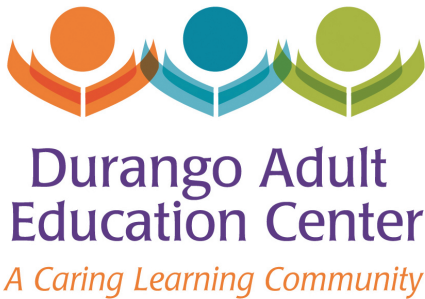


Tidings

Fall 2016 Newsletter of the Durango Adult Education Center



Everyone Can Use a BOOST

Program Expansion

Wouldn't it be nice to be like Cinderella and have a fairy godmother who eliminates the avalanche of problems that fall on your life? For students in the DAEC, this kind of special person actually exists.

Josh Kelso is the Career Advisor, newest member of the dynamite DAEC staff, and he heads up the BOOST program. B* O* O* S* T* stands for Building Opportunities & Occupations for Self-Sufficient Transitions. The concept is self-explanatory, but the interventions are diverse and their wider benefit across the community can be as subtle as they are impactful. Its services include advising, intensive case management, financial assistance, career exploration, and support and referral services all geared to help people persist in their education and attain financial independence.

On a daily basis, Josh helps students overcome immediate needs that many of us have never faced. Whether it is lack of transportation, lack of an identification card, or inability to pay for eyeglasses, all barriers to education and employment, BOOST is the go-to resource for our learners.

When you ask Josh about the newest service about to be added to the BOOST roster, he replies, "It's really, really exciting!"

Thanks to a generous grant from the Daniels Fund, students will be able to utilize a housing unit in town while they are finishing their education. In partnership with Housing Solutions of the Southwest, Kelso secured a house near the Manna Soup Kitchen. Once renovations and repairs are completed, the dorm-style unit will accommodate four students who otherwise lack housing.

"In the past, we haven't been able to help our housing-insecure students. We had to refer them to other agencies and hope that they got help they needed. With this new partnership, we'll be able to help if a student is living in a domestic violence situation or is sleeping outside on the ground with nowhere else to go," Josh explains.

The grant from the Daniels Fund is also helping more students get hands-on employment experience while completing their education. Our paid work training program is helping individuals, ages 17 – 30 with little to no prior work experience, gain valuable employability skills. "When a student graduates from the DAEC, we want them to have a competitive resume, interview practice, and an attainable career action plan in addition to their high school equivalency diploma or demonstrated English proficiency," says Josh. "The teachers do an outstanding job with the academic skills and I am responsible for the smooth transition."

continued under Program Updates...



Students in class & childcare this fall



Director's Note

The leaves around town are ablaze with autumn colors! It seems a red, orange, or purple surprise is in store around every corner. I have been thinking a lot about surprises in recent weeks. I recently ran in the Durango Double Race, two half marathons over two days. While the first day, all on trail, was warmer than expected, the real surprise came the second day with heavy rain during the entire road run. Not only was I tired from the day before, I was unprepared for the biting cold weather that never let up.

Similarly at the DAEC, we are frequently confronted with sudden changes and surprises, but our track record is solid when it comes to being responsive and adaptable. Time and again, we have been able to meet the changing needs of our students and the community. Evidence of this ability always surfaces in the sweeping success of our students as they transition through the program.

Here is a very brief overview of the many adaptations we incorporated this year:

- With more working families attending evening classes, our onsite child care program expanded to serve 19 children, including babies. We added two more child care providers to make sure those working parents can finish their education.
- We added a paper-based high school equivalency testing option to accommodate those students who would otherwise find computer-based testing a hindrance to their performance. Every learner is unique, and we are pleased to offer multiple testing options.
- We expanded our ESL services. In partnership with the Piñon Project Family Resource Center, we now offer satellite ESL classes in Cortez. Previously, English classes were not offered in the Cortez area and several students were making the long drive to Durango.
- We expanded the services of the BOOST program to include housing assistance. Thanks to a new grant from the Daniels Fund, DAEC can now address the housing needs of our current and former students to help them thrive and achieve their goals.

continued...

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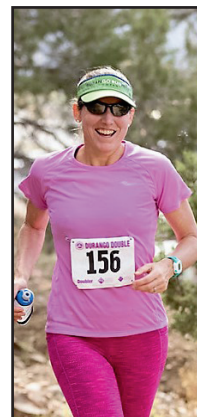
HR, Mercy Medical Center

Director's Note continued...

- Finally, we updated our classrooms over the summer. With financial assistance from the LPEA Round-Up Foundation and The Commons Leveraged Lender, we upgraded tables and chairs, applied fresh and lively paint to the walls, and replaced flooring to provide a more comfortable and productive learning environment for our students.

