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We Need More Incentive

Statistics can be bent in any way, shape, or form to fit the needs and wants of any organization. The “fact” that Idaho has the highest rate of poverty in 18-24 year-olds can be found in a numerous variety of resources. However, in my week and one day of research on the topic of poverty in Idaho, not once did I find, listed with that statistic, the percentage of college attendees in the 149,036 young adults between the ages of 18 and 24.

Although I do find this habit of bent statistics disconcerting, I do agree with the statement that Idaho has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation. I feel, that the main contributor to this fact is that education here is limited. In 2001, the high school drop-out rate grew to 11 percent. The fact is, and I know because I’m living it, that there is not much incentive to stay in high school because there is not much incentive to go to college. If parents can’t pay for it, the student must show substantial achievement; enough to get a basic amount of scholarships. This is a difficult feat for someone even with a GPA of 4.0 and above-average ACT and SAT scores. If students can’t get scholarships, they can either work for the rest of their lives, hoping for a raise, or go into a great amount of debt trying to prevent future debt. This is where the statistic is warped. It is a given that young adults from ages 18-24 are below the poverty level; this is the transition period of their lives! From teen to adult will take some getting-used-to, and often some sacrifices so that they won’t have to live in that six-year poverty margin for the rest of their lives.

I, like many others, plan to acquire hopefully a small amount of debt while I live with my parents, go to school, and work the 10-15 hours I can spare. If I can make do , and so without

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for six years of my life (or in other words, "live in poverty") it will be well worth it to see my future family able to live far above the level of poverty.

This brings me to my theory of what could and should be done in my community that is not being done already to help reduce poverty in Idaho. Family is the basis of our society. Without it, civilization as we know it would crumble. It is where we should be taught our values, morals, and what to expect of ourselves. I believe that there should be more family enrichment programs to strengthen the bond between parents and children. Programs should advertise the problem, identify ways and resources to fix the problem, cultivate partnerships to work together on the problem, and then work together. When students know that there is some one who truly cares about them and what they do, it is much easier for them to believe in themselves. However, parents cannot be the only building-block on their pyramid to success. At my high school, there have been perhaps two or three presentations the entire year about where on the Internet to look for scholarships, and how to fill out a FAFSA form. Because I've known for years what I want to do, I've done everything I could to get money for school. There are those, however, that have never even heard of a financial aid form, because these presentations are geared more towards upper-level, and AP students. Our state needs more national and local help through grants, and government funding to ensure that every student is given almost too much opportunity to go to college and make something of themselves. Although going to college will heighten debt and the "poverty rate" for a few years, cities, states, and our Nation's economy will be far better off in the long run because every person, not just a select few, got the chance to bring themselves up and out of the indigent community.