Remarkable man seeks exceptional students

In a packed room at Raymond High School, I got my first introduction to John McNab with the Reach High Scholars program he created over the past 5 years for the young people of Raymond. He is giving back and the results are remarkable.

John’s brainchild began in late 2007 with a look at Raymond student acceptance levels to higher education. Researching back to the class of 1950, he found that over the 57-year span only 16 students from Raymond had gained admission to top colleges and universities for their continuing education. He knew we could do better and decided to take on the challenge. How do you encourage students to reach high?

In less than 5 years, the Reach High Scholars program has gone from a simple idea to a highly successful — and very unique — example of community involvement in the education of young people. RHS students began to focus on and apply to top schools. The results speak for themselves. In each of the graduating classes of 2011 and 2012, six students reached high and were accepted to top schools around the country.

Student | RHS Year College
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Michelle Gilbert | 2008 St. Lawrence
Charles Martin | 2009 Rensselaer
Karry Ann Belanger | 2010 Wheaton
Kristina Francon | 2011 Skidmore
Jesse Hardman | 2011 Skidmore
Samantha Harmon | 2011 Dartmouth
Jacob Leavitt | 2011 Brown
Jonathan Lemay | 2011 Skidmore
Ami Neep | 2011 Holy Cross
Charles De Benedetto | 2012 Hobart & William Smith
Shaun Gallagher | 2012 Lafayette
Ashley Lord | 2012 Dartmouth
Joseph Morin | 2012 Rensselaer
Abby Schlangen | 2012 Trinity
Collin Spinney | 2012 Hamilton

There is no magic in this program. The students in Raymond are talented and motivated. They receive top-notch education in our schools and always have. John knew his challenge would be to encourage, focus, and support the students and their families, so he set out to do just that. Reach High says it all. Set your goals above where you think you can go and work to make it happen.

However, John stresses that achievement is not a spontaneous attitude change. Students and parents must take initiative. Success takes work. His program is now reaching deeper into the school system and providing opportunities to middle school students who will reach high
school with an attitude that they can be — and will be — the "best of the best" in their generation.

Middle school students can participate in a number of opportunities for enhanced education with the Harkness program and with summer school programs. It is never too early to interest your children in stretching their experience.

All about the Benjamins

Many parents reading this article may be skeptical, knowing they do not have the financial resources to provide their children with these opportunities. John spent a good portion of the Reach High Scholars presentation trying to assure families that if your child makes the effort and chooses to reach high, there are monies available.

One of the key jobs of the Reach High Scholars program is to support parents in their search for ways to give their children these opportunities. "A great education or experience is within reach of any student who goes after it. With the support of caring parents and community members, a great student should have every opportunity to excel." There are so many ways. John recounted the financial status of the organization during the meeting. Reach High Scholars has piqued the interest of a number of businesses and foundations who find that this type of program has excellent return on investment and have donated to offset the tuition for summer programs.

Community involvement makes this happen

The Reach High Scholars program has clearly demonstrated that it can make a difference. John works closely with Deidre Doyle, an English teacher at Raymond High School, who meets after school each Monday with the 30+ students who are active in the Reach High Scholars program at the school. These students are supporting one another as they explore opportunities to advance their education in ways that will get noticed by the top colleges and universities around the country.

John is also looking for help from community members who have skills that can enhance the reach of the program. The organization needs some structure to make it sustainable and less dependent on the work of a few. Please take a look at the website at http://www.reachhighscholars.org/index.html and then contact John or Deidre to learn how you might help.

This program puts Raymond, NH on the map in an exceptional way. Students who have participated to date are reaching out to support those students who are currently exploring their futures and reaching high. Peer support goes a long way in inspiring others to reach a little higher.

Get involved...early and often...for your own children's future and for the future of the community.