

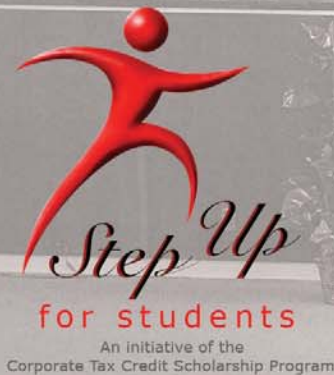
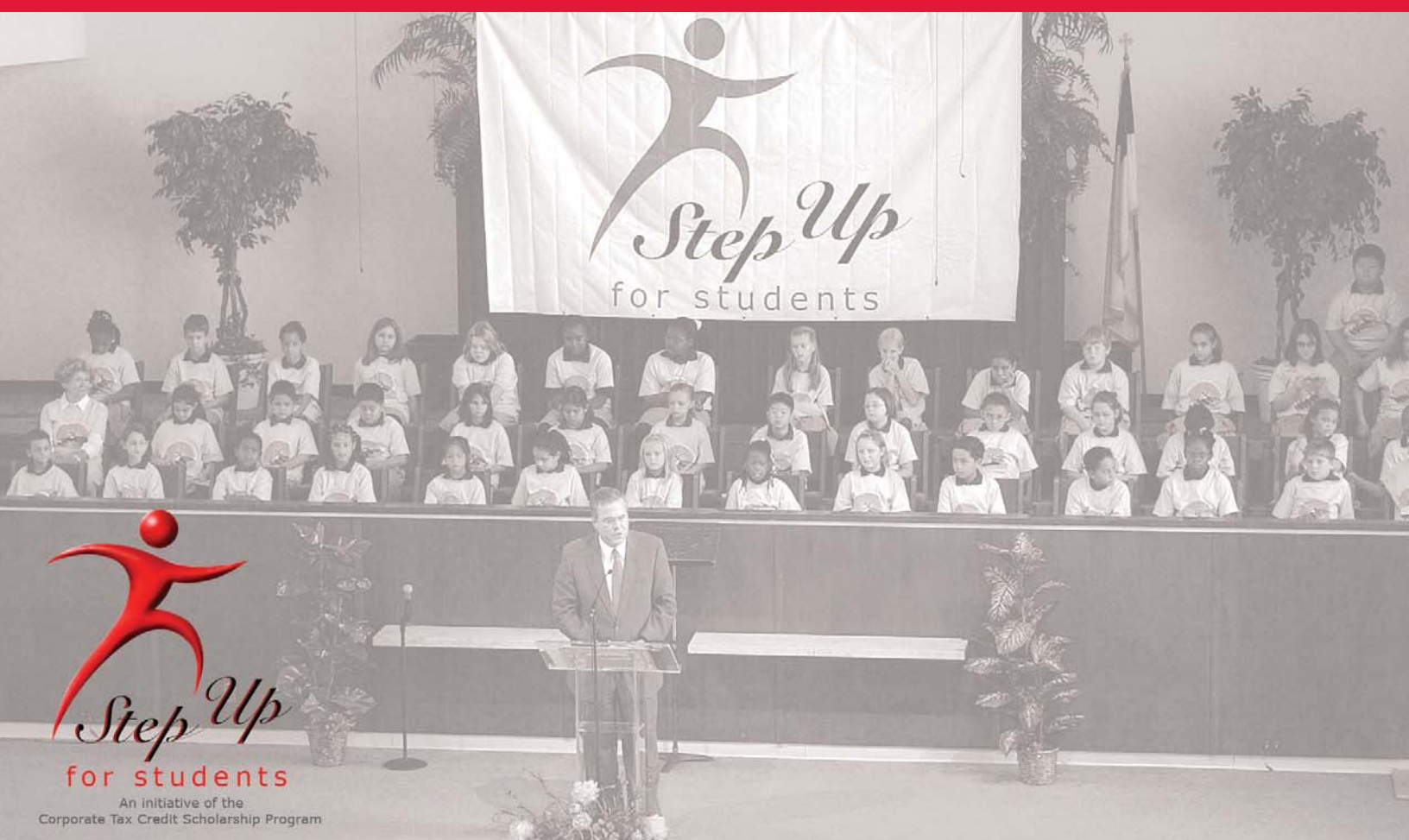
Step Up For Students
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Important Updates on School Choice in Florida



