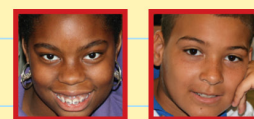




NEWSLETTER



Scholarship sees 2 percent reduction

Surge in scholarship applications comes during historic cut to public education

Students participating in Step Up For Students this fall likely will receive a scholarship of up to \$4,011. That's a drop of \$95 from the current year, a loss that's a direct result of an unprecedented cut to public education funding in Florida.

Legislators have historically backed the scholarship program with an extraordinary range of bipartisan support (see inside), and last year tied the scholarship to the public education per-student operational funding amount. That allows the scholarship to increase as public school funding increases, but a drop in tax revenue prompted the Legislature to reduce education funding by \$1.1 billion for 2011-12, bringing total spending to a level not seen since 2006.

The outlook will eventually brighten. The loss for Step Up parents would have been worse if the Legislature had not tied an increasing share of the scholarship amount to what the state spends in public schools. The scholarship next school year is increasing from 60 to 64 percent of the per-student formula and will reach 80 percent in the next four years or more.

Meanwhile, the interest from new and renewing scholarship applicants has been overwhelming. As of May 6, Step Up had received applications from nearly 55,000 interested students. Roughly 26,000 were from new students even though they couldn't apply until April 1.

The demand has prompted the program to close applications for new students on May 21. The earliest the scholarship program has had to close applications for new students in the past was in September. With such a tightened application window, scholarship administrators are also encouraging renewing applicants to act quickly.

Also as of May 6, Step Up received 47,230 calls since renewing parents could begin applying in early March, said John LeHockey, the executive vice president for scholarships at Step Up For Students. The heavy volume has led, at times, to some lengthy waits for callers, particularly during the lunch hour on any given day, though the number of calls is greatest between Mondays and Wednesdays.

During the last two years, Step Up has doubled the



**JOHN
LeHOCKEY**

size of its scholarship team from about 20 employees to 40 who are dedicated to receiving the mail, processing applications and answering the phones, LeHockey said. Step Up has also enhanced its Web site and its online application system.

"With improvements and increased interest, however, come new challenges as we strive to meet not only our own expectations, but those of our parents and schools," LeHockey said. "We understand the importance the Step Up For Students scholarship plays in so many families and we remain committed to

answering every call, every e-mail and every question as quickly and efficiently as we can. We sincerely apologize for any frustration or inconvenience that may have been caused by the overwhelming number of requests for access to our scholarship."

It's taking four weeks to process applications received by mail or fax. LeHockey said parents can help themselves and other parents by checking for updates on the toll-free line (1-877-735-7837) and avoid sending in application packages multiple times, as that strategy slows down processing for everyone.

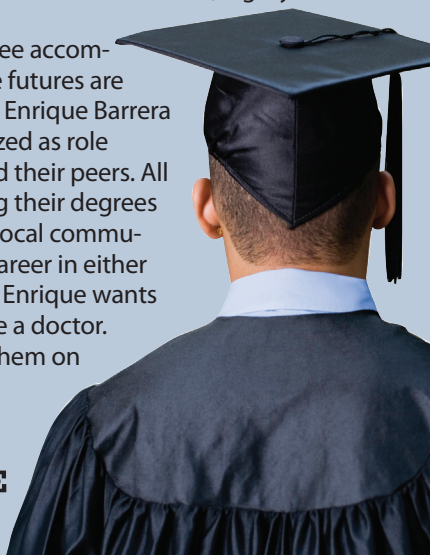
Honors for Step Up scholars

As another school year winds down, members of the biggest class of seniors in the nine-year history of the Step Up For Students program are preparing to walk across the stage. This year, more than 560 Step Up senior scholars will graduate from 212 private schools. That's an increase of 88 students and 20 schools compared to 2010.

Of these students, about 42 percent are black or multiracial, 28 percent Hispanic and 26 percent white. Two-hundred, eighty-nine are male and 271 are female.

In this edition, we celebrate three accomplished graduating seniors whose futures are certainly bright. Islande Resignac, Enrique Barrera and Charlotte Peyton are recognized as role models by both their teachers and their peers. All three already have started earning their degrees through dual enrollment at their local community colleges. Islande is eyeing a career in either engineering or psychology, while Enrique wants to become a dentist and Charlotte a doctor. All three say the scholarship put them on the path to achieving their goals.

