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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Idaho Codes to prep students for digital economy

Fees waived for first 1,200 to enroll in new online CS course

BOISE, Idaho (April 22, 2020) — Via a virtual press conference today, Gov. Brad Little and a consortium of industry, government, and education leaders launched Idaho Codes, an online computer science course to teach junior high and high school students statewide how to build websites and develop apps.

Beginning today, Idaho students in grades 7-12 can access Coding Foundations, a course that offers 120 hours of self-paced, professional-grade CS curriculum that teaches them how to code in HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. No prior coding experience is required.

Students have access to instructional videos 24/7, online mentor support is available, and there are a variety of benchmarks, including quizzes, projects, and a final exam. Those who complete the course can earn high school and/or college credits and secure mentorship opportunities.

The course typically costs \$200, but thanks to donations from the Acahand Foundation and St. Luke's Health System in partnership with the STEM Action Center, the first 1,200 students to register will get their fees waived.

Salt Lake City nonprofit Success in Education, which offers a similar program throughout Utah, is handling the registrations for Idaho students via its Code for Success program. Enrollment begins today at IdahoCodes.org.

Bottega, an accredited software development academy, created the course and describes it as best in class.

According to Gov. Little, computing literacy is important to the State of Idaho.

"Job opportunities in computer science will continue to grow, and introducing our students to computer science early on will expose them to real-world experiences and strengthen critical thinking skills that will serve them throughout their lives," Gov. Little said.

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Idaho Rep. Gayann DeMordaunt, who played a key role in making this opportunity available to Gem State students, concurs.

“When I discovered this program, I was thrilled to introduce it to Idaho industry because the skills acquired through Idaho Codes are both quantifiable and recognizable in today’s job market,” Rep. DeMordaunt said. “As a mom of two high school students, I wanted this learning opportunity for my kids and every student in Idaho.”

The Idaho Technology Council is spearheading the industry-led initiative in partnership with the STEM Action Center. Although Idaho Codes helps fulfill the increased need for high-quality at-home learning opportunities that has followed in the wake of COVID-19, ITC founder and CEO Jay Larsen said the program was in development well before the coronavirus emerged.

“I’m really excited about Idaho Codes,” Larsen said. “Computer science is going to be very important in these students’ lives and it’s important they have a good understanding of it, because everything we have today is run by code. You can take this course anywhere as long as you have Internet access, which is crucial in a mostly rural state like Idaho. And students who don’t have sufficient bandwidth or are otherwise unable to get online can reach out to us for help.”

Larsen, a strong advocate of computing education, hosts ITC’s weekly live cast, Innovation Matters, and this Thursday at 3 p.m. he will interview INL director Mark Peters, Code.org founder Hadi Partovi, and U.S. Rep. Russ Fulcher about Idaho Codes. Visit the ITC YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqEFLOgOhrTWwh-nlKuQqOw> to watch the stream.

Dr. Angela Hemingway, executive director of the STEM Action Center, said the course is an excellent match for Idaho.

“Idaho Codes is aligned to our computer science standards and to industry outcomes,” Dr. Hemingway said. “Students will learn everything from foundational HTML, CSS, and JavaScript to how to build a website. Computing literacy is the backbone of our digital economy and computer science continues to be one of the most in-demand college degrees. Computing is used throughout many careers — including most of Idaho’s top-10 hot jobs — and CS careers are the number-one source of all new wages in the country.”

She said CS jobs account for more than half of all projected job growth in STEM fields and that the Education Commission of the States anticipates computing jobs in Idaho will grow 19 percent by 2027.

Truckstop.com CEO Paris Cole, who chairs ITC’s executive committee, agrees computer literacy is important, so he approached his boss, philanthropist Scott Moscrip, about investing in Idaho Codes via the Truckstop.com founder’s charity, the Åcahand Foundation.

“There is a real need for students today to have a level of computer literacy, and Idaho Codes does that and more,” Cole said. “As I think about the rising workforce I need to support Truckstop.com, I’d love to have more students have that ability to code. So from my perspective this is a wonderful program for our students and for our state and for the technology industry in Idaho.”

