



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SORED I QUEST FINALE

On Friday, April 19, SOREDI will hold a gala Finale event for its initiative known as SOREDI Quest. Designed as a way to educate local high school students about potential careers that exist among the many world-class employers in Southern Oregon, Quest was an online scavenger hunt that used clues and questions to lead students to find the answers in a number of local company profiles.

According to Executive Director, Colleen Padilla, this effort was in direct response to concerns expressed by companies about their future workforce pipeline. "There are phenomenal companies based in our region that offer great careers and opportunity for employees to thrive in Southern Oregon. We often say that they are hidden gems. SOREDI Quest, in the making for over two years, was designed to engage students in a new and creative way to showcase these opportunities," Padilla says.

Almost 1,000 students from North and South Medford and Grants Pass High Schools participated in the beta test. In addition, 23 teams of students chose to compete for scholarships by submitting one minute videos, focusing on creative ways to inform others about the unique qualities of each company. These are posted on the Quest Video Challenge page at: <https://www.facebook.com/SORED IQuest>.

The videos were judged by counting their page views, and scholarships will be available to all members of the top three winning teams. The companies also chose one video each to receive recognition. These videos will be shown at the Final Gala and the live audience will vote for a favorite to receive a "People's Choice" scholarship award.

Over \$9,000 in scholarships and prizes will be awarded to students. This money may be used to further each student's education or career certification, up to 4 years after graduation, or for school-sponsored academic events and opportunities while still in high school. In addition, SOREDI will present the Golden Apple award to an outstanding teacher who participated.

"From the perspective of the School District, SOREDI Quest is helpful on multiple levels. By providing relevant, updated and *local* occupational information, this

project helps meet Oregon Diploma requirements for Career Education,” says Hal Jones, Pathways Coordinator for Medford School District 549c. Jones continues, “Perhaps more importantly, from a community standpoint, it’s enormously beneficial that students connect their own interests and skills to prospective, high-wage, high-demand careers right here in the Rogue Valley.”

SORED I Quest was funded in part by business sponsors, who have participated regularly from its initial inception to final execution. Hall Jones adds, “because SORED I Quest requires students to work in groups and *apply* employability skills e.g., collaboration, communication, problem solving etc., they gain valuable interpersonal experience *and* career information. SORED I Quest is a wonderful example of how business/education partnerships benefit students and the communities in which they live.”

“We couldn’t be more excited about the prospect of this initiative going system wide among all area high schools, middle schoolers and beyond. We have so much to offer in our region and we want to help change the paradigm of students leaving our region for jobs elsewhere,” Padilla concludes.

The Finale will be held at the North Medford High School Auditorium, 1900 N. Keene Way Drive, from 6:00-8:30 PM and admission is free.

About SORED I: SORED I is a private, membership-based, non-profit organization, governed by a board of directors. Its eight-person staff is charged with local business expansion and new business recruitment efforts, financial assistance to start-up companies through its business loan fund, and management of Enterprise Zones in Jackson and Josephine Counties. The agency was formed as a regional economic development agency in 1987. Learn more at <https://www.soredi.org>.