

Step Up For Students
601 N Ashley Drive
Suite #300
Tampa, FL 33602

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YES Opportunities, Inc.

Important Updates on School Choice in Florida



The Official Newsletter of Step Up for Students



SEPTEMBER '05 NEWSLETTER

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PENCIL US IN! 2005-2006 School Year Calendar

To help you start off the school year on the right foot, please take note of the following important dates for your scholarship funding organization.

September 2005

Late Sept.: Tuition Payment
Sent to Schools*

November 2005

Late Nov.: Tuition Payment
Sent to Schools*

January 2006

Late Jan.: Tuition Payment
Sent to Schools*

February 2006

- 1: Renewal Applications
available (locations below)
- 23: Tallahassee Rally

March 2006

- 1: New Applications
available (locations below)

April 2006

- Early April: Tuition Payment
Sent to Schools*
- 30: Renewal Application
deadline

May 2006

Early May: Tuition Payment
Sent to Schools*

Applications are available at:

Children First-Central Florida at
www.scholarshipfunding.org

H.E.R.O.E.S. at
www.scholarshipfunding.org

Florida P.R.I.D.E. at
www.floridapride.org

Y.E.S. Opportunities at
www.yesopportunities.org

*Parents must endorse tuition checks during this week so schools can cash checks. Any parent who refuses to endorse a tuition check will be banned from receiving another corporate tax credit scholarship from any scholarship funding organization in the state until restitution has been made to the school to which the debt is owed.

Supreme Court Heard Oral Arguments in Opportunity Scholarship Case As 2,000 Floridians Chanted in Support of Equal Educational Opportunity

On June 7, over 2,000 parents, students, educators and community leaders rallied outside the Florida Supreme Court in support of the Opportunity Scholarship Program and school choice. Inside, the court heard arguments both for and against Opportunity Scholarships that provides tuition for children in failing public schools to attend a private school.

The event was so critical to the school choice movement, that rally participants traveled from as far away as South Miami -- an eight hour, overnight trip -- just to attend. Media from around the state and across the country covered the event and communicated important rally messages delivered by keynote speakers Howard Fuller, president of BAEO (Black Alliance for Educational Options), Virginia Walden-Ford, president of DC Parents for Choice and Julio Fuentes, president of the Florida State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and board member of HCREO (Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options). Each speaker encouraged Floridians to support school choice and educational options. They also warned that a ruling against Opportunity Scholarships could threaten other popular programs like McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities, Bright Futures College Scholarships and the new Voluntary Pre-K. The Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program is not at risk.

The court is expected to rule on Opportunity Scholarships within the next few months. We will keep you posted about the outcome of this important court case.



Inside: Tips For Ongoing Learning



It's Getting Easier to Enroll in Florida Healthy Kids

By Rose Naff, Executive Director of Florida Healthy Kids

For nearly fifteen years, Healthy Kids has been Florida's model program for providing quality, affordable healthcare to uninsured children. Building on this stability and success, we are committed to make the enrollment process, from sign-ups to check-ups, positive.

This summer, we implemented suggestions from families to improve the program and the enrollment process. Among the most often requested changes was that we make it easier to apply and stay enrolled, as well as improving customer service and requiring less paperwork.

We've taken steps to meet those demands and families should find it easier to enroll.

The first step to easier enrollment began with year-round enrollment recently approved by the Governor. Now families with uninsured children don't have to wait to apply. The Florida Legislature also reduced the paperwork burden on families who are proving their initial eligibility and families who are renewing their coverage. Other improvements include the acceptance of applications and renewal forms by fax and by e-mail.

We've re-designed the Healthy Kids Web site (www.healthykids.org) and updated the content with clear, reliable information that families can access day or night with just the click of a mouse. At their convenience, families enrolled in the program can use the Web site to check their accounts and make online payments.

Even with these advances in the program's accessibility, we are still looking ahead to more improvements. To learn more about the Healthy Kids program or to download an application, families can log onto www.healthykids.org or call 1-888-540-KIDS (1-888-540-5437) for enrollment information.

Rose Naff is the Executive Director of Florida Healthy Kids, a public private partnership created by the Florida Legislature in 1990 to provide comprehensive, affordable health care coverage to previously uninsured children in Florida.



Learning is 24/7: Tips For Ongoing Learning Opportunities

Learning should not stop when your child boards the school bus to head home for the day. It's a 24/7 effort, which means you – the parent – should never underestimate your role as an educator! Research shows that children whose parents take an active role in their child's education and school activities earn better grades and have higher test scores. Read on for tips about how to make this year a great one.

Encourage Reading

- When your children were young, you read to them. Now that they are old enough to read themselves, ask them to read to you from books or magazines that they enjoy.
- Show that you value reading by letting them see you read for pleasure.
- When cooking, ask them to help you by reading recipes and directions.
- If you think your child may have difficulty reading, talk to your child's teacher and school administrator about special reading services.

Monitor Homework

- Create a place at home for your child to study, whether a corner of the kitchen table, a desk or a special spot in the living room. Ensure that the area is quiet, clean and well lit.
- Develop a regular schedule for homework, so finishing it becomes a routine. If you don't know the subject well enough to help, be available for questions you can answer and help your child find resources such as books or tutoring for those you can't help with. Make sure to praise your child for completing the task, in addition to praise for getting the right answer.

