



Academic Year 2024-2025

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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Meet Aspire Scholars

Lizbeth Reyes Dominguez

Lizbeth had not thought much about taking dual enrollment courses until her best friend, Taryn Ashby, talked her into taking a calculus course with her during their sophomore year at Payson High School (PHS). And the rest of the story is amazing.

Lizbeth, one of four \$5,000 Aspire Scholarship recipients in 2025, will complete her senior year at PHS with 53 college credits she earned with the assistance of Aspire Arizona Foundation's Dual Enrollment Program. And when she enrolls in the Dental Hygiene program at Northern Arizona University (NAU) next Fall, she will be the first in her family to embark on a college education.

"After that first course, I focused on the sciences because I knew I wanted to go into the dental hygiene field and lots of science is needed," she recalls.

Studies were not all that occupied Liz's time at PHS. She was vice president on the Executive Board for the Student Government; participated in DECA, a student-led organization focused on developing emerging leaders; and logged hundreds of hours of volunteer service in the community. And she managed all that while sneaking in a little pickleball with friends and working a variety of jobs at local businesses like Chipotle, Starbucks and Culver's.

Like other Aspire scholars, she also feels that the dual enrollment coursework gave her some advantage in receiving additional scholarship support. "I think having that many credits may have helped me stand out when applying for other scholarships," she noted. She has already received the Lumberjack Scholarship at NAU that will cover her tuition while the Dorrance Scholarship will help with other expenses.

"I also plan to continue working in college, so I do not have to take out student loans," she said. "My parents will support me in any way they can, but they are both self-employed, which can be unstable during some seasons."

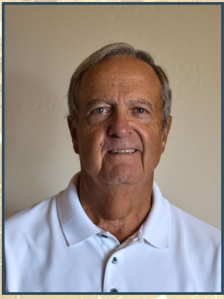
"I can't thank the donors to Aspire enough for making this opportunity available to me. These classes I took in high school have provided me with a solid foundation to continue my education," she added.



**Lizbeth Reyes
Dominguez**

Education Elevates Everyone!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Paul Brocker
President
Aspire Arizona Foundation

I always sit down to write this column following the Aspire Scholar Breakfast each year because that event reminds me of the impact our donors are having on Rim Country students. Each year we ask a current student and a former student – which we now call our Aspire Alumni – to speak to the assembled students and donors. Both speakers were outstanding, so I want to share just a couple of their comments.

Lizbeth Reyes Dominguez, a senior at Payson High School, spoke on behalf of the Aspire Scholars, telling donors “because of you, students who might otherwise have faced barriers to higher education are now able to explore their passions, gain invaluable knowledge, and work toward their dreams – without the burden of tuition costs...Thank you for being change-makers, visionaries, and champions of education. Your support means the world to us, and to the students who will forever benefit from your kindness.”

Lizbeth, speaking for the 72 Aspire Scholars in attendance, anticipates finishing her high school career with more than 50 credits before continuing her education at Northern Arizona University (NAU) next year.

Speaking as a 2022 Aspire Alum, Emmy Whaley gave donors and current students a summary of her life since she graduated from Payson High School (PHS). She noted she will receive her degree in Elementary Education from NAU this year, begin teaching second grade in the Fall while starting a master's program in Leadership at Creighton University.

“It is crazy to think just three years ago I was sitting in this very room listening to someone give this very talk,” she said, “and sitting in awe and gratitude of the donors at my table as they shared their stories...and why they support our education...”

“As I stand here today graduating a whole year early as a first generation college graduate, born and raised in our amazing small town...it is worth it, it is so worth it.”

Lizbeth and Emmy represent the 647 students who have been impacted by donors to Aspire Arizona Foundation. It makes our all-volunteer Board proud to be a part of this incredible community effort.

And both also received the prestigious Dorrance Scholarship for their NAU journey. Laura Trevillyan, Avid Advisor at PHS, credits AAF for helping students receive that support. “It is one of the hardest scholarships in the state to get,” she notes. “It gives them a certain amount of money each year and allows them to travel abroad. And because of AAF’s generosity with our students and the number of credits they’ve earned, students have a better chance of winning those scholarships.”

In the Fall 2024 semester, 144 students – a record – participated in the dual enrollment program that our donors have made possible. And as we look forward to next Fall we anticipate a similar number of students. To date, AAF donors have allowed us to pay for 9,234 college credits for local Payson students. And it is very possible that a year from now our donors can take pride in helping local students achieve 10,000 college credits. What a legacy and the Aspire Board thanks each and every one of our donors.

