

# ASPIRE mentors help students navigate future

By **Charlie Kanzig**  
Correspondent

As students enter the final year or so of high school they are often peppered with the same questions: “What are you going to do after you graduate?” “Where are you going to college?” “Do you plan to apply for scholarships?”

Rick Kroytz works daily at Sisters High School to help make sure students have answers to those questions. As the coordinator for ASPIRE (Access to Student Assistance Programs in Reach of Everyone) he helps match students to mentors, oversees college counseling, and works with the Sisters Graduate Resource Organization (GRO) to help students access local scholarships.

Kroytz, in his fourth year as ASPIRE coordinator, is in the process of completing his school counseling certification and works full-time at Sisters High School. He currently manages 28 ASPIRE mentors with the goal that by senior year, every student has an adult working with them on their personal and educational post-high-school goals.

“We have 28 great mentors right now, but I am currently recruiting to add 10 or 12 more so we have closer to 40,”

he said. “The mentors are prepared to touch base with students throughout the year and are of great help whether students are considering college, community college, apprenticeships, military, the work force, or other vocational/technical training.”

Kroytz fully appreciates the strong work done by the ASPIRE mentors and enthusiastically invites others to join the program.

“The role of our mentor is to work one on one with students to develop and encourage students to think about their future. They are a peer, guide, and cheerleader depending on what is being talked about or worked on,” he said. “Mentors are the core of the ASPIRE program and what makes Sisters High School college and career program so amazing is the relationships mentors form with students as they help the students begin to take charge of their own futures.”

In addition to ASPIRE, Sisters High School contracts with a professional college counselor, Theresa Wadden. Students and their parents can arrange for an appointment with Wadden through Kroytz or their ASPIRE mentor.

Anyone interested in learning more about ASPIRE can

contact Kroytz via e-mail at [rick.kroytz@ssd6.org](mailto:rick.kroytz@ssd6.org) or at 541-549-3203. Kroytz will arrange an interview to those interested and provide more information about how to become a volunteer and what the training program to become a mentor entails.

Kroytz is also the “in-building” connection for the ever-expanding Sisters GRO scholarship program that awarded approximately \$250,000 in local scholarships last year.

“ASPIRE and GRO work hand in hand to support students in attaining their goals for the future,” Kroytz said.

“We think the entire Sisters community should know about the wonderful work done by GRO, but we especially want current seniors and their families to be aware that there are scholarships available for just about every student situation you can think of,” he said. He continued, “Sometimes kids don’t think they are eligible for any of the scholarships for one reason or another and usually that is not the case, so one of our goals this year is to increase the percentage of kids who apply.”

According to Kroytz, every single student who completed the application process last year was granted at least one scholarship. Scholarship



PHOTO PROVIDED

Jennith Hoyt and Evan Martinez at an ASPIRE meeting.

amounts range from \$500 to over \$10,000 and are all from local citizens, companies, and organizations.

Kroytz recently hosted Financial Aid Night for parents and students in order to familiarize them with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is required by most colleges and universities. The ASPIRE office also organizes College Planning Night, college visits, vocational training information, and Scholarship Application Pizza Night, which is scheduled for

February 3, just after the GRO scholarships become available online on January 24.

Kroytz encourages families to visit the GRO website <http://shs.ssd6.org/sisters-gro> to learn more about the program, including how to become a donor.

“GRO has high goals to make it possible someday to have a scholarship of one kind or another for every single graduate every year,” he said. “The support from the local community has already been incredibly generous, but there is still room to grow.”

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