



# OUR VIEW

## *Pottawattamie Promise growth a win-win*

### Initiative is creating better futures for students and southwest Iowa communities

**T**he exponential growth of the Pottawattamie Promise program is truly a win-win situation — a win for the students who are getting an opportunity to attend college and a win for the southwest Iowa communities and businesses they will be better prepared to serve as residents and leaders.

Last Thursday, 130 seniors from area high schools received full-ride scholarships to Iowa Western Community College during the Pottawattamie Promise Recognition Breakfast at the Mid-America Center.

Important to note, the number of students who received scholarships just one year ago was 70, just over half the number who were granted scholarship this year.

This year, students from the Lewis Central School District and Avoca-Hancock-Shelby-Tenant-Walnut high school joined those from the Council Bluffs Community and Riverside Community school districts in being selected for scholarships.

Pete Tulipana, president and CEO of the Iowa West Foundation, which, with the help of Iowa Western Community College and the Omaha-based Peter Kiewit and

Aksarben foundations funded a three-year pilot program beginning in 2015, said the goal of Pottawattamie Promise is to give students what they need to be successful.

Students selected receive a scholarship that pays for tuition and room and board at Iowa Western. They also receive “intrusive advising” designed to keep them on track to be successful, including phone calls if they miss classes and monitoring of progress in their classes.

Pottawattamie Promise is structured to be more — far more — than a scholarship giveaway. Students who receive the scholarships are selected during their sophomore years of high school based on their eligibility for the Pell Grant, being on track to graduate from high school, maintaining a grade-point average of at least 2.0 — normally referred to as a “C” average — and interest in a profession that requires a degree or certificate offered by IWCC.

The Pottawattamie Promise initiative was started in the Council Bluffs and Riverside Community school districts. Twenty students each from the Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson high schools were picked for the first year along with

five students from Oakland-based Riverside.

The program is geared toward future first-generation college students who qualify for a federal Pell Grant, which helps offset the cost of tuition along with the scholarship. In initiating the program, IWF officials emphasized their effort to find students who would not consider college a possibility without financial help.

Building the capacity and skills of local residents, through both degrees and professional certification programs, is intended to help as jobs increasingly require higher levels of training.

Workforce development and the associated economic development potential of having skilled labor available in the metropolitan is the underlying aim of the Pottawattamie Promise initiative.

“We wanted to do everything we could to remove any barriers for students to get additional education to not only help sustain jobs for them and their families but also sustain the workforce that’s vital to our community,” Tulipana said.

Pottawattamie Promise is creating better futures for students and southwest Iowa communities.