3203, or by email rick.kroytz@sisters.k12.or.us.

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