



## **Local Consultants Give High School District a Boost**

It's not news that the Nevada Joint Union High School District has been hit hard by state funding cuts and a 12-year trend that shows a shrinking pool of high-school age students in our county. But you may not know how our local high school district is working to improve perceptions and raise funds so the district remains an excellent choice for our community's youth.

Last year, an angel donor supplied funding for the district to hire Aimee Retzler and Erika Kosina, local community relations and fundraising consultants, to stabilize and eventually increase enrollment and assist with raising much-needed funds for all five schools in the district – Nevada Union, Bear River, Ghidotti, North Point Academy, and Silver Springs. After spending several months researching the situation through learning walks, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews, Aimee and Erika created a community relations and fundraising plan for the district that has introduced new ideas and raised money in a short time.

The duo started by forming a Fund Development Team and a Community Relations Team from school staff, parent representatives, and community members. The Community Relations Team is carrying out public relations initiatives such as finding and publishing positive stories in the media, ensuring that there is a consistent process for welcoming and informing prospective students and parents, and re-thinking how the high schools let prospective students know about what the different campuses have to offer. They also facilitated the process of creating official brands, logos and Facebook pages for the schools, in conjunction with the launch of the new school websites.

This year the focus is on working with the Fund Development Team to raise money through a variety of different channels. Now that they have collected "wish lists" from all the schools in the areas of Technology, Visual and Performing Arts, Career Technical Education, and Athletics, Aimee and Erika hope to greatly improve upon the \$160K they raised in the last 10 months for district crisis counseling, food service improvements (including the salad bar) at NU, and art supplies and art-

related field trips for North Point Academy. The goal is to close the funding gap that has plagued the district since the 2008 financial crisis when annual funding cuts were implemented.

Community Relations efforts will also continue – Aimee and Erika met with Bear River parents on October 6<sup>th</sup> to identify what parents feel are the most important areas for improvement and promotion at that school. Several great ideas came out of that meeting, and Mr. Jim Nieto, principal at Bear River high school, will be communicating next steps to guide that work. If you have suggestions for any of the community relations or fund development initiatives that Aimee and Erika are working on, please email Aimee or Erika at [aimeeretzler@yahoo.com](mailto:aimeeretzler@yahoo.com) or [erika.kosina@gmail.com](mailto:erika.kosina@gmail.com). This is a team effort, and your feedback is welcome.