

Our City

It so often happens to those who are properly prepared. The unsuspecting or those less progressive in their planning and preparation often think of it as just luck. How often have you heard someone say, “Oh, they are always so lucky!” My high school coach Jim Koetter and 4-H leaders Ruth and Floyd Johnson taught me long ago that luck happens when proper preparation meets opportunity. There is no substitute for proper preparation and those who depend solely on luck are left holding an empty bag of opportunities.

My congratulations to Principal Travis Hansen, Counselor Joni Pritcher, Family Liaison Angie Harker and Superintendent Randy Jensen for being selected by the Idaho Blue Cross Foundation to be a part of the Healthy Minds Partnership. As I have written extensively about the lack of mental health care and family wellness are a nationwide problem. As a school district American Falls began trying to address this crisis three years ago when Angie Harker was hired as a liaison between our schools and struggling families. The District further helped itself and patrons by initiating the Opportunity Community; a program by the way which is already showing success. Over 30 schools from across the state received an onsite interview and school inspection during the selection process; AFHS was one of ten schools chosen that met the criteria needed to qualify for this technical assistance grant. Proper preparation or luck?

The Healthy Minds Partnership will be a collaborative effort between the High School, behavioral health providers and the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health designed to help our youth receive the behavioral health services they need at school. The Healthy Minds Partnership (HMP) will help, at no cost to the District, behavioral health providers set up a clinical space at American Falls High School to provide services onsite, reducing barriers such as access transportation, student time away from school, parent time away from work and other similar things. The behavioral health providers will coordinate billing to Medicaid and private insurers while managing student personal information; a student’s access to onsite behavioral health services is not associated with any other designation such as an IEP or other educational accommodation.

The Healthy Minds Partnership is a technical assistance award. Which may not sound like much until you put the full weight and experience of the Blue Cross Foundation behind it. This non-financial award offers valuable subject matter expertise for schools and districts to build and implement the Healthy Minds Partnership. This technical assistance award will provide support to the High School and its students in the form of consulting services, facilitation, project management and the sharing of information. This technical assistance includes up to eight hours per month of subject matter expertise like consulting services, facilitation, project management and again the sharing of information that will be required to implement the Healthy Minds Partnership.

Often we take for granted or dismiss out of hand the significance of things like the Healthy Minds Partnership, the Opportunity Community, the new Community Learning Center and the extraordinary efforts of those around us. I have heard it said, “They are just doing their job” or “That is what they get paid to do.” No! If just doing their job was all that folks like these cared about, make no mistake, these programs would not exist in our community. As a mayor and

teacher I am so proud to work with people like these everyday who share a common vision of what could be when proper preparation meets opportunity.

Until next week...