

Foundation stresses value of leadership in education

It is not unusual for Gary Trujillo to hear success stories of students being the first in their family to attend college. He thrives on such stories.

“Creating a foundation with results we can see every day is what the Be a Leader Foundation is all about,” said Trujillo, who started the foundation with his wife, Melissa, in 2001. “The students we work with know they have a bright future with educational attainment in sight.”

The Be a Leader Foundation (BALF) is creating a pipeline of college-bound students in Phoenix who are focused and prepared for success. BALF programs, beginning with a leadership institute for seventh-graders, are based on the core values of integrity, excellence, and treating people with dignity and respect. The Valedictorian Club helps eighth-graders begin planning for college and start building the skills they’ll need. High-school students in the Be a Leader Institute continue preparing for college and career success through workshops, mentorship and a support network of classmates.

The organization emphasizes building trust, developing the self-confidence needed to both lead and follow, and making ethical, value-based decisions. These decisions provide a platform for personal, educational and professional success.

“Participants are not only presented with a wealth of information about the



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resources available for them to graduate from college, but most importantly are empowered by mentors to ‘dream big’ and break down any barriers preventing them from being college bound, focused and prepared,” said Karla Robles, Director of College Going Initiatives for BALF.

Last summer, the Foundation’s 15 student interns from Arizona State University embarked on the opportunity of a lifetime. With the guidance and funding from BALF and Sponsor for Educational Opportunity, the students lived in New York and were placed in internships at corporations such as Xerox and JPMorgan Chase. From this corporate experience, many have been hired by these top companies.

For more information, contact Trujillo at gary.trujillo@bealeaderfoundation.org.

Carol Peck is president and CEO of the Rodel Foundation of Arizona. Her columns appear every other Sunday. Post your questions and comments on her blog at azcentral.com/members/Blog/DrPeck or send them to rodel@rodefoundations.org. Visit the Rodel Foundation-AZ Web site at www.rodelaz.org.