

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 1772

A RESOLUTION congratulating and commending Rise Up For Youth for its inspirational and motivational mentoring programs for youth.

WHEREAS, Rise Up For Youth inspires and motivates future generations to unlock their full potential through education, mentoring and empowerment. Through two mentoring programs, Caring Ladies Assisting Students to Succeed (CLASS) and Do You Want To Live Or Die?, Rise Up For Youth works to keep students in school, out of legal trouble and on their way to a life of purpose; and

WHEREAS, Students come to Rise Up For Youth on their own, through friends, school counselors, law enforcement and other mentoring programs. Most are academically underperforming, come from challenging family backgrounds and have a greater chance than their peers of dropping out of school and finding their way into the criminal justice system. They have few positive role models. They need extra support – academically, emotionally and socially – to get through school; and

WHEREAS, Through programs such as CLASS, for teen girls, and Do You Want To Live Or Die?, for young men, Rise Up For Youth helps participants through mentoring, education and empowerment; and

WHEREAS, CLASS and Do You Want To Live Or Die? conduct weekly group mentoring sessions in four USD 259 high schools in the Wichita area. These directed sessions allow participants to address concerns in their lives and support one another. Monthly enrichment workshops outside of school focus on specific areas to help participants develop skills necessary to be successful. Workshop topics have included healthy relationships, job skills, college prep, how to work with law enforcement and positive self-esteem. Both programs also conduct one-on-one mentoring. Staff and mentors are available 24/7 and go to where the students need them – at other schools, outside schools and online. This combination of group mentoring, skills development and full-time one-on-one mentoring makes Rise Up For Youth's programs unique in Wichita; and

WHEREAS, The most visible part of Rise Up For Youth's work comes from its education piece. Four-year graduation rates among African-American and Hispanic students in USD 259 was less than 72% for young men and 77% for young women. Failure to graduate dramatically increases the chances of imprisonment and continuing the cycle of poverty. With this in mind, Rise Up For Youth's primary goal is to help kids graduate from high school and encourage post-secondary education or quality full-time employment. Mentors monitor report cards quarterly to find problems that would prevent or delay high school graduation. They also give participants a view of college by taking them on college visits. By far the most popular aspect of the program is the taking of participants on tours of local and state colleges and traveling outside of Kansas. Every year, they go to at least one historically black college or university. For many students, college seemed like something that was not for them or was out of reach. By arranging visits to colleges, especially historically black colleges and universities, Rise Up For Youth shows participants the possibilities available to them; and

WHEREAS, Rise Up For Youth also prepares youth for college through ACT prep, help with FAFSA and assistance in applying for college. Rise Up For Youth understands the difficulty many participants face financially, so mentors make sure everyone goes off to college with a college care package of dorm and school necessities and provide educational scholarships for deserving students when resources are available; and

WHEREAS, The greatest role models for participants are David and Lynn Gilkey. Their personal journeys inspire children and adults alike. Many students say the way Lynn and David care about them and connect with them have made the most impact in their successes. Their commitment to student success really allows participants to know someone cares and to seek out support when they need it. David and Lynn also inspire the adults around them to provide support socially and financially to help young people succeed in life; and

WHEREAS, Rise Up For Youth, CLASS, and Do You Want To Live Or Die? want to empower participants. Empowered teens will become adults with purpose and are more able to make healthy lifestyle choices. Rise Up For Youth provides the participants with cultural and volunteer opportunities outside of school and home that they may not otherwise have access to. Community service gives participants the chance to give back to their community and teaches them about service leadership. Enrichment programs include visiting the Kansas African-American Museum, participating in the Kansas Youth Leadership Summit, touring prisons and attending cultural and arts events. Participants who attend events frequently and meet academic expectations are given positive incentive awards. These include outings to Worlds of Fun, K-State football games, bowling and other local activities; and

WHEREAS, Most importantly, Rise Up For Youth provides positive role modeling. By having active and engaged community members, participants can be inspired to live purposeful lives. Business and community leaders have come together to engage and inspire. By seeing what their lives can be and having access to the tools to get there, participants can emulate role models and achieve success; and

WHEREAS, The Rise Up For Youth staff is made up of Lynn Gilkey, co-founder and CLASS Program Director; David Gilkey, co-founder and Do You Want To Live Or Die? Program Director; Ariel Rodriguez-Williams, Executive Director; and Kareem Collins, Program Coordinator. The volunteer board of directors has 13 individuals representing business, community and educational leaders. Volunteers for the organization come from a broad range of area residents, and all are committed to the success of the young people in the programs: Now, therefore,

*Be it resolved by the Senate of the State of Kansas:* That we congratulate and commend Rise Up For Youth for its inspirational and motivational mentoring programs for youth in Kansas; and

*Be it further resolved:* That the Secretary of the Senate shall send enrolled copies of this resolution to Lynn Gilkey, David Gilkey, Ariel Rodriguez-Williams, Kareem Collins and Senator Faust-Goudeau.

Senate Resolution No. 1772 was sponsored by Senator Oletha Faust-Goudeau.

I hereby certify that the above RESOLUTION originated in the SENATE, and was adopted by that body

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*President of the Senate.*

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*Secretary of the Senate.*