



The Gear Up Messenger

September 2002

Preparing Students To Succeed

Volume 1, Issue 3

GEAR UP welcomes guest speaker Jason R. Dorsey

On October 22 through October 30, the GEAR UP Partnership will present Jason R. Dorsey, nationally acclaimed author and motivational speaker, to the Southeastern Oklahoma Enterprise GEAR UP Partnership. Dorsey will speak to all 17 Partnership schools and to the GEAR UP communities over the course of a week long tour.

Dorsey's ability to relate to young audiences has given him an edge in the world of motivational speaking. He approaches young students and teens with humor and his own personal stories. He will speak to the GEAR UP students about taking responsibility for their actions, leadership, and living life with purpose. In addition, GEAR UP has purchased a copy of his best selling book, *Graduate to Your Perfect Job*, for every GEAR UP student in the Partnership. GEAR UP Assistant Director, Bettye Finnell, has witnessed Dorsey's powerful message first hand. She discovered Dorsey's talent when he spoke to a grant directors meeting in San Antonio Texas. "Jason has a great story to tell and everyone—students, par-



ents, and educators alike—will be inspired by what he has to say," said Finnell. "I am ecstatic about bringing Jason to Southeast-

ern Oklahoma to speak to our GEAR UP Partnership. I think what Jason has to say will motivate our GEAR UP students to get excited about their own potential and their plans for the future!"

Dorsey's accolades include speaking alongside such national leaders as General Colin Powell, President Bill Clinton, and First Lady Barbara Bush.

The Brenham Texas native began extensively exploring his career opportunities at the age of 16. He enrolled in a medical program at the University of Miami in Gables, Florida. He then went on to work on an archeological dig in the Mediterranean through a program at Harvard University. He eventually went on to study at the Business Honors program at the University of Texas at Austin.

At the age of 18, a junior at UT, Dorsey was urged by a mentor to follow his dream of writing a book about his personal experience. He then authored *Graduate to your Perfect Job* in two and a half weeks, and by

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GEAR UP holds HOSTS workshops

The GEAR UP Partnership held a HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed) workshop from July 30 through August 2. Goodland School made available their cafeteria for instruction and their computer lab for practice sessions. The workshops provided additional training for the academic coaches who will continue facilitating the mentoring program in all 17 Partnership schools.

The workshops, facilitated by HOSTS Math Specialist Renita Ferguson and Language Arts Specialist Mary Day, covered all aspects of the HOSTS program. Participants were given a review of all new HOSTS mate-



HOSTS Math Specialist Renita Ferguson assists GEAR UP teachers.

rials, computer software, and product resources for use in the structured mentoring programs on their respective campuses.

The HOSTS Corporation aided in the process of measuring academic progress with the use of HOSTS assessment in Language Arts and Math for seventh and eighth grades. Judy Sweat, Mid States Regional Support Manager, agreed to prepare Language Arts tests for use by all Partnership seventh and eighth graders.

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School spotlight

School Spotlight will be a monthly feature for the *Messenger*. Each issue we will be featuring a different school in our Partnership, highlighting a great GEAR UP feature of that school.

The first year with the GEAR UP Partnership brought many exciting new ideas and opportunities for the seventeen GEAR UP schools. For Calera School, providing a HOSTS room that would maximize the mentoring program's potential was an important step.



Calera's mentor message board.

The HOSTS materials were first used in teachers' classrooms, due to a lack of empty space for a specific HOSTS room. Calera then received an invitation from Pam Carter at Terrell Elementary School in Denison, Texas, to visit their HOSTS Learning Center. "Mr. Parrish and I went for the tour and we left excited!" said Karen Hughes, Calera's

GEAR UP Site Coordinator.

She then suggested that the school convert the teachers' lounge into a new HOSTS Learning Center. The lounge was located next to her office, where Hughes could more effectively monitor the program. She commented, "We all want to put the students at Calera first, so the faculty gave up their lounge."

The staff began shopping for furniture, working on bulletin boards, and finding decorations. Hughes then sent out a mailing to all the addresses within the school district describing the program and asking for mentors.

The HOSTS program at Calera had 11 mentors and 21 students this past year, and Calera hopes to be in full force for the second year using the HOSTS program.

"Choctaw Nation agreed to send mentors and I plan to ask the First United Bank and other businesses to mentor for us," says Hughes. "This will work—there are too many good people supporting it for it not to work!"

For more information about Calera School and its HOSTS program, please contact Karen Hughes at karenhughes@caleraisd.k12.ok.us.



HOSTS supplies share the faculty lounge space at Calera.

HOSTS

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Over 50 teachers from the 17 partnership schools participated in the workshop. Teachers who were involved in HOSTS last school year reported significant gains made by students that participated in the program.

