

Gearing up together: Week devoted to pointing students toward right path

By **RODD CAYTON** The Daily News | Posted: Friday, October 10, 2014 12:53 am

BULLHEAD CITY — The Class of 2018 has been encouraged to follow its dreams.

This week, freshmen at Mohave and River Valley high schools learned that they are not walking that path alone.

The Colorado River Union High School District began observing National Gear Up Week on Tuesday, with special events highlighting the program, which seeks to have every Class of 2018 member leave high school prepared for further education or the workforce.

There was no school Monday, but Tuesday, there was a thank-you letter in each teacher's box with Smarties candy taped to it.

Wednesday, students walked the hallways to see some of the area's more prominent individuals and groups smiling at them from the walls. Each was photographed with a sign reading "I support education."

Photo subjects included the Rotary Club of Bullhead City, Mohave County Supervisor Steve Moss, Bullhead City Police Chief Brian Williamson and local pediatrician Alan Barton.

"We are displaying photos of community members who support education in honor of Gear Up week," RVHS Gear Up coordinator Diane Beardsley said. "Letting the students know that the community cares about them and their future."

Also Wednesday, a proclamation from Gov. Jan Brewer recognized Arizona Gear Up Week in the state. According to a related news release, Gear Up graduates enroll in college at a higher rate than other Arizona students.



GEAR UP

River Valley High School students Sammy Rain, left, and Hope Jehng show thank-you notes that students in the Gear Up program made for teachers. RVHS and Mohave High School are marking National Gear Up Week this week to showcase the program's impact on education in the area. Rain is a freshman and senior Jehng is a peer mentor for the frosh. Also pictured is the RVHS Gear Up mascot, Bea Star.

Students also signed two stoles, with each signature serving as a pledge to graduate in 2018. Beardsley said that before the graduation ceremony, the students will select a teacher at each school to wear a stole and represent the students.

Thursday, the student body at each school wrote their dreams on slips of paper, which will be attached to balloons to be released at lunchtime today.

“When they graduate, they can follow their dreams,” Beardsley said.

National Gear Up Week is intended to raise awareness in communities of the positive impact Gear Up is having locally. Gear Up (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a competitive grant program of the U.S. Department of Education that aims to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education by providing grants to offer support services to high-poverty middle and high schools, according to its website.

The current local program is in its third year. The Class of 2018 was enrolled as seventh-graders. The program moves up with the students as they progress. Beardsley, for example, had an office at Mohave Valley Junior High last year.

Other Gear Up activities have focused on showing students that further education is more an expectation than a dream. Beardsley said 30 students from each school will go on an Oct. 21 trip to UNLV for a campus tour, college fair and dinner in the dining hall.