Rick Folkerson, president and executive director of Success in Education, said the need for high school graduates with computer science skills has never been greater.

“Upwards of 60 percent of the technology jobs that will be available by 2025 have not even been identified yet, meaning there are jobs that are coming that nobody knows about that will require coding and programming skills,” Folkerson said. “We’re literally just scratching the surface, and for us to not have students prepared for the rigors of basic, fundamental coding and programming is really a detriment to their long-term success.”

The course is even a great opportunity for students whose career goals don’t include coding, according to St. Luke’s vice president and CIO Reid Stephan, who serves on ITC’s board of trustees.

“There’s this traditional mindset that coding is for a computer geek, and that couldn’t be further from the truth,” Stephan said. “The reality is you can take a coding class without having this career goal of being a software developer, programmer, or coder. A coding class teaches you great skills that translate to a lot of other aspects to your life. It teaches you problem-solving skills, how to be creative, and to be tenacious and stick with a problem until you solve it instead of giving up.

“Coding is a common language that touches every aspect of our lives, and Idaho Codes will help develop a generation of people who aren’t scared of it. We have to give them some basic tools so they can succeed in this new digital world that we have.”

Stephan also serves on the Vallivue School District board of trustees. Last week the Vallivue and Middleton school districts conducted a soft launch of Idaho Codes in their junior and senior high schools.

Middleton School District superintendent Dr. Sherawn Reberry said Idaho Codes offers students an opportunity to gain skills that are in high demand.

“Computer science literacy is important,” Dr. Reberry said. “It helps in the arenas of comprehension, collaboration, vocabulary, partnering, and creativity — skills that are invaluable no matter what career you are pursuing. And now that all high schools are required to offer CS courses, Idaho Codes provides students with an additional opportunity beyond what’s already available via the Idaho Digital Learning Academy and through face-to-face instruction from teachers in the classroom.”

About Success in Education

Success in Education created its Road to Success, Keys to Success, and Code to Success programs as a way to empower Utah students with literacy, motivate them to achieve their academic goals, and equip them with the knowledge and skillsets to succeed in a digital world. The Garff family founded the public charity in Salt Lake City in 2004 as the Robert H. and Katharine B. Garff Foundation, which donated the programs to Success in Education during the transition to ensure there is broader support and oversight. Visit sieutah.com for more information.

About the Idaho Technology Council

Founded in 2009, the member-driven Idaho Technology Council is committed to ensuring the state's technology ecosystem succeeds. ITC serves as the voice of Idaho's technology-based industry, driving the state's transition into a knowledge-based economy with initiatives around talent, access to capital, and commercialization. Visit IdahoTechCouncil.org for more information.

About the Idaho STEM Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to increase access to STEM opportunities, align education and workforce needs, and amplify awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity.

Visit STEM.idaho.gov for more information, and visit <https://STEM.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation> to make a tax-deductible donation to the Idaho STEM Action Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to enhance the investment the state has made in Idaho's STEM community. Contributions provide greater access to STEM camps for children, student competitions, and many other life-shaping programs.

About the Ācahand Foundation

The Ācahand Foundation was established in 2019 to LIFT the health and welfare of others, INSPIRE learning and education, INNOVATE positive change in communities, and AMPLIFY the impact of our vision and mission. Our aim is to inspire learning and create educational opportunities for those with the desire and passion to succeed. The foundation is focused on impacting K-12, vocational, and college education in the Intermountain West region of the United States and select countries internationally.

About St. Luke's Health System

St. Luke's is part of the communities we serve, and we want to help make them better places to live and thrive. That's why we give back — through millions of dollars in unreimbursed services, care, and investments; through Community Health Needs Assessments, which pinpoint and assess the most critical healthcare needs in our communities; and through financial support to like-minded community organizations. Visit StLukesOnline.org to discover how we're giving back to your community.