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SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

Generous gift helps bring the world to N.M. teens

By Robert Nott | The New Mexican

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Albuquerque teen Chloe Larkin discovered the world not 130 miles from where she was born.

The 18-year-old attends the Montezuma-based United World College, a college-preparatory high school near Las Vegas, N.M., that offers an International Baccalaureate diploma to students between ages 16 and 19. She is one of 222 students at the school, which has a total of 94 countries represented in its student population this year.

“Before I was in a classroom of just New Mexicans. Now I have kids from all over the world in my classroom,” she said.

And thanks to a new, huge financial gift, United World College can expand that classroom even more, offering more students from around the world the chance to attend on a scholarship. American philanthropist Shelby Davis, who founded investment management firm Davis Selected Advisers, has pledged more than \$100 million to fund

100 scholarships every year for students from hundreds of countries to attend one of the 17 United World campuses around the world.

The scholarship would cover their last two years of high school at \$25,000 per year. College president Victoria Mora said the new scholarship funding will allow six more students — from Barbados, Bulgaria, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay and the Philippines — to attend the school in 2018-19.

Most of the schools charge about \$38,000 a year in tuition, room and board, said Mora. Some 80 percent of the students at the United World College campus in Montezuma attend on scholarships.

The new scholarship money can give students from all around the world the ability to “dare to dream,” Mora said — particularly for economically challenged students from impoverished nations.

“It’s really important for our colleges and universities to have access to that kind of diversity to help us understand the larger world and meet the best and brightest from other parts of the world,” she said.

United World College sites are known for promoting multicultural understanding, interaction with the community in which they are located and sustainability efforts.

Larkin, for example, has been working on a school project about the opioid epidemic in New Mexico that both satisfies academic requirements and helps the community. By working on that and other topics in a group consisting of students from other countries, she said she learns new perspectives on “issues I thought would be U.S.-centric.”

She currently attends the school with help from a previous Shelby Davis scholarship, she said.

Davis' relationship with the college dates back at least 20 years, when he first met former president Philip Geier on a ski trip in Taos. Davis then came to visit the campus and, impressed with its world view, gave it a \$45 million scholarship endowment in 1998. Since then he has bestowed more financial gifts upon the college, giving it money to restore the historic Montezuma Castle on campus, for example.

German educator Kurt Hahn, among others, founded the first United World Campus in Wales in 1962. Philanthropist Armand Hammer founded the Montezuma campus in 1982. It is also known as the Armand Hammer United World College of the American West. It is the only United World college in the U.S.

Students do not apply to any one of the United World colleges, but to committees in their native countries which then consider the students based on leadership skills, academic achievement and the students' curiosity about the world.

Mora said it is hoped the new scholarship funding will encourage those committees to raise funds on their own as match grants to help students in their own countries attend a United World campus.

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