

Graduation Matters

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As the end of the school year rapidly approaches students in the class of 2012 have already begun to make plans for graduation. Graduation is the culmination of a K-12 journey that is cause for celebration.

On Sunday, May 27, at 4 p.m., family, friends and the community will gather inside the Havre High School gymnasium to commemorate this joyous occasion. Unfortunately there are students who started that journey that for varying reasons will not be present at the ceremony.

It is an unsettling truth, and we as a school district have spent much time and energy trying to come up with ideas to reduce the number of students that will not be receiving their diploma this spring.

In March we were informed by the Office of Public Instruction that we were the recipients of a Graduation Matters grant to help us in our endeavor to reduce the number of dropouts in Havre Public Schools.

Graduation Matters is a statewide effort to emphasize the importance of graduation and to encourage students across the state to stay in school.

One of the exciting aspects in Havre becoming a Graduation Matters district is that, as our students travel across the state they will see a recurring theme displayed in store windows, on billboards and various reader boards. Each participating school district may put their own brand of uniqueness into local efforts but the core of the message remains true.

Graduation matters. It matters for Spartans, Bruins, Tigers and it matters for Blue Ponies.

Dropout prevention is an issue that affects the entire community. It is a cause that I hope our community will help us in finding solutions.

I want to recognize two individuals that have already agreed to help Havre Public Schools promote Graduation Matters in Havre: Debbie Vandenberg, executive director of the Havre Area Chamber of Commerce, and James Limbaugh, chancellor of Montana State University-Northern. These two individuals represent organizations that are directly impacted by the success of Havre Public Schools and its students. I was greatly encouraged by their willingness to lend their voices and to collaborate on ideas that promote Graduation Matters in Havre.

Partnerships with our local university and the Havre Area Chamber of Commerce are significant steps in creating a centralized effort in our community to encourage children to remain in school and to graduate.

If you have an idea that you would like to share with one of us regarding Graduation Matters, I would encourage you to take a moment to do so.

One of the first things you can do is to go online and complete a survey created in partnership with the Havre Area Chamber of Commerce. It can be found by typing <http://www.formsite.com/hpsk12/form102/index.html?1334090850907> into your web browser.

Please join us in demonstrating to the children of our community that Graduation Matters in Havre.

(Andy Carlson is superintendent of Havre Public Schools.)