

Governor Baldacci Proclaims Second Annual GEAR UP Day

Sept. 30—Maine State GEAR UP announced today its celebration of the Second Annual National GEAR UP Day. This day commemorates 11 years of success for the transformative Gaining Early Awareness and Education for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a college access program created during the Clinton Administration. Since its inception in 1999, GEAR UP has improved educational outcomes for millions of students across the United States from families who are economically disadvantaged.

Governor Baldacci showed his support for this national celebration by proclaiming September 30, 2010, Maine State GEAR UP Day.

Maine State GEAR UP currently serves over 5,000 students in 7th-12th grade, and supports 18 school districts in ensuring that all students are academically and socially prepared for postsecondary education. \$1.5 million per year is allocated in scholarships to eligible Maine GEAR UP graduates who are enrolled in undergraduate degree programs.

National GEAR UP Day is a time to celebrate these accomplishments in the local community. Kathryn Markovchick, director of Maine State GEAR UP, shares: “We are thrilled to be joining GEAR UP programs across the country in recognizing the importance of this work and the great strides that have been made over the last eleven years to ensure that more students are prepared for, and aspire to, higher education.”

This program has a proven history of successful outcomes for participating students. 91% of Maine GEAR UP high school students surveyed during the '08-'09 school year stated that they expected to attain a 2- or 4-year college degree. We attribute these aspirations to the various activities and supports provided to GEAR UP students, including: personalized learning plans, mentoring, tutoring, counseling, work exploration, college visits, and more. In addition, professional development is provided to school staff to ensure that students have access to a challenging and engaging curriculum. 72% of Maine GEAR UP 2009 graduates filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), indicating their intention to enroll in college this year, as compared with the state college-going rate of 55%.

Maine GEAR UP schools are planning activities during the week of September 30 to promote college and career awareness. Madison High School will be focused on a competition among classes having students identify where faculty went to college. Students with the most correct answers will get their names placed in a drawing to win certificates to local businesses. Carrabec High School will have a GEAR UP Dreams poster in the cafeteria on which students may share their post-high school plans. Machias High School, Jonesport-Beals High School, Lee Academy, Mt. Abram Regional High School, Piscataquis Community Secondary School, Sumner Memorial High School, Hodgdon High School and Lawrence High School will be highlighting their staff and alumni experiences with the college-going process. Old Town High



School will be hosting “A Passport to Your Future Day” with a career and college fair and an open house, and Shead High School will host a parent night for seniors focused on financial aid, scholarships and college applications. Lubec Consolidated School, Rose M. Gaffney Elementary School, Helen Dunn Elementary School and Mt. Jefferson Junior High School will be involving 7th and 8th graders in fun activities including a college scavenger hunt and creating their personal learning plans.

For more information about Maine State GEAR UP, please contact Syntiro, formerly the Maine Support Network, at (866) 291-0004. To learn more about the national GEAR UP program, please contact the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships at 202-530-1135 or www.edpartnerships.org.

About Maine State GEAR UP: Maine’s GEAR UP Program is helping to create a sustainable culture in schools that supports students who are economically disadvantaged in preparing for, accessing, and succeeding in postsecondary education.

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