



ARIZONA FOUNDATION

Academic Year 2023-2024

AAF MISSION

The mission of the Aspire Arizona Foundation (AAF) is to support the higher education needs of Payson, Arizona and the surrounding Rim Country rural communities.

We help young adults aspire to higher education by making college education Accessible, Attainable and Affordable.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Aspire Scholars - pg 1
- Aspire Alumni - pg 2
- Aspire Arizona Foundation History /Annual Fund Results - pg 3
- A Teacher’s Perspective/Aspire Awardees - pg 4
- Aspire Scholarship Recipient/Aspire Scholarship Breakfast - pg 5

Meet Aspire Scholars

Cody Cliburn

My name is Cody Cliburn, and this year I am a graduating senior from Payson High School (PHS). Through the dual credit program, I’ve been able to acquire 18 hours of college credits, including two years of English and one year of math. Taking these college classes has not only helped me get ahead in my college education but has also allowed me to experience college early. I’ve had amazing professors who care about my future, and I have made many great memories and friends. I want to personally thank Mrs. Fowler, my English professor, for her patience and support.



Cody Cliburn

With graduation quickly approaching, I plan on attending Mesa Community College while maintaining an internship with Salt River Project (SRP). After that, I plan to transfer to Grand Canyon University to complete a bachelor's degree, although I haven't decided on my major yet. Aspire has significantly shortened the time and reduced the cost it will take to acquire a college degree. On behalf of all the students, past, present and future, I would like to thank the Aspire Board for their relentless support of this program and for making all this possible. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the donors. Without your contributions, none of this would be possible. Aspire has not only prepared us for the future but has also inspired us to take control of our future, and we sincerely thank you for these opportunities.

Donor Thank You!

The Aspire Arizona Foundation has experienced its best fundraising campaign since inception this year, driven by a generous Matching Gift Grant from a longtime donor. Matching gifts can be a powerful incentive for individual donors to give, as it effectively doubles the impact of their contributions. For every donation given, an equal amount is provided by the Matching Gift Grant.

It's impressive that 54 out of 80 gifts received qualified for the matching offer, resulting in nearly \$13,000 in additional funds for the 2023-24 drive. Of these 54 donors, 28 were new donors, demonstrating the effectiveness of a matching grant in engaging both existing and new supporters. In addition, two donors matched the entire amount of the matching grant individually. Over 100 students benefited from the additional funds raised.

We are deeply grateful for the generosity of our donors. Your support enables us to continue to fulfill our foundation’s mission and serve our community’s students. We thank you!

Education Elevates Everyone!

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE



The first thing that comes to mind when I write this column each year, is how grateful I am to the 100 plus donors who make this Aspire Arizona Foundation (AAF) program possible. Without each and every one of you, AAF would not have been able to assist the 570

students who have participated in this program—and this past year was one of our best! First, we’ve seen our enrolled student numbers climb back above the 100 mark, which is where we were prior to Covid. And second, with the assistance of a matching grant from a long time donor, we had our best fundraising year to date. Thank you doesn’t seem big enough recognition for all your support...but thank you!

I would also like to celebrate Payson High School. AAF has partnered with the high school since we began this program in 2016. We’ve worked closely with the dedicated staff and faculty at PHS and have seen their commitment to their students and to a quality education. And so, we were not surprised back in February when PHS was named an A+ School of Excellence by the Arizona Educational Foundation.

This award began in 1983 as a means to identify, recognize and celebrate educational excellence in schools throughout Arizona. I know first-hand the rigor that the Arizona Educational Foundation uses to assess the schools it recognizes because I, along with the AAF Vice President, Patti Beauchamp, was asked to meet with the committee doing the assessment of Payson High School. This team was an impressive collection of educators from around the State and they delved deeply into PHS’ commitment to academic excellence and its ability to create and maintain a learning-centered and safe school environment.

