

Education Fund grads can't wait for college

Tad Whitaker

Article Launched: 08/03/2007 11:38:30 PM PDT

The clock read 10 minutes to noon Thursday when an SAT prep teacher in San Rafael called out for someone to provide the number for pi.



Kenny Haynes (front), a senior at San Rafael High School, studies for the SAT exam at Dominican University in San Rafael on Thursday. (IJ photo/Frankie Frost)

An hourlong free lunch at the Dominican University cafeteria was on everyone's mind. But an arm shot up on the far left side, halfway toward the back of the classroom packed to the walls with 60 local high school students.

"Three-point-one-four," Kenny Haynes said.

Haynes and the other 59 local students graduate

Saturday from the weeklong Marin Education Fund Summer Application Institute, which provides college application assistance to children who are the first in their families to attend college.

Kim Mazzuca, president of the Marin Education Fund, said the program started in the summer of 2000 with 24 students. It came about because education fund employees kept noticing how many underprivileged children were applying for scholarships without SAT scores or even mandatory high school classes required for college attendance.

"They didn't have the necessary preparation to get there," she said.

This year's class of 60 students was the biggest yet, thanks to local donors who support the program, she said. But organizers still have to turn away one person for every one they accept.

"There would be more students applying if we really increased our outreach," she said.

Haynes, a 17-year-old senior who lives in Marin City but transferred to San Rafael High School, said his father and an older brother both attended College of Marin. But he's set on a four-year school, preferably one such as San Jose State University or Portland State University that could offer a football scholarship.

"That's my goal right now," he said.

Haynes wants to study law enforcement so he can ultimately work as a corrections officer, juvenile probation officer or SWAT team member.

He's a disciplined student with a clear goal in mind, but the weeklong college course provided a valuable step-by-step process to help with the tedious application process. Haynes has also met a

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host of new friends who are focused on attending college and supporting each other to get there.

"It's been a blessing," he said.

Aside from the coursework, the program connects students with mentors who help them through the process during the school year. Haynes got San Rafael schools Trustee Linda Jackson, who has helped both of her daughters and five other children in the program navigate the application process.

"It's a daunting idea," she said.

Jackson said that, in addition to helping Haynes with deadlines, she is knowledgeable about financial aid, Internet resources and knowing what schools are looking for.

So far, Haynes is open to all of her ideas and any help he can get.

"He seems to be very committed to getting into the best place he can," Jackson said.

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