



TIDINGS



Durango & Cortez Adult Education Center Fall 2022 Newsletter

When Serving Time is Study Time

Inmates Earn Diplomas and New Opportunities

For a few moments, radio chatter echoes through the hallways in the La Plata County Jail as deputies and staff pass quick requests over their handhelds.

"Is there a deputy available to bring two inmates to 904 for a GED test?"

"Boudreau's on it!"

Detentions Lieutenant Gary Boudreau oversees many of the inmate support programs, including religious services, library services, behavioral health, and the GED program. "When I became Lieutenant eight years ago, the GED program existed but was unfunded and ineffective," he explains. "We added \$20,000 to the program budget and [in 2017] the Education Center partnered with us. They have been teaching here ever since."

The success has been measurable. Since that year, nearly 200 student-inmates have received educational support with teachers and volunteer tutors investing over 2,300 instructional hours.

Boudreau escorts two GED student-inmates into testing room 904 and wishes them luck.

John Hendricks and Dustin Wall have been preparing for this moment. John was taking the dreaded reading and

John Hendricks and Dustin Wall have been preparing for this moment. John was taking the dreaded reading and language arts test, while Dustin had to grapple with the lengthy math test.

"If I pass and graduate, my girlfriend is going to be so proud," John grins nervously.

Dustin notes, "I have always made good money, but I want to show my kids that their dad went back to school so they can see how important it is."

However, prepping for their GED exams has been difficult. The jail environment is not designed with quiet studying in mind. Instead, Dustin and John study in large rooms with cinderblock walls, metal chairs and tables bolted to the floor. Inmates loiter about, their cacophony of laughter and chatter competes with the loud TV on the wall.

"It's stressful trying to study here," John admits. "Some of the guys [support] you, but others tease you for studying in the pod."

Luckily, inmates receive targeted teaching from DAEC instructors Mary Mullen and Cyd Franken. "They're so great!" Dustin exclaims. He goes on to say he learns so much even though he gets only two hours per week with them.

The competition for a slice of an inmate's time is surprisingly fierce. Teachers must schedule their sessions around the inmates' other commitments such as support groups and court hearings.

Despite these challenges, John and Dustin are already looking beyond the GED. John has plans to attend Pueblo Community College, once he is released, to pursue a certification in automotive repair. Meanwhile, Dustin sets his sights on a college degree. "I want to get my degree in geology and work in the petroleum industry," he says.



John Hendricks settles in at his GED test station inside the jail

As the test software launches, both John and Dustin focus on their computer screens for the two-hour timed exam. Then it's time to wait for their results as the computer grades them. If they pass, they will graduate and receive their diploma. In the jail, GED graduations are a big deal.

In the last five years, 23 inmates have earned a GED diploma at the jail. This may seem like a small number, but those who are incarcerated rarely

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From the Director

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

For the last 35 years, your generosity has created an educational safety net for individuals wanting to improve their lives through education. You've shared your talents and your time, and you've financially supported adult literacy in our community. Our amazing volunteers have given more than 400 hours to learners so far in 2022 and we have already surpassed our 2021 graduation numbers! We are again celebrating full and vibrant "in-person" classes.



*Susan Hakanson,
Executive Director*

We could not do this without your support.

Teachers and volunteer tutors in our programs change lives. The GED programs at the La Plata County Jail featured in this newsletter have shown to drastically reduce recidivism within our inmate/student population. When our students learn to read or improve their English language skills, earn a high school equivalency diploma, or gain US Citizenship, you've launched them towards a future of opportunities.

Coming back from COVID has proven difficult for educational & non-profit funding. Many of our reliable funding sources are stretched thin and have changed priorities to helping with housing and food insecurity first. As such, this year has been a challenge to maintain (if not grow) vital educational programs.

Your monthly and annual donations allow DAEC to continue the 35-year tradition of improving our community through effective and compassionate education for those who need it the most. We all know that education is the best investment we can make; it has the highest financial and social returns. Your help at this critical juncture will allow DAEC to move forward with the strength and vitality needed to address the educational needs of our adult learners.

Thank you for your generous support that helps to strengthen our community. Together we are creating a better world.

In Partnership,
Susan Hakanson

Serving Time Continued...

remain at the same jail long enough to prepare for and take each of the four GED exams. Therefore, a mixture of lucky timing and court decisions must fall into place if an inmate wishes to graduate.

Jail staff recognizes these roadblocks and makes every graduation a special event.

"Our GED graduation ceremonies are the most uplifting thing I have experienced here," Lt. Boudreau says. "Graduates wear a cap and gown, we play the graduation march and celebrate the achievement with acceptance speeches and cake. For many, I suspect the graduation ceremony is the first time they have been celebrated. After every graduation, we see new interest from inmates in obtaining their GED."