Meet Aspire Alumni



Elly Schreur

When **Elly Schreur** graduated from Payson High School (PHS) in 2019, she was off to Northern Arizona University (NAU) with most of her prerequisite classes covered through dual enrollment coursework completed at PHS and thoughts of eventually pursuing a law degree. “I had a passion to make the community where I live a better place,” she explained, “and I thought pursuing a degree in law would be the way to go.” But COVID changed things, and when she was notified during her first spring break at NAU that courses would be moved online, she left Flagstaff and returned to Payson.

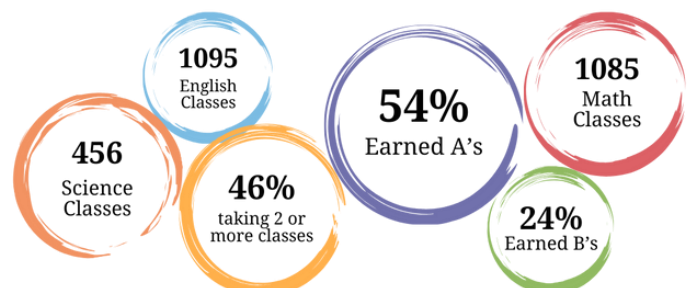
“I was fortunate because through the Aspire program, all my prerequisites were completed except for one science course. And that showed that I was serious about my education, so I received other scholarships covering all my school expenses except housing,” she said.

When the coursework was moved online, Elly decided to remove the housing expense and move back to Payson and complete her college work from home. She completed her NAU degree in Criminology & Criminal Justice, with a minor in Psychology, in 3 years while working for Payson’s Stodghill Trucking and Excavating, where she managed the HR and hiring department. “They were wonderful to me in so many ways, including being flexible with my academic schedule,” she said.

With her return to Payson, she realized her desire to make her community a better place could be done through working with members of the community. “I was introduced to Axis Culture Group by my roommate. They connect the community, build worthwhile relationships, and do so much to benefit local businesses and nonprofits that when they asked me to join their team, and impact the community that raised me, I was thrilled.” But she did not forget what Stodghill did for her and stayed for five months to train her replacement after beginning her work with Axis.

She has now been with Axis Culture Group for 3 years. She addressed the current Aspire Scholars at the annual breakfast at The Rim Club in 2024. “Remember, with the foundation you’ve built here...with the tools you have developed with the help of the donors to Aspire Arizona Foundation, there is nothing you can’t achieve. Show your gratitude and be humble, but be proud.”

2950 College Classes Taken By Aspire Students (2016 - 2025)



Aspire Scholar Breakfast

April, 2025

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



Aspire Achievement Award



Aspire Ambition Award Winners



Aspire Scholars and Donors



History of the Aspire Arizona Foundation

Aspire Arizona Foundation (AAF) is a local Payson-based nonprofit organization that was founded in 2013. Its initial focus was to support building a university campus in Payson and provide scholarships for Rim Country students enrolled at the proposed campus. When no university partner was found for a Payson campus, the all-volunteer Board of Directors explored other ways to support Payson students in their quest for higher education.

In July 2015, members of the AAF Board learned that AP Physics and Chemistry (important prerequisites for college) were being eliminated at Payson High school due to low enrollments. AAF met with GCC and high school administrators who recommended exploring Dual Enrollment programs which would allow students to take academic college level courses and receive both high school and college credit. AAF decided that the best way to assure broad participation was to offer free dual credit (DC) general education courses at the high school. The first DC courses were offered in the Fall of 2016. Initially, AAF paid for one course per semester and parents/student paid for additional credits. In the Fall of 2018, AAF realized that some families couldn't afford to take extra classes. In Spring 2019, AAF began paying tuition for up to 3 general education courses per semester. Since inception, over 674 students have participated and earned more than 8,400 fully transferable college credits.

The AAF board today is made up of 11 volunteers who focus their attention on raising funds locally to help Payson High School students and home-schooled students get an early start on their college education. In addition, since 2023, AAF has offered three \$5,000 college scholarships to graduating seniors. To date, AAF has raised more than \$829,000 and paid tuition of over \$523,000 plus college scholarships of \$45,000. AAF makes college Accessible, Attainable and Affordable for Payson students.

