



KENAI PENINSULA

Graduation Really Achieves Dreams

June 2009

The Board of Directors, staff, students and families involved with Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula would like to thank Dr. Donna Peterson for her vision and long standing commitment to the success of each and every student. Six years ago Dr. Peterson saw the potential in bringing the Project GRAD model to the Peninsula and has maintained that commitment to the vision throughout the years despite bumps in the road. This steadfast commitment has yielded results.

Last week 16 students from six of the GRAD communities graduated as GRAD scholars and joined the 31 previous scholars. At last count 13 of the 16 2009 GRAD Scholars already had plans to attend a postsecondary program. That in itself is a remarkable paradigm shift. In our small schools High School graduation is increasingly being seen as an important step in the education process...not the final step. The combination of onsite academic coaches, an increased focus on career and postsecondary awareness, summer institutes and the Project GRAD scholarships seems to be working together to make a difference. In reviewing the files last week I noted that the 13 students with plans to attend college in the fall have each traveled outside of the village via Project GRAD, Native ED or GEAR UP grant funds to explore career options and visit a campus. Introducing first generation college students to the possibilities available to them is imperative.

Project GRAD will celebrate another milestone in August - 30 scholars will be utilizing the GRAD scholarship and enrolled in a post secondary program. Students are currently studying engineering, social work, welding, nursing, teaching, journalism, cultural anthropology, process technology, culinary arts. The first GRAD scholar will graduate with an AA degree after fall semester. To date we have had students complete CNA courses, EMT certificate and an AVTEC welding program. Together we are building the next workforce for the Kenai - one student at a time. Dr. Petersen your vision is becoming reality.

Last summer Project GRAD became a federally authorized program. To date the accompanying funding has not been secured. Project GRAD USA is working diligently to receive funding through the FY 2010 Federal budget. Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula has also applied for a DOE Native ED grant and a Denali Training fund grant. GRAD Kenai is grateful for the support of KPBSD.



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June 1-12 PGKP is hosting the annual precollege Summer Institute in partnership with Kachemak Bay Campus, UAF's Kasistna Bay Lab, and KPBSD. This year's theme is "Invent Your Future". 45 Students will spend the two weeks studying Robotics, designing career/college portfolios, improving essay writing skills, participating in field study in Kachemak Bay, job shadowing with professional and participating in the Kachemak Bay Writers Conference. Our closing ceremony is June 12 in Homer at 1:00 pm. We invite all School Board members to attend.

In closing, Dr. Peterson you will be missed.

A couple of years from now expect to receive an invitation to celebrating the first GRAD Scholars completion of a four year degree. I hope you will be able to join us for it as you have played a key part in making that happen.

Bonnie Powell
Executive Director
Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula