

## Summer Advantage Program in Roaring Fork School District Intact for 2017

January 4, 2017

John Stroud [jstroud@postindependent.com](mailto:jstroud@postindependent.com)

A successful fundraising campaign to close 2016 will mean that the popular Summer Advantage summer school program for Roaring Fork School District elementary students can continue this year.

However, more money is needed to secure the program's long-term future, according to Terri Caine, co-founder of Summit 54, which brings the nationally acclaimed program to elementary schools in Glenwood Springs, Carbondale and Basalt.

At the same time, the school district also continues to evaluate its ability to financially support summer school and a variety of other off-hours enrichment programs.

Six years ago, Summit 54 obtained a matching five-year federal Social Innovation Fund Grant through Mile High United Way, allowing it to partner with Roaring Fork Schools to offer the acclaimed academic and summer activity enrichment program.

Those early literacy programming funds are no longer available in Colorado, Caine said, so Summit 54 has had to raise twice as much money as in previous years to make up for the grant money.

"We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of our community members who stepped up in a huge way to help us continue this very successful program," Caine said in a news release this week announcing that the program would continue.

Still, more donations are needed for the program this summer, and to keep it going in future years, she said.

Rob Stein, superintendent for Roaring Fork Schools, also was pleased to learn of the successful fundraising effort to keep Summer Advantage going this year.

"We're fortunate to have this partnership with Summer Advantage and Summit 54, and grateful to Terri Caine for her hard work and dedication to this effort," he said.

As with other summer and after-school enrichment programs, including the Enrichment Wednesdays offerings, the school district is in evaluation mode when it comes to providing direct financial support, Stein said.

Summit 54's effort to raise outside donations means the district's taxpayer-supported contribution for Summer Advantage will be reduced from more than \$300,000, including use of facilities, transportation



The Glenwood Springs Fire Department gave the kids a tour inside the ambulance and demonstrated to them what it is like to be a firefighter during the last day of the Summer Advantage camp at Sopris Elementary School last summer.

*Chelsea Self / Post Independent*

and meal service resources, to about \$164,800, district officials indicated in an earlier interview with the Post Independent.

### **AVOIDING SUMMER SLIP**

A key focus of the Summer Advantage program is to keep elementary school-age students on track during the summer as they transition to the next grade level, and avoid what's referred to as "summer learning loss."

The Mile High United Way grant required an independent evaluation of the program locally to help determine whether it was having an impact academically on the participating students.

According to Caine, research conducted by APA Consulting demonstrated that Roaring Fork Valley students who participated in Summer Advantage not only reversed summer learning loss, they moved forward 14 percentage points in district standardized tests as a result of the five-week program. That meant they were able to begin the fall school year 1.8 months ahead of where they completed the prior school year, she said.



Alvaro Rosas and his friends were surprised by the Classic Air Medical helicopter crew from Valley View Hospital during the last day of their Summer Advantage camp at Sopris Elementary.  
*Chelsea Self / Post Independent*

Out of the roughly 600 students in kindergarten through fourth grades who took part in the program, about 84 percent are considered financially disadvantaged because they receive free and reduced price lunch during the school year.

"National statistics indicate that low-income children typically forget two to three months more per summer than their middle-income peers," according to Summit 54's news release.

Stein said in the previous interview that the data is "mixed" regarding the academic benefit of summer school programs at the elementary and middle school levels.

For that reason, the district is likely to end its own summer school program targeted at middle school students in favor of keeping that money in the classroom during the regular school year, he said.

### **COMMUNITY VALUE**

The Aspen Community Foundation-supported Enrichment Wednesdays programs, offering academic support and other activities for elementary and middle school students during the district's early release day, is also seeking additional community support or it could go away.

There is a larger community value to providing enrichment programs, both during the summer and after school, especially for disadvantaged students, Stein said.

“Certainly, there is academic benefit to all of these programs, but the greatest need in our community is for enriching, safe and affordable extended day and extended year learning opportunities for children,” he said.

The school district alone can’t support those types of programs, but is willing to partner with other community organizations to do so, he added.

The free, five-week Summer Advantage program will be offered again for kindergarten through fourth-grade students in Glenwood Springs, Carbondale and Basalt from June 26 through July 28. The program includes two meals, two hours of literacy, an hour of math, recess and two afternoon enrichment classes Monday through Thursday, a “Fun Fridays” speaker or outing, plus a college visit and community service project.

Summit 54 is recognized by the state for Summer Advantage as an “approved child care provider,” meaning donations qualify for an additional 50 percent tax credit on top of the normal charitable donation benefits, Caine said.

Donations can be sent to Summit 54, 1550 Larimer St., Suite 770, Denver, CO 80202, or visit <http://summit54.org/donate/>.