



Rural kids get jumpstart on college for College Savings Day

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10PM: Rural kids get jumpstart on college for College Savings Day

BOX ELDER COUNTY — It may take a village to raise a child, but it takes a state to help those children save money for college.

And now every child in the Park Valley, Grouse Creek and Snowville communities has a jumpstart on their college savings plans, thanks to a statewide campaign and a concerned teacher.

"It's just ranching and I think sometimes they just want to stay on the family ranch and keep with the family business, family tradition," said Park Valley teacher Melissa Morris.

She was so concerned about her students' futures, she contacted KSL to help her community "dream big."

Chopper 5 landed at the school's Dream Job fair, where KSL representatives encouraged students to plan for college and careers, not just cattle.

"Outside of Park Valley, without ranching, they need a college education," said principal Brian Anderson.

The students also received resources to make those dreams become reality.

Prosperity2020, a business-led statewide effort to improve Utah education, provided applications for every student to open college savings accounts. And they received extra an incentive: If they opened their 529 college savings account by Thursday, May 29, the state would match the first \$25.

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—Principal Brian Anderson

Research shows lack of money is usually cited as the biggest obstacle to attending college.

"If they have to go to a bank and borrow it, it can sometimes be an onerous thing," said Alan Hall, chairman of Prosperity2020. "If they'll start to save now, they can lighten the load a bit."

A private donor added another incentive. If the kids were willing to open those accounts with the Utah Educational Savings Plan on Thursday, all 70 students would get the \$25 needed to qualify for the state match.

Students cheered at the news and crowded organizers to get applications.

Teacher Melissa Morris says most of these kids realize they're going to have to go beyond their community if they want to succeed. And she was grateful this would not only initiate savings accounts, but a dialogue within many families.

"I want them to accomplish their dreams and be everything that I know they can be," she said.

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