

3 SCHOOLS WILL ADD SCHOLARS PROGRAM

BY MICHAELA SAUNDERS WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A program that teaches scholars from backgrounds of poverty what they need to know to get into college and succeed there is coming to three more metro area high schools.

Millard South, Omaha North and Omaha Bryan High Schools were named Wednesday as the second group of schools selected for the Avenue Scholars program. They will start this spring.

The Bright Futures Foundation 's Avenue Scholars program gives low-income students of academic promise a daily class, led by a "talent adviser," to prepare them for their academic futures .

Early in 2010, about 50 sophomores and juniors from each of the newly participating high schools will be identified using referrals from school staffers, information from transcripts and an innovative Gallup survey that measures hope, engagement and well-being.

They will join the nearly 175 students now in the program and about 60 more sophomores to be selected from Omaha Benson, Omaha Northwest and Ralston High, where the program already is in place.

Its goal is to provide support for the students from the time they are identified until they have successfully completed a postsecondary program — two or four years and potentially beyond — and have entered the workforce.

Attending the event Wednesday were current Avenue Scholars and middle school students in an after-school program spurred by Building Bright Futures .

The three new high schools in the program were named in the final 20 minutes of a nearly two-hour presentation on the progress of efforts by Building Bright Futures and the Bright Futures Foundation .

From mentoring and early childhood education to efforts to help juvenile offenders catch up on their credits and re-enter high school, the groups are starting many efforts this year.

Michael Yanney, who serves on the boards of both, told those gathered that because of another effort, the William H. Thompson scholars program funded by the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation , "We can put these kids through technical schools and colleges. All we have to do is make up our minds to get them ready for that."

That is how the two Bright Futures programs work together. The Bright Futures Foundation prepares older students for success after high school and helps them find scholarships. Building Bright Futures ' mission is supporting younger students from birth through high school so they can graduate.

“They are waiting for us to get it right,” Willie Barney, president of the Omaha Empowerment Network, told the hundreds gathered in the Joslyn Art Museum’s auditorium. “There is no option. We must and we will get it done.”

AVENUE SCHOLARS The **Bright Futures Foundation** began identifying its Avenue Scholars last spring. Participants now attend: Metropolitan Community College Omaha Benson High School Omaha Northwest High School Ralston High School In early 2010, students will be selected from the first group of high schools and from the following: Omaha North High School Omaha Bryan High School Millard South High School

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