Timeline For Aspire Arizona Foundation

- Fall 2013 Aspire Arizona Foundation (AAF) established
- 8.8.2014 AAF receives 501(c)3 designation from IRS
- July 2015 AP Chemistry and Physics courses not offered at Payson High School (PHS) due to low enrollment/budget issues
- Fall 2015 AAF considers the dual-credit model to offer college prerequisites. First fundraising campaign raises \$7,500
- Fall 2016 First dual-credit courses offered at PHS in partnership with GCC with 100 students enrolled. Tuition budget \$32,000
- Fall 2017 Fundraising over \$20,000. Holbrook Pyle Foundation first contribution. First Aspire Scholars breakfast.
- Fall 2018 AAF rewards students who earn an A by paying for a second course. Tuition budget \$55,000.
- Sprg 2019 With MHA assistance, tuition support increased for up to 3 classes per semester at no cost to families. AAF Tuition paid since inception reaches \$200,000 for over 135 enrolled students
- Fall 2020 Covid impacts dual-credit program. Enrollment falls to 85 students. Local fundraising doubles to \$40,000/yr.
- 2021 Dual-credit college credits earned exceed 5,000.
- 2022 Tuition paid since inception on exceeds \$300,000. Fundraising increases to \$84,000. First golf tournament
- 2023 College credits earned reach 6,789. Three \$5,000 scholarships granted. Fundraising over \$100,000.
- 2024 Over 1000 credits earned this year. 7,850 earned since 2016!
- Fall 2024 Highest fall enrollment ever – 146 students.
- Sprg 2025 Tuition paid exceeds \$500,000 for 674 students. Credits earned to exceed 9,000! Four \$5,000 scholarships awarded.



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

Mailing Address

Return Service Requested

Join Aspire Arizona Foundation

Fore

Its 5th Annual Community
Golf Tournament

Saturday, September 13, 2025 at the
Payson Golf Course

Featuring an Opportunity for
Title Sponsorship

And a Golf-Themed Silent Auction
featuring Foursomes at ARCIS
Arizona's Finest Courses.



Title Sponsor Benefits include:

Your logo on a 3'X 5' Banner and in a
quarter page ad in the Roundup

A Foursome and promotional item in
the goodie bag

Title Sponsor Fee \$700

Individual \$125

Call or email Mike Christ for
information

Cell: 312.560.3497

Email: mike.christ@me.com



**Aspire
Golf Tournament
2024**



Helping Shape Payson's Future

**Aspire Arizona Foundation is a
501 (c)(3) non-profit.**
Tax ID 46-4130332

100% of donations
fund dual enrollment.
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

CONTRIBUTION FORM:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

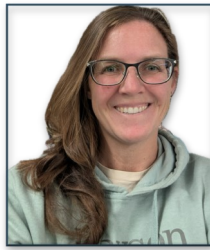
Email: _____

**I would like to support
Dual-Credit Tuition for:**

- _____ **One Student @ \$210**
_____ **Two Students @ \$420**
_____ **Three Students @ \$630**
_____ **Five Students @ \$1050**
_____ ***Another Amount \$** _____

**To make an in-kind stock gift,
email Paul@aspirearizona.org to
receive stock gift instructions.**

What inspired you to become a math teacher, and how long have you been teaching at Payson High School?



Alison Nordquist

I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. As a child, I played "class" with friends and a giant whiteboard. Initially, I wanted to teach English, but AP courses changed my mind. In high school, I took "Toro Teachers of Tomorrow," a course that introduced me to teaching. I was already a preschool teacher assistant and chose to intern in a middle school math class.

I struggled with math growing up. Placement issues put me in a higher-level class than I was ready for, and I spent years mimicking my teachers without understanding. In AP Calculus my senior year, things finally clicked. I remember my engineer father spending nights trying to help me grasp algebra. That lightbulb moment is something I love seeing in my students.

I started teaching in 2010 and joined Payson High School in 2011. In 2015, I moved to the college but continue teaching dual enrollment math.

What do you enjoy most about teaching dual-credit math classes?

Dual-credit math is incredibly useful. Students see how everything they've learned applies to real-world situations. They also build a strong academic foundation for trade school, college, or life.

How do dual-credit math courses differ from traditional high school math?

Students earn both high school and college credit, but the bigger difference is the workload. It helps them adjust to college expectations in a supportive environment.