**YOU CAN LEARN MORE
ABOUT ISLANDE, ENRIQUE
AND CHARLOTTE *INSIDE***



Oprah Show reaches out to Jax school



The Oprah Winfrey Show recently paid a visit to a half-dozen Step Up scholars at Father's H.a.r.b.o.r. Academy in Jacksonville, where celebrity entertainer Jessica Simpson arrived with surprise prom makeovers for the students, most of whom have been in foster care and couldn't afford dresses for the school dance. Pictured here in the top row from left to right are Shanae, Alex, Paris, Jessica Simpson, Eliza and Bailey. In the bottom row from left to right are Jakina and Isabel.

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Senior embraces
new 'struggle' of school

Enrique Barrera

John Paul II Catholic High School/Tallahassee

Every day, Enrique Barrera wakes early and drives two hours roundtrip to attend classes at Tallahassee's John Paul II Catholic High School. There, the honor student takes Advanced Placement courses, assists in drama productions and participates in Model United Nations competitions.

It's a world apart from the public school he attended two years ago, where gangs were present and advanced courses were not. It also helped set Enrique on a new path in his life, one that includes a high school diploma and his dream of college and dentistry.

Enrique says he would never have reached this success if his older brother hadn't pointed him in the right direction. Initially, he didn't understand when his brother left their neighborhood school to attend John Paul II an hour away. But after seeing a change in his brother's academic performance and learning that he could take Advanced



Placement courses at John Paul II, Enrique decided to enroll his junior year.

"I noticed that he was involved here and he got along with his teachers and he would come home and do homework," he said. "I wondered how he would get homework, and I would not get homework."

Enrique's parents, Antonio and Margarita, are proud of their son's dedication to his education. Margarita's fear that her son would fall prey to the gang influences has been allayed since Enrique enrolled at John Paul II Catholic. Antonio, a construction worker, and Margarita, a homemaker, are thankful for the scholarships provided by Step Up For Students.

Enrique's day begins at 6:15 a.m. and often runs into the early hours of the next morning. He also works part time, volunteers with his church youth group, and takes classes at Tallahassee Community College under a dual enrollment program. So far, he's earned 20 college credits.

It's a hectic life, but Enrique always makes time to study – even if it means going to bed at 1 a.m.

"It's a struggle, but I have to get my work done," he said.

Guidance counselor Martha Ray says Enrique is one of the best role models at the school.

"Enrique is an example for the other students not only here but for other students that may come here in the future," she said. "The other kids see the commitment ... and it rubs off on them."

Overcoming disabilities,
emerging a salutatorian

Charlotte Leyton

Brito Miami Private School/Miami

Charlotte Leyton was five years old before she spoke her first word and in sixth grade before she lost the label of special education. She was born with developmental and learning disabilities so severe her doctors said she would struggle to make it to first grade and could never graduate from high school.

Today, Charlotte, 18, is a lively, well-rounded teenager who is graduating from Brito Miami Private School with a 4.13 grade point average, college credits from dual enrollment at Miami Dade College and an eye on medical school. She leaves Brito not only as a member of the Honor Society but also as the Class of 2011 salutatorian.

Charlotte said she's motivated by a strong desire to do her best. "I really focus ... I know I can really push myself," she said. "Nothing's impossible."



Charlotte's perseverance is inspiring, said Katryna Anasagasti-Carrasco, Brito Miami's assistant principal. "She's one of these students who doesn't let things

get her down," she said. "She'll do whatever it takes to get the job done."

Charlotte's mother, Brenda Tijerino de Leyton, credits her daughter's turnaround to a combination of intensive therapy and a support network of family and teachers. It was a hard-won achievement that often left Charlotte in tears and unable to express herself. Her mother would encourage Charlotte to write down what she wanted to say. It was enough to prepare Charlotte for a mainstream classroom by the sixth grade.

But as Charlotte was preparing to attend middle school, Brenda feared sending her to the local public school. She thought the classes were too large and the academics not strong enough. So she researched area private schools and thought Brito Miami was just the right place for Charlotte. Thanks to the Step Up For Students scholarship program, the family of five could afford to send Charlotte to the school. This year, Charlotte is one of 100 Step Up scholars attending Brito Miami.

When Charlotte entered ninth grade, she began receiving more challenging coursework. Brenda, who'd always assisted Charlotte with her schoolwork, began pulling back so that Charlotte would be more independent and accountable for her education.

