

New program identifies first generation college students

by Lyn Rowden

Now that we are fully into the tax season, it is always good thing to see where some of our tax dollars go. The communities of Fairfield, Benton, Albion, and

seniors. Ms. Avallone is working hard to ensure all these students know this money is available and will help them all with the college search, applications, editing admissions essays, etc. In addition, any GEAR UP student who



Erika Abelin, Lawrence High School senior and GEAR UP student, reviews paperwork with Janet Avallone, GEAR UP advisor. Erika has applied to several colleges and hopes to study occupational therapy or psychology.

Photo by Lyn Rowden

Clinton, which comprise MSAD #49, are the beneficiaries of some of that tax revenue through an inspiring program at Lawrence High School called GEAR UP. Fully funded by federal tax dollars its purpose is to support students and their parents as they prepare for and access opportunities to go to college.

GEAR UP, which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, in partnership with The Finance Authority of Maine, MELMAC, and the Maine Parent Federation, was designed to help schools identify students who would be of the first generation in their family to go to college, those of low income, and those in communities where college aspirations have been historically low. "Maine is one of the best in the nation for high school graduations but one of the worse for college graduations," stated Janet Avallone, the GEAR UP advisor at Lawrence. "Our work force needs better training to get businesses to come to Maine."

graduated within the year may still apply for funds to continue their education. Janet says enthusiastically, "I want students to realize they have an incredible opportunity to use this money -- by gosh, use it!"

Janet also works with students and parents who are not in the program to apply to college and for financial aid. The specific GEAR UP funds would not be available, but "There is so much in the State of Maine for college-going. New grants are being written all the time," she explains. She will happily meet with any one who wants some friendly support working through the maze of financial aid forms and terminology. Computers are available in her office for virtual tours of colleges and for on-line filing of applications and FAFSA forms for financial aid. If anyone needs assistance please call her at Lawrence High School, 453-4200 extension 390 or write javallone@msad49.org.

GEAR UP is partnered with the

Fairfield res

The results are in and the Fairfield Town logo will not change. The town solicited ideas for new town logos and three were submitted. Those three along with the current logo were used on a ballot form that was mailed to all residents in Fairfield including Shawmut, Hinckley and Fairfield Center.

The first selection depicted Fairfield - Crossroads of Maine with central proximity to St.

Consider a

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Imagine at the end of life being surrounded by the harmonious voices of angels. This is the experience of those who are dying or near death who have been blessed by songs of healing and comfort by their bedsides. Hollowell Singers, a choral group in Brattleboro, Vermont, provides this service through hospice and last November offered a workshop in Central Maine to spread this healing work to our area. Sixty-two people attended and interest in this music ministry has spread throughout Maine.

Now a new group is being organized in Waterville to cover the Central Maine area. Their first meeting will be Saturday, February 23, 10 a.m. - noon at the Universalist Unitarian Church, 69 Silver Street in Waterville. Organized by Marie Eastman, who will graduate in June from the Chaplaincy Institute of Portland, this meeting is open to everyone who would like to use their voices to sing to those passing from this world. Although most of the meeting will be spent in song, there will be discussions to arrange rehearsal times and to choose a name for this emerging group. Marie invites anyone who cannot attend but is interested in joining to contact her by phone at 207-240-6221 or email mae@blessingspace.com.

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This past school year 34 Lawrence graduates received a total of \$146,540 in scholarships from GEAR UP to attend Maine colleges. That was for the freshman year and the amount carries forward to cover each of the remaining years for an undergraduate degree or certificate. Students in the program may use the money for post secondary schools including the University of Maine system, community colleges, massage therapy and cosmetology schools, and private colleges. This year there are 257 students in the program with 57

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GEAR UP is partnered with the Maine Parent Federation which offers a wide variety of support in education. They provide workshops and materials for students and parents to encourage the college process. On their list of "Tips for Parents" it says "Parents can do many things to encourage their children to keep their options open and to close as few doors to the future as possible." We as taxpayers are doing likewise, when some of our money goes to support continuing education and open the doors to brighter futures for our next generation.

Church, 69 Silver Street Waterville. Organized by Mar Eastman, who will graduate June from the Chaplains Institute of Portland, this meeting is open to everyone who would like to use their voices to sing, those passing from this world. Although most of the meeting will be spent in song, there will be discussions to arrange rehearsal times and to choose name for this emerging group. Marie invites anyone who cannot attend but is interested in joining to contact her by phone at 207-240-6221 or email mae@blesingspace.com.

One need not be able to read music nor have hospice training. A four-hour orientation will be provided at a later date to become familiar and comfortable with the hospice philosophy and work. This group, which will present a variety of music from uplifting chants to traditional hymns, depending upon the choices of the patient, will be directed by Harry Vayo, a noted local musician and teacher, who has been educated in music therapy.

Although this group is n

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