William Brooks Van Buren Named 2015 GEAR UP Youth of the Year

William Brooks Van Buren of Gillette was selected by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) as the 2015 GEAR UP Youth of the Year. He received the honor at the NCCEP/GEAR UP conference on July 22 in San Francisco.

At the conference, William was introduced as someone who, “fully embodies the attributes of perseverance and resiliency and inevitably stands as a prime example of their power.” In addition, he was described as, “well aware of the challenges that life presents and has used the knowledge gained from his experiences to not only shape his life, but to inspire those around him.”

“William is such a deserving recipient of this award,” said Kristin Young, Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD) GEAR UP Site Coordinator. “He’s an outstanding student who was nominated by GEAR UP Wyoming, not only for his academic prowess and how far he has made it, but because we felt his perspective on education was special, especially for someone who was deprived of education in his early years of life.”

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— Kristin Young, NWCCD GEAR UP Site Coordinator

William graduated from Campbell County High in 2015, but his educational path wasn’t easy. He and his two siblings were born into a single parent household. Due to his family’s financial hardships and bouts of homelessness, William changed schools often and missed four years of elementary school education. After his family relocated to Wyoming, William was able to re-enter school in the seventh grade. Caring for his younger sibling and helping his mother support their family consumed much of William’s free time, but he continued to catch up on his studies. As his confidence in school grew, his desire to learn and challenge himself grew as well. He excelled in school and pursued many interests, embracing the academic and cultural community in his school district.

William joined GEAR UP during his sophomore year of high school. He was committed to pursuing postsecondary education and worked closely with his GEAR UP academic coach to complete college applications, perform scholarship searches, and research degrees and careers.

He realized his dream of attending Purdue University when he was named a 2015 Daniels Fund scholarship recipient. William plans to study computer science and Japanese.
Over 150 students experienced college life, explored future careers, and learned about financial aid at Camp GEAR UP this summer. From July 13 - July 17, students in 9th through 12th grades stayed in the residence halls and participated in activities at the University of Wyoming and Curt Gowdy State Park.

While all students explored the outdoors and learned about college life, academic tracks allowed them to experience specific subjects such as communications and journalism, robotics, the arts, and science/technology/engineering/math (STEM).

Students created artwork at the Cooper Center for Creative Arts and learned to play traditional Indonesian gamelan music.

The robotics and STEM tracks allowed students to gain hands-on experience.

Students learned teamwork while canoeing at Curt Gowdy State Park. They also conducted outdoor science experiments.

On the final night of Camp GEAR UP, students and team leaders took the stage for an evening of entertainment.

The communications and journalism track enabled students to conduct interviews and have articles printed in the The Laramie Boomerang.

GEAR UP WYOMING offers professional development opportunities throughout the state of Wyoming. In-school trainings are offered at low or no cost. Topics include student engagement, student transitions, ACT® preparation for teachers, ACT® data interpretation, and working with under-resourced learners. In addition to these topics, GEAR UP WYOMING welcomes the opportunity to discuss sponsoring other types of professional development, provided the training meets the GEAR UP WYOMING goals and objectives and funding is available.

Regional workshops hosted by GEAR UP WYOMING have included topics such as ACT® preparation for teachers, under-resourced learners, understanding and implementing the Common Core, and coaching strategies for educators. These workshops are provided to a wide range of educational professionals, including administrators, instructional facilitators, classroom teachers, and Bridges Summer School teachers.

In addition to offering in-school and regional workshops, GEAR UP WYOMING works with AdvancED to support semi-annual School Improvement Conferences. Through work with AdvancED, GEAR UP WYOMING has been able to offer guest speakers and conference resources to hundreds of Wyoming's educators. GEAR UP Wyoming also partners with the Wyoming Department of Education for some trainings.

GEAR UP WYOMING has served 170 individuals in the educational field since June 1, 2015. Seventy-one of the attendees were registered Bridges Summer School teachers. For further inquiries regarding GEAR UP WYOMING professional development, please contact Chrissie Henschler at chensch@uwyo.edu.
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GEAR UP Wyoming is administered by the office of Student Educational Opportunity (SEO) in the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Wyoming.

**GEAR UP Wyoming Partners:**
Casper College, Central Wyoming College, Eastern Wyoming College, Laramie County Community College, Northern Wyoming Community College District, Northwest College, Western Wyoming Community College, University of Wyoming, Wyoming Department of Education

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**Daniels Fund Scholarship**

GEAR UP Wyoming helps students apply for the Daniels Fund scholarship. Daniels Fund scholarships are awarded in the spring to graduating high school seniors and supplement other federal, state, institutional, and private financial aid and scholarships. Students may use their scholarship at any two- or four-year accredited, nonprofit college or university in the United States with an intention to complete a bachelor’s degree. **Apply online September 14 - November 13.**

For more information, visit www.danielsfund.org

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**Reminder!**

The application for the University of Wyoming GEAR UP institutional scholarship is due by **June 1** for fall semester or **November 1** for spring semester.