Important Program Updates in This Issue

Student Spotlight

Patrick Schwend
Coral Springs Christian Academy/Coral Springs

Eleventh-grader Patrick Schwend is beginning another school year at Coral Springs Christian Academy with a packed schedule of honors classes and band practices and membership in an honor society.

Not long ago, the first day of school was a different story for Patrick. Six years ago, he was a troubled fifth-grader attending a public school. He and his parents constantly met with teachers and administrators because of his behavioral problems and his academic performance was dismal.

Patrick’s mother, Oristela, knew things only would get worse for her middle school student when he was placed in a remedial reading class with 20 other students and two teachers. School officials declined to remove Patrick from the class.

“It was chaos,” she said. “Oristela and her husband, Roland, banded together to move their son to a private school but couldn’t afford the tuition. Thus, Oristela learned about Step Up for Students Scholarship for low-income families.

Seeing a glimmer of hope, the Schwends took advantage of the program’s opportunity to send their son to a school where he knew he would get the individual attention he needed.

Patrick’s transformation was almost immediate. As a sixth grader at Our Savior Lutheran School, Patrick was placed in a classroom with just 12 students. As one of the oldest students, Patrick became a classroom leader and the responsibility helped turn around his behavior. He participated in the school Science Fair, won several achievement awards and made the honor roll.

Patrick’s academic success continues at Coral Springs Christian Academy, where he is in his sixth year on the scholarship. He takes on a leadership role at his school, which is largely invisible to parents and schools, but for our schools as well.”

Our goal has always been, and remains, exceptional customer service,” said John LeHockey, Step Up’s executive director of scholarship operation.

Changes at Step Up for Students

Some big changes at Step Up For Students have eased the application process for families new to the program and for those who are coming back, and they have helped set the scholarship program on a path to steady growth.

A new 12-person call center has handled more than 65,000 calls and is providing answers to parent questions during what has become the busiest application season in the program’s history. The program also has made an online application available to thousands of parents for the first time this season and made application fees payable electronically to thousands more. The result is that the document processing and application processing teams have this year handled more than 30,000 applications requesting scholarships for nearly 45,000 individual students.

To make all this happen, Step Up administrators have hired more staff and moved the scholarship operation into larger office space to accommodate the program’s growth and to come up with ways to improve customer service. While many of the changes are largely invisible to parents and schools, administrators say they think the changes are responsible for some positive feedback the program has been getting.

“Our goal has always been, and remains, exceptional customer service,” said John LeHockey, Step Up’s executive director of scholarship operations. “These changes are just the start. As we expand, we’ll focus on the tools that provide better services and guidance to not only our families, but for our schools as well.”

Changes at Step Up For Students Herald New Era for Families, Schools

The Step Up scholarship program on a path to steady growth.
**Step Up for Students Newsletter**

**www.StepUpForStudents.org**

---

**Students, schools get high marks in two new reports**

New independent research on Step Up for Students’ Scholarship Program has earned a double dose of encouragement recently. Both the scholarship program and the public schools they help fund have received rave reviews.

John Kirtley, chairman and founder of the company – making the program a win-win opportunity for all involved. For Students, the program truly is a win-win opportunity for all involved.

---

**SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT**

**Indian Rocks Christian School/Largo**

When Indian Rocks Christian School opened its doors in 1984, its classrooms were dedicated to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. Twenty-six years and two campus expansions later, the school has blossomed into a K-12 campus that boasts accreditation from two professional organizations and more than 600 students.

Over the years, Indian Rocks has sought to provide its students an education that fosters both their academic and spiritual growth. Advanced placement, dual credit and honors programs are available to students, 99 percent of whom go on to attend college. Indian Rocks students are twice annually with the Stanford Achievement Test.

The first report, released June 2, was prepared by the University of Southern California and JCPenney professor David Figlio. He found that the Florida Council for School Education, covered the 2009-2010 nationally norm-referenced achievement test results that scholarship students are likely to take in the next three years. In this initial analysis of 2010-2011 scholarship students, the gains were the largest in the public schools with the greatest number of nearly private schools and those with the greatest incentives to keep federal money they receive on the number of lower-income students.

“Our results indicate that the increased competitive pressure faced by public schools associated with the expansion of the McKay Scholarship Program led to general improvements in student achievement across the board,” Figlio said.

The second report, released June 11 by the Bailey and Sullivan Leadership Institute and the Program on Education Seminar on Education Policy and Parental Choice sponsored by the Florida Alliance for Choices in Education, said that the scholarship program is attracting students at 1,033 schools through-out the state. The gains made in the program have had a direct impact on the lives of Florida’s most disadvantaged families,” said Kevin C. McAllister, director of the Bailey and Sullivan Leadership Institute and the Program on Education Seminar on Education Policy and Parental Choice sponsored by the Florida Alliance for Choices in Education.

**FREE ONLINE PARENTING TOOL**

**Parents want students to finish high school first on the path to college can now do so with the click of the mouse.**

Step Up for Students can now access College Bound, a free learning and online social networking program developed by GreatSchools. The program gives parents the tools needed to help their students plan for college academically and become college-ready high school graduates. The program is limited to students who have been in grades 6-12 for at least one year and in the future will be expanded to include students in grades K-8.

