

Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center in Avondale offers courses with horses

by *David Madrid* - Dec. 16, 2010 04:25 PM
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Desiree Schneider wants to be a veterinarian, and she found what she calls the perfect school to pursue her dream: a charter school with horses.

The Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center at Estrella Mountain Community College is giving Schneider the foundation she needs to someday become a veterinarian who works with all animals, especially horses, dogs and cats, she said.

Schneider's family has a ranch in Waddell.

"I always had trouble with math, and when I came here I was confused, but once I got here, I got the hang of it because my teacher is real helpful," the 14-year-old freshman said. "Here, they spend one-on-one time with you and help you all the way and they show you (math) techniques that you can remember."

The Avondale charter high school opened in August at Dysart and Osborn roads next door to the college. The school keeps horses near Camelback and Dysart roads, where students ride the horses and learn about them.

The school's science building has two state-of-the-art science labs including a biotechnology lab with an electron microscope.

Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center Inc. (AAEC) partners with the Maricopa County Community College District. The school, which prides itself on demanding hard work of its students and preparing them for college, has 61 freshmen to seniors, and will ultimately have 300.

"This is a tough little school for kids who want to learn," said Mona Ramirez, administrator of the school.

"I have parents that call me and say 'Hey, my kid just got kicked out of school. Can I meet with you and have him enroll there?' No. This is not an alternative school," Ramirez said. "This is a college-preparatory school. Kids have to be focused on learning and want to come here to learn."

AAEC also has schools connected to Mesa Community College, Paradise Valley Community College and South Mountain Community College.

"About 30 percent of our graduating students every year graduate with their associate of arts degree before they graduate from high school," Conley said.

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