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New Charter School Receives Nearly \$1 Million in Early Fundraising Efforts

Idaho Falls: Since December, a highly anticipated new secondary school opening this fall in Idaho Falls has received \$955,000 in support from a variety of sources. Alturas Preparatory Academy (APA), a new International Baccalaureate (IB) charter school founded as a sister school of Alturas International Academy (AIA) in Idaho Falls, has been awarded a competitive federal grant and has attracted numerous local donors eager to see the school succeed.

The largest piece of this puzzle is an \$800,000 grant from Idaho's *Communities of Excellence* Charter School Program (CSP) grant administered by the Boise-based education non-profit Bluum. APA was awarded the grant following a competitive third-party review process in which the school's leadership had to demonstrate detailed plans for academic success as well as financial prudence. APA plans to use the grant money for technology, curriculum, and furniture.

"Alturas Preparatory Academy is exactly the type school that Idaho's competitive *Communities of Excellence* grant program aims to support in Idaho," said Bluum CEO Terry Ryan. Ryan added, "Idaho Falls is a growing community and APA provides a great IB opportunity for families who are looking for a rigorous academic program that can help their children excel as learners and citizens."

APA leadership then put out a call in January for individuals to become founders of the new school. Per state regulations, these are individuals who pledge financial support to help start up a new charter school. In return, their children are guaranteed enrollment. Thus far, 13 founders have pledged \$10,000 each, for a total of \$130,000. Founders' children may total only up to 10% of the total student enrollment at Alturas, so a few more spots for founders remain available before reaching capacity. The school plans to use this money for high-quality equipment such as musical instruments and art supplies.

In addition, Idaho Central Credit Union (ICCU) has pledged \$25,000 to become the school's first corporate founder. The credit union and the school leadership are working to direct those funds in a way that will make the most impact. ICCU was also a corporate founder of AIA.

At a meeting in August 2020, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission unanimously approved APA to begin operations in Fall 2021. Upon receiving state approval, APA was also awarded a \$1.76 million dollar grant from the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation to help fund the purchase and renovation of the former Sears building in the Grand Teton Mall. APA will house grades 6-10 in its first year, adding 11th and 12th in subsequent years. AIA, currently a K-8 school located in the historic O.E. Bell Building, will then revert to K-5.

Construction at the 73,000-square-foot former Sears building is currently underway.

The school will follow the same model that AIA has used in its K-8 school since opening in 2016. The model centers on teaching students primarily in small groups according to their instructional levels. Like AIA, APA will seek authorization as an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. AIA is currently the only authorized IB World School in Eastern Idaho. Both APA and AIA are open to any student living in the boundaries of Idaho Falls School District #91, Bonneville Joint School District #93, or Shelley School District #60, as well as others by application, and there is no charge for admission. Enrollment is determined by a lottery system, with priority given to founders and current AIA students and their siblings. Applications to the lottery are currently open, and close March 31, with the drawing to be held the following week.

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