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News

Magazine names LHUSD top in state

by MARK HALL

The Lake Havasu Unified School District just got a gold star for good performance. Expansion Management magazine has rated the district as the top school system in Arizona, according to a December 2002 article.

The article also mentioned that because of the high "gold" rating, the district ranks in the top 17 percent of 1,500 schools rated across the United States.

The rating was given as part of an "education quotient" the magazine issues to school districts across the nation.

Lake Havasu City was awarded an 86, which was a combination of three scores such as graduation outcome, which includes college graduation rates and entrance exam scores; resource index, which measures a community's financial commitment to public education; and community index, which measures the economic and educational background of the community's adult population. On the most important score, the graduation outcome, the district scored a 97.

Lake Havasu City Unified School District scored higher than Scottsdale (85), Peoria (84), Catalina Foothills in Tucson (84) and Flagstaff (82). Twenty-two of the state's largest school district were rated in the survey.

Don Holbrook, president of the Lake Havasu Partnership for Economic Development, said the magazine hires non-biased, private firms to gather the information.

"I'm really very pleased. We always knew we had a real good school system," LHUSD superintendent Joseph Meli said.

Meli said he was somewhat surprised when he found out about the rating because the district is one of the most underfunded in the state. "That's why this recognition is so heartfelt," he said.

Meli said the combination of elements produces a very good curriculum and programs for dropouts and those students interested in exploring vocational paths. LHC also has placed many of its students in the military academies, he said, which is a very competitive process.

"It takes a dedicated faculty with parental support," Meli said.

The story of how Havasu actually got rated in the first place started last year when Holbrook saw the 2001 magazine article. Lake Havasu City was not rated and he felt it was worthy of being included with the rest of the larger, expanding community schools. He said he called the editors at the magazine and requested they rank Lake Havasu City, and this year, they did.

"Lo and behold, we're the top-ranked in Arizona," Holbrook said.

Expansion Management Magazine is a publication that is read primarily by business executives looking to expand and build their respective companies into areas that are showing good growth.



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