

Leaders discuss education and youth

Shanna Cummings and Ashley Maden Thursday, February 14, 2019 1:00 AM

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Winnemucca Futures 2019 highlighted the advancements and trajectory of Humboldt County's government, industries and education. More than 165 people from Humboldt County and other locales attended the event, held at the Boys and Girls Club.

Humboldt County School District

Superintendent Dave Jensen gave an update on Humboldt County School District's (HCSD) progress, including announcing that the graduation rate had reached nearly 91 percent, a 27-point difference in the six years since he took the reins. Jensen credited the district's five-year strategic plan as a significant boon to improvement. The district took 18 months to formulate its strategic plan with a five-year vision, which centers on Guaranteed Learning and Culture for all grade levels.



Humboldt County School District Superintendent of Schools Dr. Dave Jensen, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Educator Brad Schultz and Great Basin College Health and Human Services Dean Dr. Amber Donnelly.

The district is also in the process of updating Reading and Math curricula for all grade levels. Last year, the district adopted the Fountas and Pinnell curriculum for pre-kindergarten through third grade. This year, grades four through eight began the Wit and Wisdom curriculum. Lowry and McDermitt high schools are currently piloting new ELA and Math curricula.

Jensen said programs like Gear Up and Summit that support postsecondary education and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) careers are funded by grants that, when the funding ends, requires the district to create contingency plans to continue providing the service, or else discontinue the program. Declining enrollment at McDermitt Combined School as well as a lack of teachers for rural locations has meant that students suffer for lack of art and music programs.

Jensen also stressed the importance of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) or vocational program for students not interested in college, and assured attendees that the district has no intention of dropping its CTE program.

To address the issue of suicide and mental health in schools, Jensen said HCSD teachers have all been trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid that helps teachers identify students experiencing suicidal ideation and intercede for these students to prevent tragedy.

UNR Cooperative Extension

University of Nevada Reno Cooperative Extension Educator Brad Schultz talked about how the Cooperative Extension distributes agricultural research around the state, particularly range and grazing management as well as noxious weed management and eradication.

The Cooperative Extension's 4H program teaches about 225 youth about agriculture and around 20 other programs ranging from animal husbandry to rocketry, as well as in-school and after-school programs. Despite a significant budget cut in 2011, Humboldt County Cooperative Extension still has a full time 4H position.

The Cooperative Extension provides non-credit education on a number of community-based issues like agriculture, natural resources, community development and children, youth and families. Schultz said he primarily works with range management, agriculture and grazing, with proposals for migration of pronghorn, sage brush fire rehab, dormant season grazing, noxious weeds with Conservation Districts and Weed Districts.

Schultz said agencies are looking into changing the strategic use of grazing and fire breaks to combat wildfires, including changing grazing seasons on permit land to reduce fuel buildup like cheat grass.

Great Basin College

Great Basin College (GBC) Health and Human Services Dean Dr. Amber Donnelly shared the most recent accomplishments of the college, along with plans for the future.

At the 2018 Winnemucca Futures event, Donnelly shared news of the \$5 million Pennington Foundation grant pledge for a new health sciences and technology building to be constructed in Winnemucca, with a requirement of securing \$2 million in community funding by June 2019.

Donnelly announced that the college had met its funding goal with numerous donations and an additional contribution of \$500,000 from the Pennington Foundation. She said the building is ready for design and they expect to break ground on the building in June 2019.

"That's a really big win for our community; it literally was just an idea that we had originally when we started the nursing program here four years ago," said Donnelly.

Currently, second year nursing students are housed in the ambulance barn of Humboldt General Hospital, which Donnelly said isn't really conducive to learning.

The first year nursing program celebrated six graduates, twelve have graduated to-date and nine are slotted to graduate from the four-year nursing program. Fifteen students are currently enrolled and on track to graduate in the Winnemucca nursing program at GBC.

The GBC nursing program has seen a growth from approximately twenty nursing students in Elko when the program began five years ago to now over 110 students between Winnemucca and Elko.

Looking to the future, Donnelly said they would like to add radiology and stenography programs in Winnemucca, along with technical programs and additional opportunities created by the new building where the paramedic program would likely be housed.

Donnelly reported that the new building will also allow for dedicated lab space for the Electrical program, with the program being funded with a partnership with Barrick Gold Corporation.