On behalf of the AAF Board of Directors, I extend my congratulations to everyone at Payson High School for this well-deserved recognition. I hope our donors will take great pride in knowing that their contributions are actively empowering our community’s students as they move forward in their educational pursuits.

Paul Brocker
President
Aspire Arizona Foundation

Crystal Kubby, PHS 2017 Graduate

Crystal Kubby, a member of the first Aspire Scholars cohort, believes she benefited greatly from the dual enrollment program at Payson High School (PHS). She is very grateful for the opportunity to have taken a handful of dual credit courses that gave her a head start at Arizona State University where she enrolled in 2017 after graduating from PHS.



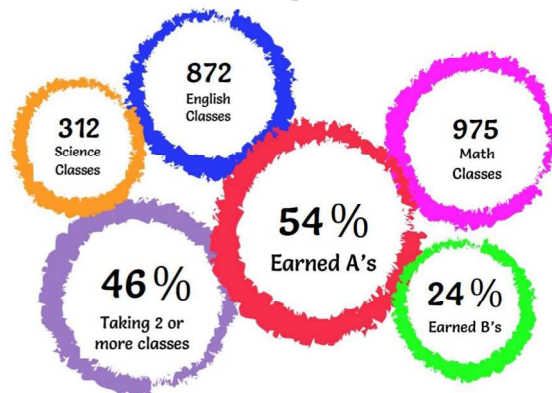
The dual credit course gave Crystal the advanced content that she needed to bridge the gap between high school and college. “I needed Calculus before going to Arizona State University to be successful and without Aspire that class would not have been available to me,” said Crystal. “I was learning higher-level college content, but I had the safety net and support from my teacher that you generally do not get from a traditional college professor.”

Crystal took the dual credit program a leap further by not only taking dual credit courses at Payson High School, but also taking dual credit courses at Gila Community College. It was eye-opening for her as a younger student to interact with college students and gain diverse perspectives and stories that are not typically encountered in a high school setting. It also helped her adjust to college norms. “I remember I raised my hand to go to the bathroom in my ENG101 class at the community college, and was told by the professor and my peers that college students don’t need to do that. The level of responsibility and expectations were different.”

Crystal offers some advice for high school students: If you are nervous or unsure about college, try dual enrollment. It helps you transition from high school to college and gives you a safety net to explore college curriculum. If you plan to pursue university education, then take the leap and sign up for a dual credit course at the college campus. It will open your eyes to what to expect when you get to the university.

“I want to let donors know that every little bit of your investment is a life altering and lifelong benefit to students. I’m still so appreciative of the one year I had in the Aspire program before I graduated. It has had a lasting impact on my education and career.” Crystal earned her Bachelors of Science in Geology from Arizona State University and is currently working as a full time Geologist at Freeport McMoRan’s Bagdad mine.

2361 College Classes Taken By Aspire Students (2016-2023)



Donor Honor Roll 2023-34			
Levels	Amount	Donors	Totals
Achievement	\$100-499	53	\$10,423
Merit	\$500-999	14	\$7,527
Scholarship	\$1000-1499	6	\$6,150
Honor Roll	\$1500-2499	2	\$3,914
Leadership	\$2500-4999	5	\$13,500
Honor Society	Above \$5000	7	\$81,000
Totals		87	\$122,514

In the heart of Payson, the Aspire Arizona Foundation (AAF) offers local students an educational opportunity toward a path of growth and success. Established in 2013, with a vision to support higher education initiatives in Rim Country, AAF's commitment has evolved into a trusted resource for helping make college dreams a reality for countless students.

AAF's journey began with the ambition to bring a university campus to Payson and provide scholarships for local students. However, when the Payson university campus planning slowed, a determined Board of Directors embarked on a new mission—to assist students to pursue a college education through an innovative program.



In July 2015, the AAF Board learned about the elimination of AP Physics and Chemistry at Payson High School due to low enrollment, further emphasizing the need for a solution. Recognizing the importance of these courses as college prerequisites, AAF collaborated with local stakeholders to explore alternatives. The solution emerged in the form of a dual enrollment program—a program allowing students to earn both college and high school credit for courses taken during high school.

AAF's groundbreaking initiative to offer free dual-credit general education courses at Payson High School was launched in Fall 2016. Initially, the cost of one course per semester was covered, with families bearing the expense for additional credits. In the Fall of 2018, it became apparent that some families couldn't afford to pay for the extra courses. Consequently, in Spring 2019, AAF began paying tuition for up to 3 general education courses per semester per student. To further assist AAF students pursue their higher education goals, in 2023, AAF began awarding three \$5,000 college scholarships annually to graduating seniors. AAF's impact speaks volumes, with over 570 students participating in the program and collectively earning more than 7,300 transferable college credits since its inception.

An all-volunteer Board of Directors comprising 11 individuals guide AAF's fundraising efforts—efforts that have resulted in funding over \$435,000 in tuition payments and \$30,000 in college scholarships. AAF serves as a testament to how community-driven initiatives can shape education and nurture our students' aspirations. Through collaboration, innovation, and dedication, AAF has made college education *attainable, accessible, and affordable*, and has paved the way for a future where every student can dare to dream and turn those dreams into reality.

Helping Shape Payson's Future

Your tax-deductible contribution can shape the future by helping AAF provide dual-credit opportunities

**ASU Tuition for 1 Year Costs
\$12,698**

**Aspire Scholarship of \$2160 = 24
Dual-Credits = 1 Year of College**

100% of donations fund student scholarships. Invest in the next generation and in the future of Payson.

**Aspire Arizona Foundation is a
501 (c)(3) non-profit.**

Tax ID 46-4130332

For Information or to Donate go to

www.aspirearizona.org

**Mail to: 431 S. Beeline Highway, Suite 1,
Payson, AZ 85541**



Aspire awardees for 2023/2024

Aspire Merit Scholarships

Raul Sias Peralta - \$5,000
Daniel Schalesky -- \$5,000
Rebecca Chiccino -- \$2,500
Anderson Hatch -- \$2,500

Aspire Achievement Level (Earned more than 30 Credits)


Anderson Hatch
Angelina Jakubek
Brooklyn Klein
Benjamin Menghini
Aidan Meredith
Benjamin Otte
Daniel Schalesky
Raul Sias Peralta

Aspire Ambition Level (Earned more than 20 Credits)

Rebecca Chiccino
Gage Freischmidt
Chloe Hancock
Ethan Morphis
Lizbeth Reyes Dominguez
Nehemiah Rodriguez
William Spalding

4th Annual
Aspire Arizona Foundation
Charity Golf Tournament

Saturday, September 14, 2024
8:00 AM Shotgun
Payson Golf Club
Scramble Format
\$125 Entry Fee



Save the Date

A Teacher's Perspective

Interview with Brian Young, PHS Instructional Coach

For many students, the path to higher education can seem daunting, filled with obstacles and financial constraints. However, at Payson High School (PHS), a cost-free opportunity shines bright through the implementation of a dual-credit program that opens doors to academic success and transforms lives.



The introduction of dual-credit programs at PHS in the fall of 2016 marked a significant shift in academic offerings, providing students with the chance to engage in college-level curriculum while still in high school. As PHS Instructional Coach, Brian Young, noted the immediate benefits and opportunities it presented to students.

Brian, after earning his Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Chadron State College in Nebraska, began his career in education at PHS in 2005 as an English teacher. He eventually assumed the roles of department head and instructional coach, giving him the opportunity to spend time in classrooms giving feedback to teachers. As part of that role, he also plans and teaches professional development to all staff, supervises all testing on campus, including the pre-testing needed for dual enrollment—and much, much more. Additionally, Brian serves as the AVID PHS coordinator and the varsity baseball coach.