College Bound offers parents tips and resources including a “Quick Start” guide that parents can download to assist them in keeping students focused on achieving their goals, a “Welcome Guide” and lessons that they can complete with their students in grades 6-12.

The “Quick Start” guide includes other grades. Parents who want to give their students the “College Bound” option can access it by clicking on the College Bound link in their child’s account. Parents can also call the Company’s toll-free customer service number to find out more.

**DONOR CORNER**

**Alcoholic Beverage Industry Contributes More than $38 Million to Step Up for Students**

This past spring, the Florida Legislative Budget Commission approved tax revenue from the alcoholic beverage industry to meet the Step Up for Students program to help offset the anticipated shortfall in the state’s general fund. The alcoholic beverage industry had been providing funds in the state’s General Revenue Fund that were used primarily to fund scholarships for low-income children.

As with companies that redacted the gross revenues from the alcoholic beverage industry, the tax revenue will be subject to a fee equal to one percent of the gross revenues from alcoholic beverages. The tax revenue will allow the state to provide additional educational opportunities to low-income students through the program, the company said.

The bill, which passed the Florida Senate on March 28 and went into effect on July 1, 2010, also extended the tax on Florida alcoholic beverage excise tax to include vendors that failed to stamp their company to make sure that Step Up for Students scholarships were going to low-income students.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE BACK**

The program is on pace to meet or exceed the 16 percent increase in the number of scholarships that the Florida Alliance for Choices in Education and the Florida Taxpayer Action Network have estimated for the year, which totaled 28,277 students in the 2010-2011 school year. The Florida scholarship education program school tuition assistance now pays as much as $4,195 and is set to increase as the program grows year to year. In addition, there are more than 1,200 private schools state-wide that accept a Step Up for Students scholarship.

LeHockey, who has a history in the corporate world of organizing companies to make them more responsive to customer needs, went about making the changes that he needed to meet the spike in demand. First, Step Up for Students took control over all application processing and ended the reliance on College Bound’s private School Aid Service in Ohio. LeHockey then established a call center that eventually included outside sales professionals who were able to sign up families on Florida’s east coast during the application season.

“This was a radical deal with the help of Step Up for Students’ Scholarship Team has the for-sale and lessons that they can complete with their students in grades 6-12. Parents can also call the Company’s toll-free customer service number to find out more.

**DONOR CORNER**

**Alcoholic Beverage Industry Contributes More than $38 Million to Step Up for Students**

This past spring, the Florida Legislative Budget Commission approved tax revenue from the alcoholic beverage industry to meet the Step Up for Students program to help offset the anticipated shortfall in the state’s general fund. The alcoholic beverage industry had been providing funds in the state’s General Revenue Fund that were used primarily to fund scholarships for low-income children.

As with companies that redirected the gross revenues from the alcoholic beverage industry, the tax revenue will be subject to a fee equal to one percent of the gross revenues from alcoholic beverages. The tax revenue will allow the state to provide additional educational opportunities to low-income students through the program, the company said.

The bill, which passed the Florida Senate on March 28 and went into effect on July 1, 2010, also extended the tax on Florida alcoholic beverage excise tax to include vendors that failed to stamp their company to make sure that Step Up for Students scholarships were going to low-income students.

**DONOR CORNER**

**Alcoholic Beverage Industry Contributes More than $38 Million to Step Up for Students**

This past spring, the Florida Legislative Budget Commission approved tax revenue from the alcoholic beverage industry to meet the Step Up for Students program to help offset the anticipated shortfall in the state’s general fund. The alcoholic beverage industry had been providing funds in the state’s General Revenue Fund that were used primarily to fund scholarships for low-income children.

As with companies that redirected the gross revenues from the alcoholic beverage industry, the tax revenue will be subject to a fee equal to one percent of the gross revenues from alcoholic beverages. The tax revenue will allow the state to provide additional educational opportunities to low-income students through the program, the company said.

The bill, which passed with both chambers of the legislature on April 21 and went into effect on July 1, 2010, extended the tax on Florida alcoholic beverage excise tax to include vendors that failed to stamp their company to make sure that Step Up for Students scholarships were going to low-income students.

The bill, which passed with both chambers of the legislature on April 21 and went into effect on July 1, 2010, extended the tax on Florida alcoholic beverage excise tax to include vendors that failed to stamp their company to make sure that Step Up for Students scholarships were going to low-income students.

The bill, which passed with both chambers of the legislature on April 21 and went into effect on July 1, 2010, extended the tax on Florida alcoholic beverage excise tax to include vendors that failed to stamp their company to make sure that Step Up for Students scholarships were going to low-income students.

The bill, which passed with both chambers of the legislature on April 21 and went into effect on July 1, 2010, extended the tax on Florida alcoholic beverage excise tax to include vendors that failed to stamp their company to make sure that Step Up for Students scholarships were going to low-income students.
Academic Beverage Industry Contributes More than $38 Million to Step Up For Students

This past spring, the Florida Legislature passed legislation that allows Alcoholic Beverage Industry to contribute tax-credited contributions that will provide scholarships for low-income children through the Step Up For Students program.