The Official Newsletter of Step Up for Students



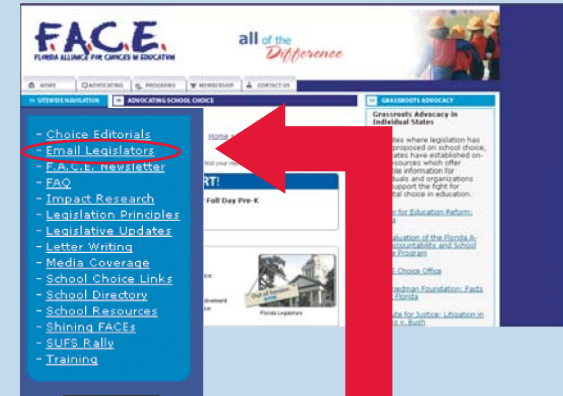
DECEMBER '05 NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of Step Up for Students

Be Informed, Get Involved

Step Up For Students is helping our families and schools better understand and have easier access to the legislative decision-making process.

Thanks to a new program available on the Florida Alliance for Choices in Education website (www.flace.org), members of the community have up to date information regarding proposed legislation and an effortless way to contact their state legislators right at their fingertips.



To get started, simply go to the F.A.C.E. website and click on "Email Legislators" icon on the left side of the home page. Enter your zip code for a customized report on the proposed laws that will affect your scholarship. We provide summaries of each law's impact, whether we support or oppose it, and vote summaries so you can see your legislators' position on that legislation. When you are ready to contact your legislators, click "Take Action" and you can email your legislator directly from our site. We will even give you a form to help in writing your email or letter. No looking up districts or contact information; our smart system gives you all the tools to make your voice heard!

This year, we will be focusing on accountability legislation that will help prove the Step Up For Students scholarship program is well run and improving lives. We need these measures to help protect and expand the program, and we need your voice to accomplish that goal. Also, we will automatically send you alerts by email when your assistance is urgently needed during the legislative session, if you register for that service on the F.A.C.E. website. And make it your New Year's Resolution to log on weekly in support of the Step Up For Students program!

Pencil Us In: February 15, 2006 2006 Rally in Tally

Make your signs, pack your enthusiasm and get ready for the 2006 Rally in Tallahassee!

This year's rally will again focus on:

- thanking legislators for their support of Florida's school choice program
- advocating for the protecting and expansion of choice programs, and
- putting a face on the success of scholarship programs

Parents, students and school administrators are our best spokespeople!

As always, the morning of legislative visits and enthusiastic speakers will be concluded with lunch and the opportunity to visit local Tallahassee attractions like the Capitol, the Challenger Learning Center and Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science. If you are interested in participating, please contact Michael Benjamin at 1(800) 782-9140 or mjbenjamin@flace.org. See you there!



Inside: Step Up For Students Grows



WellStudent

By Rose Naff, Executive Director of Florida Healthy Kids

One out of every five children in the U.S. is overweight. For this reason, every parent should be aware of the serious health risks that obesity poses for their children.

If a child becomes severely overweight or obese, he or she becomes at risk for a number of conditions, including high cholesterol, high blood pressure, early heart disease, diabetes, bone problems and skin conditions.

How do I know if my child is obese?

You should ask your child's doctor. The doctor will take a measurement and compare it to a healthy combination of height and weight called Body Mass Index (BMI).

What Causes Obesity in Children?

Most children are overweight due to a lack of regular exercise, an excess of sedentary behavior (television viewing, computer usage, etc.), and poor eating habits such as eating too many high-calorie foods, eating when not hungry, eating while watching TV or eating while doing homework.