Limit Television and Video Time

- American children spend more time watching television or playing video games than they do completing homework or other school-related activities. To help your child focus on schoolwork, limit how many hours a day your child watches television or plays video games.
- Be a good example by limiting your own television time and choose to read a book instead.
- If your child's homework is done and television limit has been reached, read a book together or play a game that encourages imagination.
- Finally, monitor what your child is watching and discuss the shows; then go to the library together and find books that explore the same subject.

Volunteer at Your Child's School

- Take an active role in your child's school to demonstrate your commitment to his/her education and the importance of volunteer work. Join the parent-teacher organization or chaperone field trips.
- If aren't able to help on weekdays, lend a hand at evening arts performances or weekend clean-up days.

Taking an active role in your child's education will help make them successful in school and throughout life.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: WellCare Health Plans Committed to Healthy Bodies and Healthy Minds



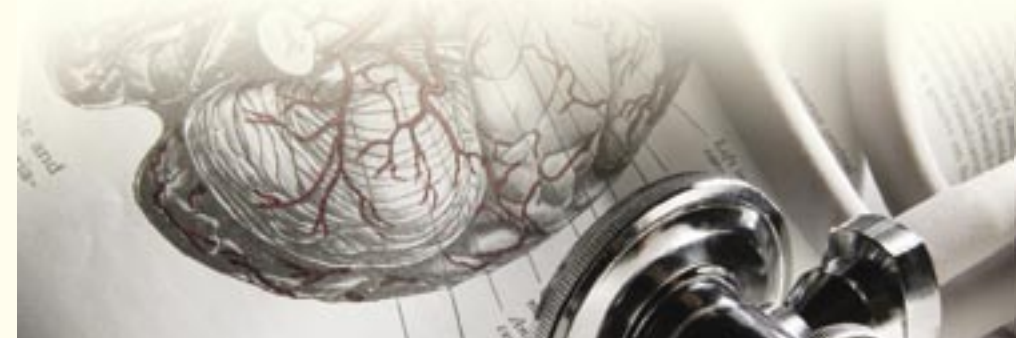
WellCare Health Plans, Inc., has a strong commitment to making sure every kid gets the good start they need – a healthy body and a healthy mind. That commitment is backed up by WellCare's participation in the Step Up for Students Program. "Limited financial means should not prevent a child from getting a quality education," said Todd Farha, President and CEO of WellCare. "Participating in the Corporate Tax Credit is an effective way for the private sector to help provide Florida's students with what every parent wants for their kids: a quality education in a safe and loving environment of their choice. We are proud to be partnered with the Step Up for Students program and the families it serves."

WellCare knows a lot about serving families in need. Through its Staywell and HealthEase health plans, WellCare serves almost half a million Floridians who receive Medicaid and Healthy Kids benefits. Including its plans outside of Florida, WellCare serves over 808,000 Medicare and Medicaid recipients in seven states. Wellcare has served Florida's neediest residents for more than a decade.

"Supporting Step Up for Students is an extension of the kind of help we provide families every day," Farha said. "It's also an excellent way to encourage corporations to help extend state funding for education. As employers in Florida, we all have a stake in making sure the children who will be the workforce of the future are well-equipped for the challenges they'll face. The knowledge that a program like this could add as much as \$1 billion in extra revenue targeted directly to education –and really make a difference in the lives of children–makes Step Up for Students a program in which every Florida company should consider participating."

Farha says that he was drawn to the program because, like WellCare, it serves underserved populations, and because provides educational opportunities that would not otherwise exist. "Education is the linchpin of our society," he said. "I can't think of anything that has a greater payoff than to give children a chance to succeed. If we can save taxpayer money as well, and to date the program has saved taxpayers \$58 million, it's a compelling opportunity."

Farha said his company values teamwork and partnership. "They're more than words for us, they're how we run our business. They're also how Step Up for Students works with Scholarship Funding Organizations," Farha said. "We applaud Step Up for Students and Children First-Central Florida, Florida PRIDE, HEROES and YES Opportunities for providing a great model for how the private sector can partner with communities, schools and parents to provide a real benefit to Florida's children. I can't imagine a CEO who wouldn't respond to this kind of opportunity to help kids and their community."



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Parents Choose New School Over Medication to Improve Their Child's Educational Future

SUFS Recipient Graduates Valedictorian



When Michael Vargas was in second grade, school officials told his parents that he was emotionally handicapped and should be medicated. Refusing, his parents turned to the Corporate Tax Credit scholarship program and educator Petrena Trice. Michael's goal was to be a professional football player, and he knew he would need good grades to play football in college. His NFL dreams inspired Michael to move up to the head of the class.

Grateful for the opportunity for her son to explore his full potential, Michael's mother delivered her son's success story to lawmakers in Tallahassee in 2001. On June 10, 2005, Michael graduated valedictorian of his eighth grade class at Tri-Tech Prep with a 4.0 GPA and celebrated his acceptance into Westminster Christian High School. During his graduation address, he told his classmates that being a good role model for his younger siblings kept him working hard, even when the odds seemed to be against him. Michael certainly met his goal to be a good role model to his siblings and is an inspiration for all Step Up For Students scholarship recipients.

Congratulations to Michael from Step Up For Students!