



COALITION OF IDAHO CHARTER SCHOOL FAMILIES

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For Immediate Release

October 31, 2012

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Innovative Rathdrum charter school wins Albertson Foundation award

North Idaho STEM Charter Academy is a unique educational facility. Located in Rathdrum, this school offers inquiry-based learning with a radical shakeup of the K-8 class schedule. Students spend every afternoon tackling an ambitious Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) project with real world applications. Partners include MIT, the Museum of Science and the US Navy.

And North Idaho STEM Charter Academy is one of six recipients of the prestigious ID21 Awards from the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation for 2012. The awards are presented to educational programs and facilities throughout Idaho that utilize new concepts and innovations in reaching students.

North Idaho STEM Charter Academy provides a safe, positive, organized setting with clearly defined behavior expectations. The Academy believes that knowledge and application of current technology prepares students for tomorrow's world.

"Our school is unique in that we make higher-level thinking relevant again," said school co-founder and principal Scott Thomson. "We strive to get kids excited about the practicality of math and science."

Students at North Idaho STEM Charter Academy attend school from 8 am - 4 pm. Every morning, students study traditional school subjects such as math, science, language and social studies. The afternoons are reserved for field work and special projects which demonstrate in a hands-on manner how the study of math, science and other subjects actually applies to engineering concepts in the real world.

"We challenge our students to work on exciting projects such as robotics and rocketry. Our first-graders are actually learning basic computer programming. It is a bit of a departure from traditional classroom learning," said Thomson. "We consider ourselves an apprenticeship program for young engineers."

As one of the six recipients of the ID21 awards, North Idaho STEM Charter Academy will receive \$50,000. The program was also honored at the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation's awards ceremony on Oct. 16 at the Egyptian Theater in downtown Boise.

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“These transformative programs represent the education revolution in Idaho,” said Jamie MacMillan, executive director of the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, sponsor of the ID21 Awards. “They are driven by outstanding leaders, supported by their community and use creativity, innovation and technology to provide real-world relevant skills for their students. These winners are changing the way Idaho learns.”

One hundred sixty-seven programs (schools, non-profits, government entities and other 501c3 organizations) from across the state were nominated for an ID21 Award. Nominees were invited to fill out and submit a detailed application by August 1. [Of the 167 nominees](#), 120 completed the application. An independent judge chose the finalists. [To see the complete list of 24 finalists, click here.](#)

The J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation is a private family foundation committed to learning opportunities for all Idahoans. Since 1997, the Foundation has invested more than \$500 million to improve education in Idaho.

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