What Parents Can Do To Help Their Children?

What your children eat and how much they exercise plays a critical role in maintaining a healthy weight.

Here are five tips to better health.

1. Control portion size. Many servings are 2 or 3 times bigger than necessary. Share meals or choose smaller portions whether you are cooking at home, eating in a restaurant or taking out.
2. Cut down on fat. Look for the low-fat version of your favorite foods and choose lean rather than fatty meats, like skinless poultry or fish.
3. Encourage your child to drink more water and less soda.
4. Provide your kids with a variety of healthful eating choices to teach them how to make healthy eating decisions for themselves.
5. Lead by example - Increase your family's physical activity. Reduce the amount of time your family spends in sedentary activities, such as watching TV or playing video games. Plan physical activities that the whole family can participate in.

Each year, obesity causes at least 300,000 deaths in the U.S., and healthcare costs associated with obesity are about \$100 billion. By teaching your children healthy eating and exercise habits, you can measurably improve their chances of a healthy life.



Step Up For Students Grows to 15,000 Scholarship Recipients

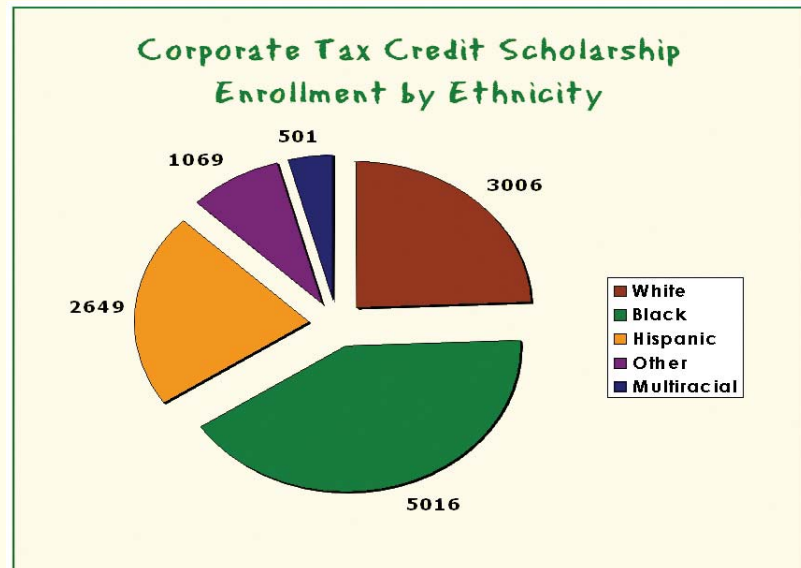
Now in its fourth year, the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program has now awarded 15,000 scholarship students for the 2005-2006 school year, up from about 11,000 last year. An increased cap for the program, combined with the generosity of corporate donors and excellent customer service from scholarship funding organizations has allowed the program to grow to meet the demand.

When the cap was raised during the 2005 legislative session, Step Up For Students set to work to raise the full \$88 million, proving that Florida corporations are eager to participate in the program. We

expect to have met the cap by the end of the year. Thank you, donors!

Our scholarship funding organizations eagerly set out to award as many scholarships as possible, and have attracted thousands of new families, thanks to your help. Our parents, students and school administrators are our best spokespersons!

The expansion of the program helps prove that Florida families want school choice and that the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program is a valuable tool for improving Florida's future. Thanks to our donors, schools and families for Stepping Up for students!



DONOR SPOTLIGHT: Lowe's Companies Joins Step Up For Students with \$8 Million Contribution



Lowe's Companies, the home improvement corporation, officially joined Step Up For Students with an \$8 million contribution presented at the Fall Donor Rally in Tampa on October 17. Kem Smith, regional vice president of operations for Lowe's, presented the check to Governor Jeb Bush and over 1,200 Step Up For Students scholarship recipients at the end of the rally that included musical and dance performances and remarks by Tampa Bay area corporate donors.