It worked. Charlotte threw herself into her schoolwork and now has some sage advice for other students who have difficult backgrounds.

"Never let anyone tell you what you can't do," she said. "Everyone is different in their own way."

In three years, a transformation
and bright future

Islande Resignac

The Potter's House/Jacksonville

Islande Resignac spent her freshman year at a local public high school skipping class, hanging with the wrong crowd and earning C's. Three years later, Islande is graduating from The Potter's House Christian Academy in Jacksonville with a 4.1 GPA and a scholarship from the University of Florida.

It's an outcome that doesn't surprise English teacher and assistant Principal Lela Johnson.

"She's actually one of the top students I've taught here," she said. "She's brilliant."

Islande is also a relentless go-getter. She is president of her school's National Honor Society, participates in Girl Scouts, is chaplain of the senior class, a member



of the cheer squad, and is the 2010-2011 Ms. Potter's House, a position that requires her to represent the school at community service projects and other events. As for her academics, Islande already is working toward a degree in either psychology or engineering – having earned 24 college credits through dual

enrollment at Florida State College at Jacksonville.

The 17-year-old said the drive to succeed and do well comes from her parents having drilled the importance of education into their six children.

"It's something that they love talking about," she said. "They instilled that in us at an early age. I don't want to let them down."

Islande was just six months old when her parents, Jean, a janitor, and Sivilia, a homemaker, emigrated from Haiti to Florida. Raising a family of six on Jean's salary left little money to pay for the private schooling the two wanted their children to have. But the pair's dream came true after a member of the family's church told them about Step Up For Students.

Jean Resignac said he's proud of his daughter's accomplishments and he'll continue to encourage her to do well.

"I keep pushing her to do better things," he said.

Islande credits the spiritual and academic lessons she's learned at The Potter's House for putting her on the right track. She also appreciated the efforts of teachers to get to know the students on a personal level.

Islande said things would be very different for her had it not been for her teacher's guidance and parent's encouragement.

"I definitely would not be looking at (attending) a four-year institution," she said. "My future is a lot better now."

Navigating the new StepUpForStudents.org

On March 1, Step Up For Students launched a new Web site, one designed to make navigation easier and to make the application process smoother for parents. Here are some new features:

1. Click here to learn about Step Up's history, its mission and how the program works for parents, donor and schools.

2. Click on the boxes to learn more about Step Up scholarship recipients, or see video footage from recent events such as Step Up's Tax Credit Scholarship Rally or 2010 Donor Rally.

3. This box's menu allows parents, donors and school officials to quickly access important information and their respective areas of the website.

4. Parents can get the latest information about application start dates for new and renewal families, deadlines and other application-related announcements here.

5. Visitors can find the most recent local and national news coverage about Step Up here.

The screenshot shows the StepUpForStudents.org website interface. At the top left is the Step Up logo. A navigation menu includes 'About Us', 'Our Cause', 'How It Works', 'News & Research', and 'Logins'. A red circle with the number '1' is placed over the 'How It Works' link. Below the menu is a banner with the text 'We provide scholarships for low income Florida schoolchildren and believe in equal educational opportunity' and language options for English and Spanish. A grid of photos of students and events is shown, with a red circle '2' over one of the photos and a 'Click my photo!' link. To the right is a green sidebar with sections for 'For Parents', 'For Donors', and 'For Schools', with a red circle '3' over the 'For Parents' section. Below the sidebar is a 'Charity Navigator' badge. The main content area features 'Application News' with a 'View All Posts' link, an 'Important Announcement regarding NEW applicants:' section with a red circle '4' over the text, and a 'News and Events' section with a red circle '5' over the title. A search bar is located at the bottom right.

Step Up president aids in charter school innovations

Recently, the president of Step Up For Students has been active in a broader push toward education reform in our public schools, and his efforts are turning heads.

Doug Tuthill, who has presided over Step Up since 2008, has recently started work with community and African American leaders in St. Petersburg to create an incubator for a cluster of high-quality charter schools.

They have called their nonprofit effort the Learning Village, and they recently heard from five groups of local community activists with ambitions to create a charter school collaborative. These groups include several veteran K-12 educators, a recently retired judge, a police officer, three parole officer, several small business owners, three college professors, several activist parents

and at least one student.

"They are enthusiastic, committed, hard-working and knowledgeable about their children," Tuthill said. "But they also have an asset most urban school districts lack: They have the trust of their community. Much of the failure we see in urban school systems derives from the hostility and alienation parents feel toward their local public schools and, until that trust is established, high student achievement is not possible."