According to Brian, the most notable impact of the dual-credit program is that it encourages students to envision higher education goals and pursue those goals with confidence while still in high school. Students experience success and are challenged with college-level curriculum but in the familiar environment of an on-campus classroom with a known teacher. He believes the biggest challenge for dual enrollment is getting students to take the risk. Once in the class, they realize the support is there and that the instructors want them to be successful. What makes Brian most proud is seeing students hesitantly try the courses during the school year, and then go on to take more courses on their own or over the summer. It's amazing to see students earn an associate degree prior to their own high school graduation.

The even greater program impact, he believes, is felt at home with families. At times, parents seem even more excited than their students about the potential for the challenge of college courses, and then, of course, about the cost-saving benefits of the AAF program. When students can attend college courses tuition-free and ease the high costs of education, it's a huge relief for families. No doubt, the students' families are reaping a great benefit.

As PHS continues to expand its dual-credit offerings, the entire program expands with the possibilities of the courses offered. More levels of English and math are being offered, and the ripples throughout the campus can be felt as students are being prepared earlier in their high school years for college, and can focus on future plans earlier. Teacher recommendation for dual enrollment appears to be the strongest incentive and confidence-builder for students. Recognizing that someone believes they have the ability to be successful is truly a game-changer. The ultimate goal for school and staff is instilling a sense of accomplishment and ambition in the hearts of students and their families alike. Through dedication and a steadfast belief in the potential of every student, Brian and his colleagues continue to endorse higher education, one empowered student at a time.

Aspire Scholar Breakfast

April, 2024

Honoring Payson students achieving academic success in Aspire's Dual-Credit program.



AAF Board of Directors

2024 AAF Scholarship Recipients

(left to right)

*Raul Sias Peralta
Daniel Schalesky
Rebecca Chiccino
Anderson Hatch*



Scholarship Recipient—Raul Sias Peralta

Raul Sias Peralta received one of the 2024 AAF College Scholarships for \$5,000. He plans to attend Northern Arizona University this fall where he has also received a tuition scholarship. Raul maintained a 3.69 GPA at PUSD while working part-time. In addition, he was involved in extracurricular activities including National Honor Society and Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA). Raul was president of the Key Club and secretary of Veterans Heritage Project. Raul's scholarship application embodies everything AAF hoped to accomplish with the dual credit program!



“My planned major is history for secondary education. Upon earning said degree, I wish to return to Payson to teach at Payson High School--this will also allow me to fulfill a personal goal of becoming my younger sister's teacher. I, as a student, have been greatly impacted and incredibly grateful for the opportunities granted to me by the Arizona Aspire Foundation. By the second semester of my senior year, I completed a total of 14 dual credit classes. I took Math, English, Science, History and even marketing classes thanks to the opportunity Aspire has granted me! According to a credit transfer tool, Jackspath, I have earned roughly 39 college credits—33% of my degree done already! This is amazing, especially because it has taken a significant amount of the financial burden off my shoulders. Taking dual enrollment classes gave me the opportunity of a lifetime to better push me to do my absolute best in my classes and ensure that I achieve what I set out to achieve. It is with the support of the Arizona Aspire Foundation that I have been able to take a considerable amount of my foundational classes out of the way and made considerable progress toward my degree.”



Aspire Scholars at STEM Workshop

Aspire Arizona students Daniel Schalesky and Thomas Jakubek shared the results of their science experiment with local elementary student Roman Martinez at PHS Chem Stem event earlier this year.

A Parent's Thank You

Yesterday Joshua graduated from GCU with a Business degree. He did this in 2 years with the help of all the dual-credit he was encouraged to complete during his high school years. He's said over and over again that it was that head start that made it work for him to finish the degree; without that he doesn't think he would have done it. As a family, we just want to thank Aspire for all you have done to help each Utterback kid. The Aspire Arizona Foundation and their volunteers have made such a difference in our family!! One down, 5 more kids to go!



Melinda Utterback



431 S. Beeline Hwy.
Suite 1
Payson, AZ 85541

Mailing Address

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