And yes, I was able to finish the Durango Double Race. The trick to weathering change is to face it head on. I want to thank all our donors, volunteers, staff, and students for all your head-on support and dedication. Together, we are not just surviving surprises, we are creating meaningful change in the community!

With appreciation,
Teresa Malone,
Executive Director



*Teresa at the Durango Double
Photo Credit: Brashear Photo*

Program Updates

High School Equivalency

After careful consideration, DAEC has expanded options for our learners to attain a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma. As a rural leader in quality adult education, we chose to continue our rigorous instructional approach while providing a second testing option of Colorado's three-approved HSE exams. The three approved exams are: GED, HiSET, and TASC. In this way we are able to expand, rather than limit, our students' choices. While all of our current students are opting for the long-established and name brand GED for their high school equivalency, we added the HiSET exam to our testing options which allows a learner to choose between a paper-based or computer-based format for each of the five subject exams. Both the GED and HiSET meet the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education's requirements for this credential, and allow a graduate to apply for financial aid.

This month, HSE Program Manager, Stephanie Moran, was awarded Adult Education Leader of the Year award by the statewide Colorado Adult Education Professional Association at its annual conference in Denver. Her sixteen years with DAEC has positively impacted thousands of students in their pursuit of a better life.



*Stephanie with her
CAEPA award*

English as a Second Language

Like all of our programs, the ESL program adapts to the changing needs of our learners. To serve the growing enrollment, including five learners commuting from Pagosa Springs, ESL classes are taught in Durango four nights a week instead of two. Another change is the use of new curriculum with an interactive computer component and a daily language lab, learners are becoming more computer literate and furthering their ability to become independent learners.

The ESL program expanded into Cortez this May to fill the void of English classes in Montezuma County. Classes are offered there Monday through Thursday taught by new ESL teacher Sherry Grazda and two volunteers. We couldn't do it without our partner, the Piñon Project, a nonprofit family resource organization that strives to make families more self-reliant. Piñon is helping us with classroom space and coordination of onsite child care services while our working families are in class.

FRONT PAGE BOOST ARTICLE *continued...*

While Josh is always available to all students, career planning begins when a student passes half of the high school equivalency subject tests or is at the highest level of English proficiency that we teach. Besides identifying personal needs like housing or financial assistance, Josh also provides essential career services to DAEC students and alumni. Motivated students take advantage of help with resume writing, interview practice, foreign degree translation, job shadowing or internship opportunities, setting short-term and long-term personal and professional goals, skill-building through education or certification, and so much more.

Josh notes that a major strength of BOOST is its ability to nimbly adjust and address what students need to succeed. After all, every person finds a time in life when they could sure use a little bippity-boppity-BOOST.



Durango Adult Education Center
A Caring Learning Community



Durango Adult Education Center

A Caring Learning Community

701 Camino del Rio, Ste. 301
Durango, CO 81301

Return Address Requested

Upcoming Events

Thursday, October 27:

Exceptional Customer Service Class
Durango Adult Education Center
8:30 - 11:30 am

Thursday, December 15:

High School Equivalency Graduation Ceremony
Durango Public Library
6 - 7 pm

Wednesday, February 1, 2017:

Spellebration - Snowdown Spelling Showdown
Henry Strater Theatre
5:30 - 7:30 pm

Our Mission

The mission of the Durango Adult Education Center, a caring learning community, is to fill educational gaps by equipping adults, children and families with the skills and knowledge necessary for 21st century careers, post-secondary education, and social and economic mobility.

Why I Volunteer

After retiring and moving to Durango from the Twin Cities ten years ago, I have tried several different volunteer opportunities, looking for a meaningful way to be helpful. Three years ago, an article in the newspaper invited people to explore the tutoring needs at the Durango Adult Education Center. Having spent 35 years as a public school middle school teacher, I found the fit that I had been searching for as a volunteer at DAEC.

For the past three years, I have had the privilege of helping students prepare for the GED test. My teaching experience in public schools has always been in very large classes. Here at DAEC, I especially enjoy being able to tailor lessons to the individual needs, abilities and successes of my students. Attending a GED graduation ceremony will demonstrate how meaningful it can be to assist determined students to overcome challenges and achieve a path to a bright future.

Anyone wanting to find a way to volunteer their time in a rewarding and worthwhile way, should consider becoming a tutor. As a retiree and seasonal employee at Purgatory, I find that I can easily arrange tutoring around my schedule of part-time work and leisure travel.

Mary Handrick, Volunteer