What are some challenges students face in these courses?

Many struggle with personal responsibility—college courses put the onus on the student. I guide them by ensuring they know about tutoring resources, offering soft due dates, and clearly posting expectations.

Can you share a success story about a student who benefited from dual-credit math?

So many students have returned to say, "Mrs. Nordquist, I didn't even have to take math in college because I took it with you!" or "I watched my roommate struggle in Stats, but I didn't need the class thanks to dual enrollment!"

Students truly appreciate dual credit after they graduate. We tell them the benefits, but they don't fully understand until they experience it. Some of my favorite moments are hearing from former students who are ahead because of this program.

What skills or confidence do students gain from these courses?

For many, this is their first real academic challenge. It teaches them how to adapt, study effectively, and ask for help. That experience gives them confidence to take on more difficult courses later.

Why is the dual-credit program important for Payson High School and the community?

Dual enrollment and the Aspire funding allow all students to try college courses. They gain confidence in their ability to succeed academically, which opens doors for their future.

What is the most rewarding part of teaching dual-credit math?

I love showing students that they *can* succeed in college-level coursework.

What advice would you give to students considering dual-credit courses?

Take the class—even if you don't think you'll need it. Aspire's dual credit program is an incredible opportunity. You never know where life will take you, so why limit your options? Dual credit is a safe way to experience college with extra support in a smaller class setting.

Aspire awardees for 2024/2025

Aspire Merit Scholarships

Gage Freischmidt	-- \$5,000
Caitlyn Hall	-- \$5,000
Grace Hopson	-- \$5,000
Lizbeth Reyes Dominguez	--\$5000

Aspire Achievement Level (Earned more than 30 Credits)

Lizbeth Reyes Dominguez
Gage Freischmidt
Kyndall Hatch
Dylan Bolin
Jeyten Johnson
Tatum McDowell
Emma Picker
Noah Spalding
Jessa Tenney
Kassandra Apodaca Vega
Carter McDowell
Taryn Ashby
Alondra Ramirez
Lincoln McDowell

Aspire Ambition Level (Earned more than 20 Credits)

Ainsley Meredith
Saige Giovanni
Grace Hopson
Helania Althoff
Mylee Redford
Jaxson Homan
Connor Elson
Audrey Dillard
Jackson Mason
Faith Otte
Roshanah Rodriquez
Cameron Mathews
Caitlyn Hall
Tulsi Miranda

Aspire Scholarship Award Winners

Gage Freischmidt

I plan on majoring in Civil Engineering at NAU and using this degree to become an architect and provide infrastructure to underserved communities. I have earned about 42 college credits before I even attend college, which is already 21% of my degree done. This has only been possible due to the opportunities that Aspire has granted me!! The ability to take dual enrollment classes has been a life-changing gift, pushing me to take on many rigorous classes and prepare myself for college, while also ensuring that I put the utmost effort into my aspirations.

Caitlyn Hall

I am excited to attend NAU in the Fall of 2025, where I will pursue a double major in Elementary Education and Psychology. After earning my degree, I hope to begin my teaching career in Arizona. The Aspire program has been pivotal in preparing me for college. Through dual enrollment, I completed my general education courses and many elective requirements. This opportunity has been an extraordinary advantage, one that has allowed me to enter university well prepared. Ultimately, I plan to further my education by earning a master's degree once I've established my career. I am truly thankful for Aspire's consideration and support.

Grace Hopson

My goal is to become a labor and delivery nurse, a passion I've held for a long time. I'm considering Grand Canyon University and Gila Community College for my education, both of which offer excellent programs that align with my career goals. Taking dual enrollment classes provided a head start on my college education and allowed me to experience the rigor of college-level coursework. They also helped me develop critical thinking and time management skills, which will be invaluable in my future studies. I am committed to excelling academically and contributing positively to my community.

Lizbeth Reyes Dominguez

I plan to earn a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene from NAU, then pursue a degree in dentistry, specializing in orthodontics. Through the dual enrollment classes, I have had the opportunity to earn 41 college credits, which is something I will never take for granted. Pursuing higher education has always been my goal, and I have no doubt that I will achieve it regardless of how hard I have to work. Thanks to the generosity of Aspire, the classes I have taken in high school have prepared me for the future and provided me with a solid foundation to continue my education. I truly could not have asked for a more benevolent community.

