

Foundation helps at-risk students

Courtesy the CRAIG & SUSAN THOMAS FOUNDATION— In the six months since Susan Thomas officially launched the Craig and Susan Thomas Foundation, it has started to make a real difference in the lives of some Wyoming students. The Foundation is dedicated to helping at-risk students get post-secondary training.

A dozen Wyoming young people received scholarships to begin college and trade schools this fall. Another recipient has already completed her cosmetology training and passed the state boards.

Leadership Award

Another goal of the organization was realized when Susan Thomas presented the first Craig and Susan Thomas Foundation Leadership Award at the state fair in Douglas in August. The leadership award will be given annually to one person who has gone above and beyond the call of duty for Wyoming youth. The award includes a cash prize of \$2,500 for the winner.

"The leadership awards may be for those people who work to get kids back in school, off drugs and alcohol, or just take time to see the value of each and every young life," said Susan Thomas.

Continuing his legacy

When asked how the Foundation came about, Susan Thomas says, "My husband, United States Senator Craig Thomas, always believed in young people. He encouraged them to be successful and to be leaders. And I have taught kids who are at-risk for 36 years in the public school system. As a team, we have been doing this work for a long time. After Craig died, I wanted to carry on that mission. So I decided the best way to honor his legacy and to help at-risk learners was to start this Foundation."

The Foundation focuses on three key areas: the lead-

ership award, scholarships, and grants.

Scholarships are given to Wyoming students who want to go to a Wyoming college or a vocational training program. The scholarships are \$1,250 and offered one semester at a time. The Foundation monitors each student's progress throughout the semester. According to Thomas, she is able to personally mentor each student.

Because post-secondary schooling is uncharted territory for these students, Thomas believes it is vital to encourage, listen, and provide assistance to each scholarship winner.

Grants given

Grants are given to groups who work with at-risk kids. The Foundation has already helped several organizations in the state, including the National Guard Youth Challenge Program and Boys' and Girls' Clubs.

Students should apply now for scholarships for the spring semester. Thomas says the Foundation is designed to help students who have struggled in school, students who do not meet other scholarship criteria.

Deadlines and how to apply

The deadline for the next round of scholarships is Nov. 15, 2008. Applications for scholarships are available on the foundation's website at www.thomas-foundation.com. Eligibility requirements include citizenship, a high school diploma or GED or eligibility for the school or program for which the applicant is pursuing, and ineligibility for the Hathaway Scholarship.

IEPs, attendance at the Boys' or Girls' Schools of Wyoming, participation in the National Guard Youth Challenge Program, or involvement in a foster-care program could commend a person for this scholarship.

Susan Thomas is proud of the work the Foundation has done already but there is a lot more to be done. "We are very excited about our first year... My goal," she says, "is every child, one mind at a time."



Photo courtesy Craig & Susan Thomas Foundation

Former Senator Craig Thomas and his wife Susan have always recognized the needs of young people. Susan, as one way of commemorating her husband's life, has established the Craig & Susan Thomas Foundation. The Foundation helps young adults who, for one reason or another, have suffered challenging setbacks.