News reporters and columnists have taken notice. Bill Maxwell, a noted columnist at the St. Petersburg Times, said Tuthill and the others are "laying



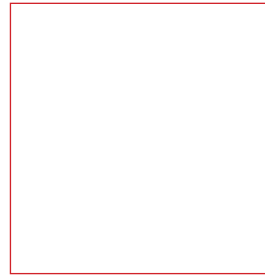
DOUG TUTHILL

the groundwork" for aspiring charter operators who have found that their enterprise is an "arduous process that requires expertise, community teamwork and money."

Tuthill had an extensive history in public education before taking over Step Up. He helped to launch Florida's first International Baccalaureate program in 1984 at St. Petersburg High School and was elected president of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association in 1991, serving two terms. He also managed a partnership between the University of Florida and the Pinellas County school district focused on improving high-poverty elementary schools.



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IMPORTANT SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION IN THIS ISSUE

Legislature lets companies give more

A high degree of bipartisan backing for Step Up For Students once again has led the Legislature to help the program, this time giving companies flexibility to contribute more to the scholarship program.

The bill that passed in early May will enable corporations to redirect up to 100 percent of their corporate income or insurance premium tax liability annually in the form of contributions to Step Up. Previously, these companies could redirect just 75 percent. They can already direct up to 100 percent of their direct pay sales tax liability and up to 90 percent of their alcohol beverage excise tax liability.

The bill also will allow a corporation with insufficient tax liability to carry forward unused tax credits for up to five years. Previously, corporations could carry forward tax credits for up to three years.

The legislation passed by a collective House-Senate margin of 131-25, with nearly half (23-25) of the Democrats and a large majority (13-8) of the Black Caucus.

“This bill does not change the amount of the individual scholarship or the cap that governs the overall amount of tax credits dedicated annually for the program,” said state Sen. Anitere Flores of Miami, who sponsored the bill. “Nor does it increase the cost of the program. This is just a good bill to allow more students to enjoy these benefits and allow more businesses to participate.”



SENATOR ANITERE FLORES

This is the official newsletter for Step Up For Students, published four times a year.



About Step Up For Students:

Our mission is to help alleviate the enormous educational challenges faced by children from low-income and working class families.

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DONOR CORNER

MEDNAX nears 10 years of support to Step Up

Since 2002, MEDNAX and its principal subsidiary Pediatrix Medical Group have contributed to Step Up For Students to fund K-12 scholarships for low-income children in Florida.

Thanks to MEDNAX’s contributions, roughly 2,800 underprivileged students in Florida have been given the opportunity to attend either a private school or out-of-district public school of their parents’ choice that best meets their individual needs through the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program.

MEDNAX is a holding company that includes the parent company of Pediatrix and American Anesthesiology, Inc. Pediatrix Medical Group joined Step Up For Students as a corporate partner and extended its relationship under the MEDNAX umbrella.

“MEDNAX is fully committed to the health and happiness of our nation’s children and is honored to be a corporate partner of Step Up For Students--a program that is transforming the lives of the state’s most needy children,” said Frederick Miller, President of Pediatrix. “We are thankful for the opportunity to invest in the future of our country’s youth and are thrilled to be approaching 10 years of continuous support to Step Up For Students.”

MEDNAX is the nation’s leading provider of neonatal, maternal-fetal and pediatric physician subspecialty services as well as anesthesia services, and through its affiliated professional corporations, employs more than



1,650 physicians in 33 states and Puerto Rico, as of April 30, 2011.

The name MEDNAX is an abstract word that reflects the company’s unique position as an organization. The syllable MED represents a physician-driven medical group that’s focused on patient care; NAX represents a national presence; and the “X” acts as a continuation of the long-standing Pediatrix brand, from which MEDNAX was launched, that has represented quality patient care since 1979.

Pediatrix Medical Group, a unit of MEDNAX, now includes neonatal physicians who provide services at more than 300 neonatal intensive care units who collaborate with affiliated maternal-fetal medicine, pediatric cardiology and pediatric intensivist physician subspecialists to provide a clinical care continuum. Pediatrix is also the nation’s largest provider of newborn hearing screens.

Also a unit of MEDNAX, American Anesthesiology is a growing physician group that includes more than 700 anesthesiologists and advanced practitioners with practices in Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia.