Ann Stebner Steele is the new GEAR UP Wyoming Student Programming Coordinator at the University of Wyoming. Although she was born and raised in Rawlins, Wyoming, she also thinks of the Red Desert and the Wind River Mountains as home. She earned her B.A. in English at the University of Wyoming and her Masters in Creative Writing at the University of Idaho. Ann has a background in student advising and in teaching composition, creative writing, and English as a Second Language.

In her first few months with GEAR UP Wyoming, Ann helped complete planning and coordination for Camp GEAR UP, a summer camp held at the University of Wyoming.

Ericka Elder attended high school in Afton, Wyoming, where she joined the GEAR UP program. She is currently majoring in Psychology and Criminal Justice at the University of Wyoming. This summer, she served as a Camp GEAR UP peer mentor.

GUWY: How did you learn about the GEAR UP Program?

Ericka: I was a sophomore when I got a phone call telling me that it was possible for me to go to college even though I could not afford it. I went to a meeting led by Dolores Willis who was an outreach coordinator for Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC). She told us about GEAR UP, and I have been involved ever since.

GUWY: Did your experiences in GEAR UP play a part in your decision to become a Camp GEAR UP peer mentor?

Ericka: I attended a WWCC summer academy before I graduated from high school. I was terrified to go. I was constantly reminding myself it couldn’t be that bad, and I had an amazing time! I loved the peer mentors and will continued on page 3
Over 160 students “Experienced the Possibilities” at Camp GEAR UP this summer. From July 8 - July 12, students in 9th through 12th grades stayed in the residence halls and participated in academic activities at the University of Wyoming, the Laramie County Community College (LCCC) Wind Energy Technology Center, the NCAR-Wyoming Supercomputing Center, and the Snowy Range Mountains.

Activities included college readiness and career exploration workshops, science and technology modules, canoeing experiences, and team-building ropes courses. Students also participated in a leadership workshop and showcased their skills at the camp talent show.

Students learned about college curriculum at the University of Wyoming through a planetarium visit, an art project, and a biodiversity lab.

Students experienced teamwork through canoeing at Mirror Lake and a ropes course at Table in the Wilderness.

GEAR UP Wyoming: Family Matters is a publication for GEAR UP students and their families offering news and tips to help prepare students for college.

GEAR UP Wyoming is a statewide program that serves 2,000 7th-12th grade, income-eligible students each year. Wyoming’s seven community colleges provide services to these students and encourage them not only to complete high school, but to enter and succeed at a postsecondary institution. GEAR UP Wyoming also supports students through their first year of college.

GEAR UP Wyoming is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education totaling $3,548,876 annually with an additional $3,548,876 annually provided by in-kind and scholarship contributions.
On the final night of Camp GEAR UP, students took the stage for an evening of entertainment. Students explored careers in renewable energy at the LCCC Wind Energy Technology Center and at the NCAR-Wyoming Supercomputing Center.

Students attended a college fair featuring the University of Wyoming, the Wyoming Department of Education, and Wyoming’s community colleges.

Ericka Elder, continued from page 1

never forget some of the team building and leadership activities that really impacted how I interacted with people.

When I learned I could be one of those experience-enhancing, peer mentors for GEAR UP students, I was so excited. I knew the students would put on a brave face, but would be very nervous about spending a week with strangers in a strange place. The Camp GEAR UP peer mentors waited outside to greet every bus of students. Our attitudes set the tone for the camp.

GUWY: What was Camp GEAR UP like for you as a Camp GEAR UP peer mentor?

Ericka: It was a unique experience. I learned so much about myself and how I work with people. It was difficult at times, but I saw the great outcome of all the hard work I put into camp. It felt great to communicate encouragement and confidence in the students. I really felt like I made a difference in their experience.

GUWY: What do you think the students learned?

Ericka: I think the students learned a lot about college life. All of these high school students coming together for this college experience showed them that the different labels at their high school are not permanent and do not really matter once you leave. In college, you can be who you are, and everyone is okay with that.

GUWY: Were there any special moments that were memorable for you or the students attending?

Ericka: There were many memorable moments for me. One student made all my hard work worth it as I watched the change that happened with him. He made it very clear the first day that he did not want to be there and that he had no plans on attending college, but his parents had forced him to come. He rarely spoke and never smiled. If he did speak, it was to a friend who was from his high school, not to me or anyone in our team. By the end of camp, he had become a leader in our team. He shared his opinions and ideas, made jokes, and smiled often.

At the end of camp, I told him I would still be here a number of years, and he said he would see me here at UW next year. That alone would have made my camp experience phenomenal.
Scholarships awarded to GEAR UP students include: Kristy Armstrong from Mountain View High School, Andrew Beachell from Evanston High School, Thomas Boyd from Riverton High School, Carlie Edelman from Douglas High School, Rhyan Gessner from Fort Mackenzie High School, Andrea Gurney from Southeast High School, Casie Rosalez from Sheridan High School, Zachary Sherman from Rawlins High School, Brianne Siebert from Powell High School, Miria Smith from Burlington High School, and Jayden Zaragoza from Kemmerer Alternative High School.

For more information about the Daniels Fund Scholarships, call your GEAR UP Coordinator or visit http://www.danielsfund.org/.

GEAR UP Wyoming Partners
Casper College, www.caspercollege.edu/gearup
Central Wyoming College, www.cwc.edu/what/Gearup
Eastern Wyoming College, www.ecwc.edu/future/gearup
Laramie County Community College, lccc.wy.edu/highschool/collegeprep/gearup
Northern Wyoming Community College District, www.sheridan.edu/site/sc/admissions/gear-up-wyoming
Northwest College, www.northwestcollege.edu/gearup
Western Wyoming Community College, www.wwcc.wy.edu/gearup
University of Wyoming, www.uwyo.edu/gearup
Wyoming Department of Education, www.k12.wy.us