

## HOW EDUCATION CHANGED MY LIFE and HOW IT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE TOO

**By Rod Gramer, IBE President/CEO**

Education changed my life. Literally changed my life. Any successes I've had personally or professionally I owe to the education I received in Idaho.

My mother had a high school education and I'm not even sure my father graduated from high school. The family lore is that he lied about his age, quit school and joined the Navy so he could serve his country in World War II. Tragically, my father died when he was 25 years old in a car accident near Idaho City four months before I was born. My mother was left to raise a 4-year-old son and one on the way. Although we did not have much money, my mother was a true believer in education and encouraged me to get as much education as I could. After high school, I went to the University of Idaho and received a degree in Journalism and History. That degree opened the door to my 38-year career in journalism that took me from Boise, to Portland, Oregon to Tampa Bay, Florida in various media executive roles. Returning to Idaho, I am now president of Idaho Business for Education, a group of nearly 200 businesses focused on helping Idaho's students succeed in school, work and life and building the workforce our economy needs for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is my way to give back to the state I love and to help Idaho's young people achieve their version of the American Dream.

My life has gone from being the first in my family to obtain a college degree to meeting my wife at the University of Idaho where she received her degree. We have two adult children, both of whom have graduated from college. My daughter is currently working on her doctorate at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. That's how education can change the trajectory for an entire family.

I truly believe that I didn't get to where I am by myself. Any success I've enjoyed in life is the result of me standing on the shoulders of many other people - some I've known well like my mother and others I've never met who helped build and support the schools and the university I attended. My wife, Julie, and I have always seen it as our responsibility to pay it forward by supporting education. Even before having our own children, we voted for every school bond or levy that came along. We supported our children's schools with our time and money and we have given what we can to our alma mater. We also created 529 accounts for our children as soon as those savings programs became available. Those 529 accounts helped our children get their college degrees.

**I would encourage all Idaho parents to contact Ideal, Idaho's college savings program, and set up a 529 for their children as soon as possible.** Just put money into it regularly. No amount is too small. And over time you'll see it grow. Eventually that fund will support your children in attaining their American Dream. You can start now by setting up an account by going to **[idsaves.org](http://idsaves.org)**.