

School of Life continues to help teens succeed

Samantha Sadlier, STG 6:50 p.m. MST November 3, 2014



(Photo: Trevor Christensen / The Spectrum & Daily News)

ST. GEORGE – A program designed to helping teens find success by learning life skills, the School of Life Foundation continues to offer economic savings to the Southern Utah community by helping students achieve high school graduation.

Based on the final data for the 2013/2014 school year, Washington County's participating high schools included 401 students in the program. Of those students, 71 were off track to graduate, said Jack Rolfe, president and founder of the School of Life. Out of the 71 students, 67 were able to graduate on time with their class.

"This had a huge economic impact on our area by saving the community (about 17 million)," he said. "This is due to the fact that each student who drops out of high school costs society (an estimated) \$292,000 because they are more likely to end up involved with crime, live in poverty and experience poor health. We are assisting these students to become tax payers instead of tax users."

The School of Life program is being expanded to other area schools as well as schools in Iron County and in Northern Utah as well as other states like Michigan and Wyoming, Rolfe said.

"By the end of the year, we hope to be in 13 to 20 schools," he said. "It's really been on the upward swing. We are quite excited about expanding."

The program is also in a pilot version at Lava Ridge Elementary and may expand to elementary schools so the concepts, which focus on developing life skills, can benefit the children at a younger age, Rolfe said.

"Research shows that if we catch these students before high school to make those life changes, we can make a bigger impact," he said.

Rolfe said the non-profit organization operates primarily on the generosity of donors.

"For every dollar donated to the School of Life last year, we had \$418 in savings to the community," he said. "It's a return on the investment to donate to organizations like ours."

The feedback is evident not just from students and graduation rates, but parents and teachers express their appreciation, Rolfe said.

"About 70 percent of the students had a 14 percent increase in GPA," he said. "One hundred percent had an increase in character attributes."

The eight-week courses — each class lasting an hour — are taught by trained and compensated professional trainers, said Kip Kint, School of Life training director.

While the trainers are compensated in a modest fashion, they also undergo several hours of training and have professional experience in business and other areas of training instruction, Kint said.

"The trainers have a disposition for it already," he said. "They love youth and love to train on principals of life. Most are entrepreneurs or professional trainers outside of the School of Life. We only bring on professional trainers. They know how to engage the students. If students aren't engaged, they won't have the same life-changing experience that we try to see with all of our students."

Rolfe said he is pleased with the direction the School of Life is headed.

"We've really found that niche in teaching in the schools," he said.

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For more information about the School of Life Foundation, visit <http://schooloflifefoundation.org/>

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