



Opinion: CEI serves east Idaho as a source of pride

REP. JERALD RAYMOND | Guest columnist Jan 28, 2023

How does a livestock producer from a small town in east Idaho who didn't graduate from college become an advocate for education statewide? Well, that requires some background. My wife and I attended college on scholarships. From my early childhood, I knew I wanted to be in the livestock business. My dad was my mentor and a very good one. After our marriage, we started a family right away, and life got in the way of more formal education. To my wife's credit, education remained a priority in our home. Our children excelled both in and out of the classroom.

Due to their mother's dedication, our children earned scholarships and attended the university of their choice. All our children are talented musically. Two of our daughters majored in music and now teach professionally. Two of our daughters trained in the medical field as nurses and received baccalaureate degrees. Our youngest son is a civil engineer and contributes professionally to major projects at Idaho National Laboratory. Our oldest is a large animal veterinarian who gets more done in a day than I ever could.

One of the mottos I've come to appreciate is, "Education displaces poverty." Wise men have encouraged everyone to gain all the education we can afford and embrace lifelong learning. A bright star in our region helps support that goal, the College of East Idaho. One needs only to attend one of their graduations to realize the good things happening on that campus.

During the last complete school year (fall 2021 to summer 2022), over 21,000 students benefitted from CEI's courses and training. This spring alone, 1,510 students enrolled in credit-seeking classes to move them closer to earning a degree, an increase of 4.7% over the same time a year ago. From pursuing a degree to earning certifications, thousands of our friends and neighbors are building a better future with the support of CEI.

Many students attend part-time, allowing them to work, parent or otherwise contribute to our communities with the balance of their time. CEI graduates often complete their education with little or no debt. Over 90% of surveyed students rated their courses as "excellent" or "very good." The vast majority of students are job-ready and have viable employment waiting for them. They also offer practical resources for the community,

with the nursing lab offering the capacity to serve as an overflow to local hospitals during a catastrophic event.



I encourage everyone interested in what's happening at CEI to arrange a meeting and take a tour. See for yourself how many students are finding new opportunities on campus. We can be proud of how our community college serves east Idaho.

Rep. Jerald **Raymond** represents District 31, which includes Fremont, Jefferson, Clark, and Lemhi counties. He owns and operates a livestock enterprise in Jefferson County.