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Yampah Mountain High School (Glenwood Springs) principal's work with teen parents honored

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Glenwood Springs, CO Colorado
November 19, 2007

Yampah Mountain High School Principal Leigh McGown started Friday morning as she has so many mornings over the past 12 years - in the basement of the school speaking with students of the teen parent program.

It's her passion for educating the young parents that achieved her a recipient of the Women's Foundation of Colorado's (WFOC) Be Bold Award. McGown was one of 20 women recognized at this year's 20th anniversary luncheon for the foundation.

It was something McGown, in all modesty, was very humbly honored to be a part of.

"Looking at the other women that were there, I thought to myself, 'Am I supposed to be here?'" she said from her office at YMHS in Glenwood Springs.

McGown's passion for the teen parent program, for which she was the director for 12 years prior to taking the head position, surfaces frequently with smiles. But her humble nature illustrates why she was recognized in the first place.

"It's a passion of mine to work with youth and young women in education. That's where we make the real impact in the community," she said. "The women in the program are the bold ones. Working with them each day is an honor."

The WFOC celebrated its 20th anniversary with the special presentation to 20 female educators from Denver and around the state for their leadership roles and impact they have on women of all ages on achieving self-sufficiency.

That's been the focus of the teen parent program at YMHS.

Students in the program, 34 young women and two young men, are shown the importance of acquiring a high school education while simultaneously learning how to be a parent as well. They aren't expected to choose being a parent over a student; rather, they are assisted in both aspects.

"The power of education in youth and young women is so important," McGown said.

Yampah Mountain High School Principal Leigh McGown is the recipient of the Women's Foundation of Colorado's Be Bold Award for work with the teen parent program at YMHS.
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McGown has had several graduates of the program go on to take important roles in the community. McGown connects with the students because she knows firsthand how it feels to be a parent while still in school. She was a 21-year-old college student when she had her daughter. She wasn't as young as the students she works with now, but she knows the struggle of balancing parenting while finishing an educational goal.

That spark set her passion ablaze.

"For me (the award) represents the program and what it accomplishes," she said. "To be one of 2,700 amazing women who attended the ceremony who do great things every day, and to be awarded is amazing. Then to think of all the women around the state that go unnoticed that impact the lives of young women, it's just an honor."

An honor not unnoticed by her peers.

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