Smith said, "Our participation in the Step Up For Students program is one of many ways that Lowe's supports education in Tampa Bay and communities across the country. By supporting programs that help children gain access to a good education, we believe we are not only contributing to a cause that's important to our customers and employees, but we're also helping build a strong foundation for Tampa Bay area youth and students across the state, who will become the employees, homeowners and community leaders of tomorrow."

Tampa Bay, home to more than 1,300 scholarship students and over 200 participating schools, was chosen to host the event because of the generosity Bay Area corporations have demonstrated by their participation in the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program.

Governor Jeb Bush told audience members that the support of Step Up For Students Scholarship donors empowers parents to find the best educational setting for their children. "In a growing community like Tampa Bay, we must provide a menu of educational options as diverse as our students.

The commitment of Step Up For Students donors is building a strong economy and community for Tampa Bay's future," he said.

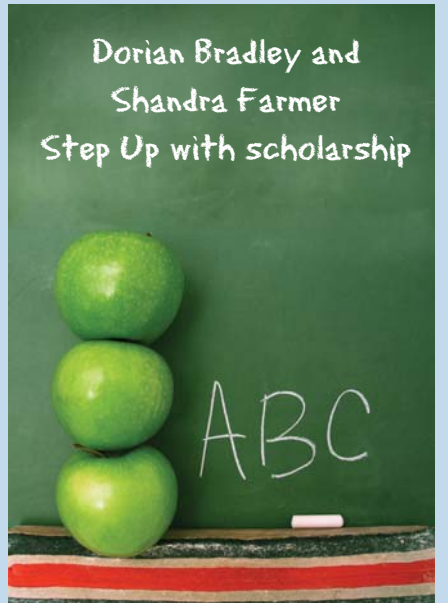
Tampa Bay area state legislators joined Gov. Bush for festivities that included song, dance and the personal story of Shannon Coates and her daughter, Taylor, 7, who is a Step Up For Students Scholarship recipient. Taylor was born prematurely with boundless energy and several health problems, but Ms. Coates knew she could thrive in the right educational setting. Thanks to her Step Up For Students Scholarship, she is now an excellent student and a dedicated dancer, cheerleader and singer.

"Going to school, working and raising a child is exhausting, but I'm not going to put Taylor's life on hold because I haven't finished my education yet. I very much want the best for her and we've been able to have that because of the Step Up For Students scholarship. This program, and all the participating companies, have made our dreams come true," said Coates.

Lowe's Companies, the Title Sponsor, and representatives from event sponsors Albertson's, Chico's, WCI Communities, WellCare, SDE, Verizon and Fifth Third Bank were pleased by the opportunity to interact with the students that receive the scholarships they fund. Following the rally, they distributed boxed lunches, provided by Albertson's, to students as they boarded buses headed back to their schools.

Step Up For Students is proud to connect Florida companies with the students whose scholarships they fund and we look forward to a donor rally in Orlando next spring.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:



Dorian Bradley and Shandra Farmer Step Up with scholarship

Brother and sister **Dorian Bradley** and **Shandra Farmer** of north Florida joined the Step Up For Students program when Dorian was 11 and Shandra was 5. Before receiving the scholarship, Dorian struggled academically in his assigned public school. His mother believed he was not given the personal attention he needed from teachers, so he was held back one year. Shandra's assigned public school was an environment their mother, Wendy, felt was unsafe for her kindergartener. Four years later, Dorian and Shandra are both happy and successful at Innovation School of Excellence in Tallahassee, thanks to their Step Up For Students scholarship!

Dorian is now a good student who enjoys his classes and the motivation he gets from his teachers. He is an aspiring musician who plays the keyboard at school and at his church and hopes to become an R&B and gospel musician.

Shandra is also thriving in her new environment. She is an A student who loves to dance in her spare time. Both Dorian and Shandra make their mother, Wendy Farmer, extremely proud. Step Up For Students congratulates Dorian and Shandra for their achievements. Keep up the good work!