

DCC PRESS RELEASE

RE: Dawson Promise Receives Gianforte Grant - June 2022

Dawson Promise Awarded \$50,000 Gianforte Grant

Dawson Community College (DCC) is receiving a grant of \$50,000 from the Gianforte Family Foundation for the Dawson Promise Program. The goal of Dawson Promise is to support youth who are homeless or unaccompanied, or have aged out of the foster care system to obtain a two-year college degree free of debt. The program works closely with individuals to assist them with the resources they need to reach their educational goals and set them up for success in life.

Throughout the United States, it is recognized that there is a conduit which leads directly from foster care to homelessness. Data from the National Youth in Transition Database indicates that approximately 21% of youth transitioning out of foster care in Montana have experienced homelessness by age 17. A conservative estimate is that 11,000 unaccompanied youth in Montana are at risk of homelessness. Additionally, only 1 out of every 2 foster children who age out of the system will have some form of gainful employment by the age of 24. (Statistics from the Montana Coordinated Community Plan: Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project.)

Dawson Promise was birthed out of the desire to change these statistics and support the most vulnerable youth in Montana. Thanks to the partnership with the Gianforte Family Foundation, as well as other financial partners, Dawson Promise students are provided the opportunity to complete a 2-year associates degree without accruing debt. The students are required to work while balancing their schoolwork. Each participant must also commit to a sliding-scale monthly payment plan to provide financial investment toward their college education. Throughout the school year, the students attended various life skills sessions to set them up for sustainable success.

The mission of the Gianforte Family Foundation is to support organizations that equip people to improve their lives in a sustainable way. Funds from the Gianforte grant will be used to directly support Dawson Promise students with room and board for the 2022-23 school year. This is the fourth consecutive year for DCC to receive this grant specifically to support Dawson Promise. Less than 3% of youth who age out of foster care in the United States will obtain a college degree. (The National Foster Youth Institute.) Dawson Community College is the innovator within the Montana University System to provide a wholistic approach toward college education for this vulnerable population.

Daneen Peterson, Advisor and Grant Navigator for Dawson Promise, said *"I have worked with various youth in foster care, as a foster parent, for the past six years. These individuals have numerous barriers which prevent them from succeeding in both high school and college. With the Dawson Promise program, our hope is to help break down some of those barriers and equip the students with the necessary life skills. I cannot erase their history or change the trauma from their past, but we can work together for a better future."*

Learn more about the Dawson Promise program online at <https://www.dawson.edu/outreach/dawson-promise.html> or contact Daneen Peterson at 406-377-3061 or dpeterson@dawson.edu.

Additional statistic: In Montana, 4% of all foster youth age out of care each year. (Casey Family Programs 2019 report.) In January 2022, there were 3,024 kids in foster care in Montana. This implies that approximately 121 youth will age out in the state of Montana this year.