Dear RMSELS Parent Community,

Our current 10th-12th grade students kicked off a new learning expedition studying alternative energy to start the new year. As a part of this expedition, students have been investigating the use of recycled materials to create energy sources that can power basic household utilities. In addition to this expedition, the students are also preparing for their upcoming spring service-learning trip on the Pine Ridge Reservation located in South Dakota. While the initial learning experience and trip did not have a direct correlation, after working with a local non-profit, the Tipi Raisers (https://www.thetipiraisers.org/), it was realized that they could potentially use their class alternative energy products to provide a resource to the reservation. The Oglala Lakota, a tribe of Sioux, live on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The reservation spans 2.8 million acres and has a fluctuating unemployment rate between 80-90% annually, of which the median income is less than $4,000 per year, and 98% of residents live below the federal poverty level. The reservation also has the second lowest life expectancy in the western hemisphere, just one place above the Caribbean country of Haiti.

As our students learned more, they also were presented with facts of life on the reservation that are not within their normal scope of daily life. The local foundation is currently hosting a community drive, which concludes on Friday, February 14, 2020. When our students were presented with the opportunity to participate, they jumped into action, placing bins around the school for collections, communicating directly with parents during pick-up / drop-off, and sharing fliers door to door in the local community. Last Thursday, our students distributed 400 fliers in the community and shared that they would come by on Friday morning to collect any donations. Unfortunately, Friday was a snow day. While most students would have rolled over and gone back to bed, our students loaded up a four-wheel drive vehicle, picked one another up, and followed through on their obligation to pick up donations. By 8:00 am, they collected two full carloads and were at school counting and sorting the donations.

Next month, the students will travel to the reservation and connect with the local community. They are excited by the opportunity to potentially design a small, alternative, recycled energy source that could power a household item as an additional donation. The dedication and passion of our students is amazing and is truly humbling as the leader of such an outstanding school. Thank you to everyone who donated to their effort; it was a fun couple weeks with the energy and buzz in the hallways!
Adventure Coordinator Transition & Announcement

Tarah Waters recently resigned her position as Adventure Coordinator to create time to continue to pursue her passion in working with adventure marketing and non-profit organizations that specify in providing opportunities for women to get outside and explore. Tarah has been a special part of the RMSEL community, working initially last year as a classroom educational assistant, departing last spring and then electing to return to work this fall with our adventure program. We will be in close contact and are already working through an opportunity for our students to participate in an upcoming film festival, “No Man’s Land Film Series.” We appreciate Tarah and are excited for her transition.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new Adventure Coordinator, Cameron “Cam” Miller who will be working with Andy Hartman to continue to plan and implement adventure experiences for our students. Cam is an alumni of the RMSEL community, graduating in 2012. As a former student at RMSEL, he understands the value and transformation that can take place through adventure travel experiences for students. When Cam transitioned to Ft. Lewis College to study Recreation Management and Outdoor Education, he said, “I want to be the next Roger.” While many of you are unfamiliar with the significance of this, it is a rich part of our history. Roger Bonnet was the RMSEL Adventure Coordinator from 1993-2013; he laid the foundation for the success of our program. Cam graduated in 2017 from Ft. Lewis College, and completed his internship at RMSEL with Nick Wilson; since then he has also worked as a contract Wilderness First Responder in our program. We are excited to work with a passionate and talented alumni to continue the legacy of our program.

Spring Art Show

The District Accountability Committee (DAC) is excited for the upcoming celebration of student learning at the Spring Art Show. The Art Show will be held on Saturday April 25, 2020. More details regarding the event will be coming so keep an eye out in Field Notes and the RMSEL Instagram (rmsel_denver) account for updates. We hope you can join us, as this night has pieces of work from classroom expeditions and our specials courses on display!

Sincerely,

Chad