

Partnerships expanding opportunities for students

In February, we announced a new partnership with Hays Academy of Hair Design that will provide the hair academy students the opportunity to take four business courses while working toward a Business Essentials certificate from Fort Hays State University.

This partnership is similar to the Gateway Program through FHSU and the North Central Kansas Technical College. Through that program, NCK Tech students can enjoy many benefits offered to Fort Hays State students, including access to campus services, participation in student activities and organizations, and on-campus student housing.

Our first eight-week class of the certificate, Understanding Personal Finances, was a huge success. The second, Management Practices, will conclude at the end of this semester. The third and fourth classes – Basics of Accounting and Taxes, and Social Media Marketing – will be taught during the fall 2022 semester.

Hays native Reece Leiker, who will graduate from Hays High School in May, plans to enroll in all those classes next year.

I have known Reece for several years as a client of her make-up and skin care business. I have always been fascinated by her business savvy. I am thrilled that she is among the students taking advantage of the FHSU-Hays Academy partnership.

Reece said she knew from the first time she heard about the partnership that it was something she wanted to check out.

“I love school for the social aspect, and I like surrounding myself with like-minded peers,” she said. “I knew living on campus was for me because I want to meet new people and stay connected to my friends who will be attending FHSU this fall. I think living on my own will teach me a lot about myself, and I look forward to that.”

Reece said her goal is to enjoy the college experience while still being able to attend the school of her choice – the hair academy.

“My goal is to have the college experience but receive the schooling of my choice through the hair academy,” she said. “The business classes follow the same logic for me, and I believe that knowing more is highly beneficial.”

One of things that I really admire about Reece is her entrepreneurial spirit. She said she didn’t picture herself as an entrepreneur when she was younger. However, when she was 11 years old and her younger brother, Channing, was 7, their mom asked them “What could you do to change the world?”

Soon thereafter, the Leiker siblings created Pure Roots, a homemade laundry detergent.

They identified and acquired a corporate sponsor for the materials so that 100% of the money from the detergent sales went directly toward their philanthropic goal to build five homes for the extremely poor in Nicaragua.

They estimated the total cost of those five homes to be \$26,000, and they set a timeline of one year for raising that amount. However, Reece and Channing reached their goal in just seven months. They then set a new target of funding 20 homes and also met that goal, raising \$104,000.

Inspired by her early success, and driven by her family's motto, "Leave it better than you found it," Reece set out on a new venture: making the world more beautiful, inside and out, by inspiring confidence and self-love.

At the age of 14, Reece became an affiliate for a cosmetics brand. Later, she and her family established Fancy That Boutique for her business. The Hays storefront features additional products such as journals and jewelry.

That's when Reece realized that the beauty industry was something she wanted to pursue as a career.

"I chose Hays Academy of Hair Design because after being an affiliate for a cosmetics brand, I realized it was something I truly enjoyed," she said. "I love helping women become the best version of themselves and reflecting their inner beauty outward."

"While I attend Hays Academy and FHSU, I plan on launching my brand and focusing on growing my business. After graduating, I plan to expand my brand and take over Fancy That Boutique.

"I love Hays and want to do my part in growing the business sector," she said, "so I'm sure there will be more entrepreneurial opportunities I will pursue."

Reece's role model is her mom, Taryn.

"I really admire my mother when it comes to business because she leads with humility and compassion," Reece said. "She makes others feel loved and heard. She pushes through her struggles and comes out stronger each time. She takes time to grow herself and takes her priorities seriously."

I have watched Reece grow her understanding of business practices such as inventory, supply chain, marketing, website development, financial management, and business planning. In all my encounters with Reece, I have found her to be extremely knowledgeable about her products and among the best in customer service and relationships. Each order she prepares for her clients includes a hand-written note to encourage a smile and a positive thought. She constantly thinks about her focus on inspiring positive change in our world.

Even at her young age, Reece has already made a significant impact in the lives and hearts of many while simultaneously building her business acumen and entrepreneurial skills and heart. I cannot wait to see how her journey continues to ignite people, communities, and our world with love. And I am excited about how our partnership with Hays Academy of Hair Design will continue to bring students like Reece to our campus.

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