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GED a path to new start

■ **Johanns honors adult basic education in ceremony and designates a week in its honor.**

By **JOSH FUNK**
 Editor

GED graduate Janet Vaughn knew that her 10th-grade education wouldn't get very far, especially with two daughters.

"I probably would have been on welfare (without a GED)," Vaughn said.

To her and many others, a GED offers a new beginning.

Dropouts don't usually miss having an education until they see missed opportunities in their own lives, said Douglas Christensen, Nebraska's commissioner of education.

During the last fiscal year, more than 16,000 Nebraskans attended adult basic education classes, but that is only

8 percent of the citizens the program aims to serve, Christensen said.

The state provides basic classes for those with less than a ninth-grade education, English as a second language courses and secondary education. These programs helped 1,847 people earn their GEDs or diplomas during fiscal year 1999.

Tuesday, Gov. Mike Johanns dedicated this week to Adult Basic Education Awareness in a Capitol ceremony that lauded the programs' successes and campaigned for more state money.

"This is something where the wheels of government have not kept pace (with the need)," said Sen. Dennis Byars of Beatrice. Currently these programs are budgeted at about \$2 million, though \$1.7 million of that comes from the federal government.

The state department of education relies on volunteers to assist paid directors and instructors, Adult Education Director Vicki Bauer said.

Christensen said more money and volunteers are needed to improve and

expand the network of 150 existing instruction sites throughout the state.

"We need a safety net for all our children that drop out of school - that's 14 percent," Christensen said. "Or else they will fall to other welfare programs."

When 17-year-old Alan Bright dropped out of a Lincoln high school last spring, he went directly to Southeast Community College's GED program.

Bright said the one-on-one atmosphere was conducive to learning.

"I'm less afraid now to ask questions," said Bright, who plans to enroll in an architectural drafting program after his GED. "I know (the teacher will) give me an answer I can understand."

Completing high school and moving on to other goals in life is important, especially for parents, GED graduate Lupe Avelar of Crete said.

"The most important thing was showing my children that no matter how long it takes, dreams and goals are worth doing," Avelar said.

School program gets more funds

By **GWEN TIETGEN**
 Staff writer

The Nebraska School-to-Career program received a \$625,000 federal grant to help sustain local partnerships as its federal funding ends in the year 2000.

The grant will support programs from Nov. 1 of this year to Oct. 31, 2000.

When this funding ends, it is up to local partnership boards to sustain the work by integrating School-to-Career into the school system's curriculum, said Barb Hopkins, director of Ventures in Partnerships, which is Lincoln's School-to-Career program.

School-to-Career is a nationwide program helping students apply their classroom lessons to the workplace. Nebraska's program started in 1995 as part of a five-year federal grant.

Nebraska identified specific areas that it sees as key to carrying forward its School-to-Career efforts.

These areas include industry-regulated skill standards, instruction, assessment and personnel financing, a focus on rural areas of the state and mentor training.

According to recent statistics, 62 percent of high schools and 39 percent of elementary schools participate in Nebraska's program.

A total of 1,164 businesses participate in the program in Nebraska, which is a higher percentage than other programs in the United States.

One local partnership through

"This is a great way for students to decide on a career before they go to college and can eliminate changing majors four or five times."

JULIE ZIMMERMAN

School-to-Career coordinator at Lincoln Southeast High School

Lincoln Public Schools is an internship program at Lincoln Southeast High School.

The internship program at Lincoln Southeast is open to all seniors. Students attend class for two weeks to arrange their internships and spend five to 10 hours per week for the rest of the semester with their sponsors.

Students are required to keep a daily journal of their activities.

At the end of the semester, the students present projects that demonstrate what they've learned.

"We have about 50 students throughout the year take part in the program," said Julie Zimmerman, School-to-Career coordinator at Lincoln Southeast.

"This is a great way for students to decide on a career before they go to college and can eliminate changing majors four or five times."

Nate Rittgarn, a senior at Lincoln Southeast, is interning at HWS Consulting Group Inc.

Rittgarn was trained to use Automatic Computer Aided Drafting and Design - AutoCAD - the compa-

ny's computerized drafting program.

After an engineer has made corrections to a drawing, Rittgarn takes the drawing and corrects it electronically.

"It's helped me out a lot and given me an overall perspective of how a business is run," Rittgarn said.

"My internship has given me a better idea of what I want to do in college."

Lauren Johnson, a Lincoln Southeast senior, is interning at Cubesoft Neverdehl-Loft Associates.

Johnson works with Web page design, networking and programming.

"It's given me an idea about what I really want to do," Johnson said. "I think I'm on the right track, and hopefully I'll get a job offer out of the experience."

Darl Naumann, team leader of business development at the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, said the program helps students prepare for the work force.

"What the School-to-Career system does is prepare individuals to learn to communicate effectively, solve problems, learn effective work habits, be responsible citizens and develop a sense of health and wellness," he said.

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