Four of our 17 Partnership schools, Broken Bow, Fort Towson, Hugo and Valliant, received a Superior rating in math from HOSTS at the end of last school year. The rating was determined by indicators such as program set up, student prescription and instruction as well as mentor recruitment, training and participation.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

September 12-13

ENCYCLOMEDIA,

Oklahoma City

September 17

State GEAR UP Conference,

Quartz Mountain State Park

September 25

A+ Science Academic Coach
and Coordinator Training,

Durant

October 2

A+ Training, Durant

October 8-9

SOSU Theatre Program for
Bryan County

October 10-11

EPAS Training at SOSU (new
Curriculum Alignment Coaches
should attend)

October 22-30

Guest Speaker Jason Dorsey

November 5-6

SOSU Theatre Program for
Choctaw and McCurtain County

March 5-7

HOSTS Annual Conference,
Orlando, Florida

**For more information on
these events, please contact
the GEAR UP office at
1-800-435-1327 x3122**

GEAR UP welcomes new VISTA volunteers

On July 25, 2002, GEAR UP welcomed its newest VISTA volunteers, Richard Cox and Dana Sorenson to the program. The two were honored with a reception on the SOSU campus on September 3.

Richard, who hails from San Diego, California, will be helping to implement and maintain the HOSTS program at Goodland School. He is living in Hugo, in an apartment provided by the Hugo Housing Authority. Richard said of his VISTA service, "I think the mentors will be the most influential—they will make a difference and have a greater impact on the kids."

The University of California at San Diego graduate said becoming a VISTA was a natural decision, "I always knew that I would do something...it's time to commit myself to service."

Rudy Manley, Director of the GEAR UP

grant said of Richard, "After Richard's interview I realized that he could do what needed to be done here. He's an anticipator, he sees the need, and responds to it." Mr. Manley went on to say he knew that Richard would be a good fit in Goodland School. "I knew he would be a good match with Jimmy Antwine, and I feel he'll be a real role model for the kids in our program."

Dana Sorenson, a native of Wilmington, Delaware, will be working in Bryan County and in the SOSU GEAR UP office. A graduate of Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina, Dana will be living in Durant, in an apartment provided by Butch and Carolyn Arnett.

Dana has a vast amount of volunteer experiences, including tutoring to men in a low security prison and participating in a summer youth program. Dana plans to draw on these experiences during her year of service. "I want

to be actively involved with what is going on in my country."

Mr. Manley said of Dana, "I knew Dana would fit in Bryan County, and that people would be accepting of her in Southeastern Oklahoma." Dana will be organizing a literacy program for the families of GEAR UP students across the 17 school Partnership.

For more information about the GEAR UP Partnership VISTA volunteers, please contact Rudy Manley at 1-800-435-1327 x2050. Or visit the AmeriCorps website at www.americorps.org.



In what is now a GEAR UP/VISTA tradition, Dana Sorenson poses with the giant peanut.



Richard Cox tests out the jungle gym at Goodland School.

Theatre tour kicks off in October

The GEAR UP Partnership and the Southeastern Oklahoma State University Theatre Department are proud to announce a program that will bring theatrical performances to all 17 schools in the GEAR UP Partnership.

The collaboration will tour a musical review in the Fall and an abridged version of Hamlet in the Spring. The tour will encompass each school in the GEAR UP Partnership. Tentative tour dates have been set up for October 8 and 9 for Bryan County and November 5 and 6 for Choctaw and McCurtain Counties. Dates for the Spring are to be announced. Each performance will last about an hour, after which the troupe will form groups with the students and have a short workshop session.

Research shows that students of the arts tend to have higher ACT/SAT scores, perform better in non-art education classes, and improve their chances of college admission. An arts education also develops skills such as critical thinking and analysis, cultural

awareness, and teamwork.

The idea to take theatrical performances on the road came about when Bryan County students that took part in a math and science summer camp this past June and July were offered a field trip to the SOSU Shakespearean Festival. The teachers in the program wondered if it was possible to have all the students in the Partnership see a performance. "I told one student he was invited to attend the Shakespeare Festival, told me he had never been to a play before," said Lisa Labosky, VISTA Volunteer with the GEAR UP Partnership. "I started wondering how many more students in our Partnership would be able to say the same thing."

The program will also include short talk-back and workshop sessions in addition to the performances. According to Nicole Cook, Graduate Assistant for the SOSU Theatre Department and Production Manger for the traveling theatre troupe, "We hope that by exposing some of these students to the art

of theatre and music, we will encourage them to become involved in such programs themselves. We want to inform them of the opportunities available in the field and the benefits of studying in the arts."

The partnership between the SOSU Theatre Department and the GEAR UP Program has revived a history of traveling theatre for children. In the 1980's, former faculty member Gary Varner created "Assorted Nutz", a children's improvisational group that toured area schools through the early 90's.

Three years ago, the department revisited the idea of touring and created a group called the Pinwheel Players. The group began touring the Madill School District with children's musical, "Maddy and Co.", written by Southeastern's own Dell McLain and Tim Boatmun. Since then, the department has taken time off from touring to develop the musical theatre program.