In addition to growing interest, inmates participating in adult education have decreased recidivism (relapse into criminal activities). In national studies conducted by the Rand Corporation, such inmates are 43% less likely to be reconvicted and have a 75% employment rate after being released.

"What I have seen is that our GED graduates come back at a far lower rate than our other inmates," notes Lt. Boudreau. "Obtaining a GED is a life-altering event for them. It boosts their confidence and opens new opportunities."

John and Dustin can attest to the feeling of achievement after taking the GED exams. John notes, "I used to be more confident in myself [before going to jail], but then I began to doubt myself, which is really easy to do when you're in here," he gestures to the windowless cinderblock walls. "But so far, I've passed everything with no problems. I'm learning to trust my abilities."

Dustin sums up his new self-awareness in one word, "Patience. I have more patience than I ever knew."

The GED jail program currently runs at low capacity. With our limited funding, several student-inmates are unable to meet with a teacher on a regular basis. Our desire is to bring on another teacher so that all student-inmates can have weekly class sessions. To make this happen, we need to operate at \$1500/month to break even.

Please consider becoming a monthly giver for the jail program so we can fully meet the needs of these students.



Let's Welcome Our New Staff!

Lori Mott - ESL Teacher/Career Advisor, Cortez



Lori was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona. She attended Northern Arizona University and earned a master's degree in multicultural education. Since moving to Colorado, Lori enjoys hiking and cross-country skiing with her husband and their dog.

"I am so happy to be part of the Durango/Cortez Adult Education team of caring teachers so I can help empower students to succeed and reach their goals."

David Scott - ESL Teacher, Durango



David Scott, a Durango High School graduate, started his ESL career in China teaching both children and adults. He received his degree from Central Washington University in Washington state.

David speaks Mandarin and Uyghur and understands the challenges of learning a new language.

In his free time he enjoys rafting, traveling, and cooking different types of food. He looks forward to helping his students progress in their English abilities.

Kirsten Chesney - Communications and Outreach Manager, Durango



Kirsten grew up in Phoenix, Arizona and parts of northern Arizona, moving to Durango in 2020.

Kirsten carries a master's degree in nutrition and began her own nutrition counseling business in 2018. Her entrepreneurship journey brought her into the world of marketing, community outreach, and website design.

This became an exciting second interest of hers and she began offering marketing services to start-ups and non-profits who help people build better lives. This led Kirsten to the Durango Adult Education Center.

"I love the supportive team at DAEC and look forward to spearheading new events and projects."

Kirsten has kept her nutrition counseling business and continues to work with clients on the side. She enjoys summiting 14ers, rock climbing, ice climbing, and camping.

Maya Zarlingo - Student Services Specialist, Durango



Maya was raised here in beautiful Durango, and feels grateful to be serving her community in such a meaningful way. After living abroad in Spain, she pursued a degree at CSU in Spanish and International Relations, graduating in May of 2022. Maya brings her services as a bilingual Spanish speaker to her role at DAEC.

In her free time, Maya enjoys racing, traveling, mountain bikes, backcountry skiing, CrossFit, yoga, and tending to her fur baby Mabel.

"I feel so inspired everyday by the amazing humans that I get to work alongside, and by the hard work, resilience, and overwhelming kindness that each one of our students exhibits. Thank you for sharing such an incredible community with me, and I look forward to connecting with you all as my time at the center progresses."

**New Staff Continues
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"Colorado Gives"
An Online Giving Event
November 1 - December 6
Scan the QR Code to Donate!



Upcoming Events

December 5-15

Session III Class Registration Opens

Thursday, December 15

Cortez GED Graduation Ceremony
6-7pm at the Turquoise Raven Gallery

Friday, December 16

Durango GED Graduation Ceremony
6-7pm at the Recreation Center

Wednesday, February 1

Snowdown Spellebration Event!
Durango's rootin'est, tootin'est spelling bee
supporting the Adult Education Center

Our Mission

The Durango Adult Education Center, a caring learning community, fills educational gaps by providing the skills and knowledge necessary for livable wage careers, post-secondary education, and social and economic mobility.



***Chandler Ray Krylowicz -
Childcare Specialist, Durango***

Chander is from the Fort Collins/Severance area.

She enjoys paddle boarding, hammocking, and binge-watching crime documentaries or *Transformers*.

Chandler is currently a sophomore up at Fort Lewis College, majoring in psychology with a minor in criminal justice. She has been working with kids for a little over seven years in after-school programs as well as summer camps.

"I'm super excited to be here and to hang out with the kiddos, helping them grow as people. I love providing a fun and safe environment for them."