

Diane M. Barrans
Executive Director
P.O. Box 110505
Juneau, AK 99811-0505



Shelly Morgan
K-12 Specialist
907.269.7972
AKadvantage.alaska.gov

Press Release

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

I Know I Can program inspires children in 34 Alaskan communities

Second-graders begin early career exploration and college awareness

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Since 2007, the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) and the UA College Savings Plan have partnered in bringing *I Know I Can's* message to second grade students across the state. University of Alaska and other alumni volunteers will share with over 1,500 students, a colorful storybook about dreaming for the future and working hard toward career goals. 34 communities are participating this year: Akiachak, Akiak, Anchorage, Barrow, Bethel, Brevig Mission, Dillingham, Elim, Fairbanks, Gambell, Haines, Juneau, Kotzebue and all school sites across the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, Koyuk, Nome, North Pole, Nunapitchuk, Russian Mission, Shishmaref, Sitka, Tuluksak, Unalakleet, Valdez, and Wasilla.

I Know I Can encourages children and their families to think about and discuss college and careers early in their school experience. Research shows children can learn to think of themselves as having higher education and related career opportunities as early as age eight and the discussion sparked by *I Know I Can* helps open their minds to the multitude of college and career options available to them.

Volunteers with a variety of postsecondary education credentials (including apprenticeships, specialized occupational training from military service, as well as vocational or collegiate certificates and degrees) share the *I Know I Can* story with second-graders in participating schools. This fun children's book tells the story of a group of animal friends trying to decide what they want to be when they grow up. Through the story, children learn that working hard in school and preparing for college will help them achieve their dreams.

After hearing and discussing the story, students draw pictures on postcards of what they want to be when they grow up. The postcards are mailed back to students two years later as a reminder of their goals. Each student takes home their own copy of the book which includes extra activities designed to stimulate family conversations about college preparedness. Students also have a chance to win a \$1,500 UA College Savings Plan scholarship account!

Bonnie Carroll, Marketing Director of the UA College Savings Plan, said the program helps youngsters think about the many exciting opportunities ahead in their future.

"Young children love to think about what they're going to be when they grow up, and we must be sure they know the steps to take in achieving their goals," Carroll said. "We know many jobs may not require a four-year college degree, but most careers require some level of postsecondary training and workforce education beyond high school. Families need to start saving for these future expenses."

"I Know I Can lays an early foundation, providing positive encouragement to help second-graders imagine their dreams and discover how to make their dreams a reality through hard work and a strong education," said Shelly Morgan, K-12 Specialist with ACPE.

The UA College Savings Plan funds Alaska's project, with operational and staffing support from ACPE. *I Know I Can* was established by a non-profit, national organization based in Ohio.

The UA College Savings Plan offers tax-advantaged, 529 college savings plans to residents in Alaska and throughout the United States. Students who use the plan to pay for college can attend any qualified school in or outside Alaska.

ACPE is the state's higher education agency and promotes, supports and provides access to higher education through a package of financial aid and early education awareness services.

For more information, call Shelly Morgan, ACPE K-12 Specialist at (907) 269-7972 or Bonnie Carroll, UA College Savings Plan Marketing Director at (907) 786-7744.

Check out <http://www.alaska.edu/student-services/outreach/i-know-i-can/index.xml> and http://akadvantage.alaska.gov/EDUCATOR-SCHOOL/Education_Planning/K-8_Programs.aspx for more information, including samples of postcards drawn by the children.

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