

Taft students gear up for college success

JIM FOSSUM The News Guard | Posted: Tuesday, September 25, 2012 8:36 pm

Taft High 7-12 staffer Susan Smith was taken aback upon her arrival at the school a few years ago when a student rushed up to her during a 60-mile college recruiting field trip to Oregon Western University in Monmouth.

"I didn't know the kids and hadn't had much exposure to them," Smith said, "and one came up and was like, 'Oh, Mrs. Smith, this is so cool.' And I said, 'Yes, it [the college] is.' And, he said, 'No. the town. I've never been out of Lincoln City.'"

The encounter with the middle-school student came as a shock to Smith, who had never been around kids who were so unexposed to life out of high school. It's led her to place the label "dream deficient" on many of Taft's underprivileged students who haven't pondered life off the Oregon Coast.

Smith said she would ask students what their aspirations were out of high school — in other words, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" — and many hadn't even thought about it.'

"We told them there are options outside of Lincoln City that are OK for them to dream about," she said, "that it's OK for them to be a scientist, because if you don't dream about it, how are you going to do it?"

To the rescue at Taft has been GEAR UP, a national secondary education assistance program that has supplied a \$35,000 recurring grant that expires at the end of the next school year.

Through funding from GEAR UP, Taft now not only brings kids to the colleges but the colleges to them through fairs and the like. Its involvement in the school's ability to promote secondary education hardly stops there, however.

For the full story, pick up the Sept. 26 edition of The News Guard or read it online in our e-edition.