For more information about the traveling theatre for GEAR UP, please contact Lisa Labosky at 1-800-435-1327 x3120, or visit our website at www.sosu.edu/gearup.

GEAR UP congratulates schools on mini grant awards

On July 1, 2002, the Southeastern Oklahoma GEAR UP Program funded 16 mini grants to twelve of our Partnership schools. In June, school districts were sent a request for proposal to submit a mini grant to the Partnership with funding up to \$5000.

The purpose of the mini grants was to obtain proposals based on the needs of local teachers, counselors, administrators, and individual school districts. The RFP contained suggested proposal ideas such as cultural activities, parental involvement programs, career fairs, and academic camps.

Of the twenty proposed mini grants, sixteen were funded. Awards were based on the submitted mini grants, the proposal as it related to GEAR UP activities, and available funding.

GEAR UP would like to congratulate the twelve schools that were awarded mini grants. Following is a list of the schools that were awarded, and a brief description of the programs they will be implementing.

Achille

Astronomy, Space, & Archeology classroom instruction.

Bennington

Math and language arts program using Orchard software.

Boswell

Field trips to Oklahoma City and Norman touring museums, the Omniplex, the State Capital, etc.

Broken Bow

Industry tours, Career Day, college campus tours, field trips, curriculum software, and an after school program.

Caddo

Field trips to SOSU, industry tour of Texas Instruments in Sherman, and a visit to Kirkpatrick Omniplex in Oklahoma City.

Calera

Media presentations project using Apple Computer based products.

Colbert

Parental involvement and mentor recruiting through "GEAR UP Kick Off" program and purchase of graphing calculators.

Durant

Accelerated math program.

Rock Creek

Field trips to SOSU Theatre Dept., to Ft. Worth museums and an earth science program.

Soper

Field trip to NASA Space Center in Houston.

Swink

Reading enrichment and remediation program.

Valliant

Authors presentation-Bill Wallace and Anna Myers (jointly with Forest Grove, Ft. Towson and Swink), field trip to science labs across Oklahoma.

Summer school success story

GEAR UP staff and teachers to present "Developing a Summer Academy" at state conference

On September 17, 2002, the Southeastern Oklahoma GEAR UP Partnership will be facilitating a presentation at the third annual state GEAR UP conference. The Partnership will be presenting "Developing a Summer Academy" based on the successful collaboration between GEAR UP and the Miss Sally program this past summer.

During the months of June and July, 2002, 30 Bryan county students from the GEAR UP program attended an eight week math and science summer school in Durant. The students received remediation in math, science and language arts.

In addition to GEAR UP students, GEAR UP coaches Robbee Tonubbee from **Calera** and Sandra Redwine from **Bennington** taught at the program. Teachers Kim Ragan from **Caddo** and Elaine Bennett from **Colbert** were also instructors for the summer.

The success of the program reported an average academic gain of 1.66 years, with an average 66.7 hours of remediation.

The ultimate goal of the summer school was to conduct a program for GEAR UP that could be duplicated within the Partnership schools. Four of the Bryan County schools

that participated have plans to duplicate the program in some capacity at their respective schools.

The presentation will detail the steps that the GEAR UP office took to pilot the program with the collaboration of Schoolware, Inc. It will also include information on day to day activities, schedules, and advice on how to make a similar program run efficiently.

The presentation will also emphasize the benefits of computer remediation, one-on-one instruction, and small class size. These will be demonstrated through increased test scores and testimonials from GEAR UP instructors and students.

Participants at the conference will receive a detailed outline of how to develop a summer academy, sample summer school applications for students, sample advertising brochures, and comments from GEAR UP students that participated this past summer.

For more information on the summer program or to obtain copies of the instructive outline, please contact the GEAR UP office at 1-800-435-1327 x3120. To view the presentation please visit our website at www.sosu.edu/gearup.

Dorsey

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the age of 19, had the book published. He has since authored *Ending School Violence: Solutions from America's Youth*, a work that came about from Dorsey's conversations and contact with young people he has met throughout his career.

Dorsey has been featured on NBC's *The Today Show*, and has had a segment on ABC's *The View*. He has also contributed to the best selling books *Chicken Soup for the Soul II* and *Chicken Soup for the Pre-Teen Soul*. He is currently working on another book in the series with author Jack Canfield. This new book focuses on connecting parents and teenagers and will be released next year.

In addition to co-authoring, Dorsey travels the country to speak to students and educators on such topics as motivation, violence prevention, entrepreneurship, and improving student performance. The GEAR UP Partnership anticipates that his visit will be inspirational to all those involved in the program.

For more information on Jason Dorsey visit his website at www.jasondorsey.com. For more information on his tour of Southeastern Oklahoma, please contact the Bettye Finnell at 1-800-435-1327 x3124.