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## J4NG program helps West Wendover senior find career in mining industry

**Toni Milano**

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J4NG specialist Lysette Perez and West Wendover High School senior Rogelio Navarro discuss his scholarship to Great Basin College and the benefits of the program on May 24.

ZOOM SCREENSHOT

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Toni Milano

**W**EST WENDOVER – West Wendover High School senior Rogelio Navarro is preparing for a new career in welding thanks to the J4NG program and a scholarship.

Navarro has received a \$5,000 scholarship from Great Basin College to pursue welding in the Millwright Technology Program. He also has a job with Nevada Gold Mines and begins training this month.

Navarro credits Jobs for Nevada's Graduates (J4NG), a statewide nonprofit program that supports college and career readiness, for helping him find a career and college pathway and successfully apply for the scholarship to Great Basin College.

Specialists with J4NG help students build the skills they need to succeed, including resume building, interview practice, and support with college and financial aid applications.

Lysette Perez has served as a specialist in West Wendover for seven years since the program's inception. "I've been able to see where we were and how much we have gone from, so it's been very exciting for me."

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Perez said the program's "main focus is to get these kids graduated and prepared for life after high school. Whether that be directly in the workforce, or if they are going to further their education at a four-year university, community college or any tech school."

"The purpose of JAG is to take students who have different types of barriers at home in their personal life and help them with college and career plans," Perez explained.

“It helps those students overcome those barriers by being an extra support system, a role model, a teacher. Sometimes we almost have to be a parent with them and to help them graduate,” she continued.

“We want to give them the tools to be successful after high school,” she said.

J4NG aims to transition students from the classroom to the workforce to support Nevada’s many growing industries. Perez said the program also focuses on community service and elementary outreach.

Navarro joined during his junior year when he was concerned about his direction after high school and credited Perez for getting him started with scholarship and financial aid applications.

“I was scared. I didn’t know what I would do after high school, but after going to J4NG, she gave me my opportunities and told me my choices,” he recalled. “Now I’m going to GBC, and I got the MTC Scholarship. She’s the reason I did it because I knew she would help me.”

For those who may have doubts about college or career options, Navarro said high schoolers should start gathering information during their sophomore or junior years.

Navarro said he was motivated to join and stay in the program to enter “the mining industry and make something out of it.”

“I know I’m leaving, but it’s for the good,” he added.

The program also offers a year-long “follow-up phase” that allows the students to “carry me along with them as their personal assistant to get them through that first year” of college,” Perez said.

“I get excited to see how they become adults after high school, their struggles in college. They call or send me texts,” she said. “It’s nice to know that those kids have a mentor to help them along with their first year after high school.”

Perez said she keeps in touch with her former students who have graduated from college or entered the military. “Many of my kids are now parents. They send me pictures of their new little family and the journeys they have taken.”

The program expanded to include Elko High School this year, and Perez is looking forward to seeing the impact on more students in both Elko County and statewide.

“I’m excited to see how Elko High School comes along with their program, and not to be the only school in Elko County that has J4NG,” Perez said. “It will be great to see both schools thrive within our school district.”

**By Toni Milano**

**Courts, K-12 schools & Spring Creek reporter**

Staff writer for the Elko Daily Free Press

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