The Alcoholic Beverage Industry Contributes did not fully provide the tax credits to Step Up For Students that were initially anticipated. The program received tax credits for the purchase of alcoholic beverages that the companies in the alcoholic beverage industry had already paid tax on in 2007.

The tax credits are not refundable and are not available for any alcoholic beverages purchased after 2007.

As with companies that rededicate money to offset the statutory tax from the excise tax on alcoholic beverages, the alcoholic beverage companies participating in the program receive a tax credit for the tax paid on the beverages for which they did not claim the tax deduction.

This allows for the alcoholic beverage companies to rededicate the tax paid on the beverages to offset the statutory tax.

This program provides an additional educational opportunity for low-income families and children participating in the program, as the company—other than the Alcoholic Beverage Industry—will be given a tax credit for the tax paid on the beverages.

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT
Indian Rocks Christian School/Largo

When Indian Rocks Christian School opened its doors in 1984, its classrooms were devoted to pre-school and kindergarten students. Twenty-six years later, the school has grown and changed to accommodate the needs of their students.

Over the years, Indian Rocks has sought to provide its students an education that fosters both their academic and spiritual growth. Advancement placed, dual credit and honors programs are available to students, 99 percent of whom go on to attend college.

In addition, students are required to devote themselves to serving others and to complete 25 hours of community service for each year they are enrolled in the school.

The first report, released June 2, was created by the University of Florida’s Center for Economic and Social Policy.

The Alcoholic Beverage Industry Contributes program, also known as the ABO program, is a voluntary program that allows companies in the alcoholic beverage industry to contribute tax-credited contributions that will provide scholarships for low-income children.

The program was the first of its kind in the country to provide tax credits for the purchase of alcoholic beverages.

LeHockey, Benjamin, extends tentacles to borders

Students, schools get high marks in two new reports

New independent research on Step Up For Students’ Scholarship Program shows a high level of satisfaction from parents who participated in Step Up For Students. Of that total, 75.1 percent are overwhelmingly satisfied with the program. Earlier this summer, parents who participated in Step Up For Students. Of that total, 75.1 percent are overwhelmingly satisfied with the program. Earlier this summer, parents who participated in Step Up For Students.

The results from these interviews marked the second time in as many months that Step Up has benefited from research showing that parents of Step Up students are satisfied with the program.

The study was commissioned by the Florida Alliance for Choices in Education and conducted by the Study Hall research group in Tampa, which conducted the interviews.

And the dark edges peek out,” said Robert Iles, the managing director for the Study Hall research group in Tampa, which conducted the interviews. "It's not that we don't think it's been a success - it's just that we don't think it's been as successful as it could be."

Some randomly selected scholarship parents in Orlando and Tampa got the chance to speak their mind last month, and Step Up For Students added their responses to the body of research about the program.

The responses from these interviews marked the second time in as many months that Step Up has benefited from research showing that parents of Step Up students are satisfied with the program.

The study was commissioned by the Florida Alliance for Choices in Education and conducted by the Study Hall research group in Tampa, which conducted the interviews.

The responses from these interviews marked the second time in as many months that Step Up has benefited from research showing that parents of Step Up students are satisfied with the program.
Eleventh-grader Patrick Schwendt is beginning another school year at Coral Springs Christian Academy with a packed schedule of honors classes and band practices and membership in an honor society.

Not long ago, the first day of school was a different story for Patrick. Six years ago, he was a troubled fifth-grader attending a public school. He and his parents constantly met with teachers and administrators because of his behavioral problems and his academic performance. Patrick’s mother, Oristela, knew things only would get worse for her middle school student when he was placed in a remedial reading class with 50 other students and two teachers. School officials declined to remove Patrick from the class.

“It was chaos,” she said.

Oristela and her husband, Roland, longed to move their son to a school where he couldn’t afford the tuition. Then, Oristela and her husband, Roland, discovered Coral Springs Christian Academy, where he is in his sixth year on the scholarship. He takes honors classes and band practices and is excelling at the school, said his sister, Jessica, a fourth-grader.

Both are Step Up For Students recipients, but for our schools as well.”

As one of the older students, Patrick became a classroom leader and the responsibility helped turn around his behavior. He participated in the school Science Fair, orangized several achievement awards and made the honor roll.

Patrick’s academic success continues at Coral Springs Christian Academy, where he is in his sixth year on the scholarship. He takes honors classes and band practices and is excelling at the school, said his sister, Jessica, a fourth-grader. Both are Step Up For Students recipients who are also excelling at the school, said Oristela.

At Coral Springs, Patrick said he’s thrived with teachers. “They challenge your skills in every class,” he said. “It’s really personal. You build a relationship with the teachers.”

About Coral Springs Christian Academy

Established in 1971 as a pre-K and elementary school, Coral Springs Christian Academy in Coral Springs serves 750 students through grade 12, 17 of whom received the Step Up For Students Scholarship last year. The school offers a college preparatory curriculum and is accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International, the Florida Council of Independent Schools, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Florida Kindergarten Council. The school also uses the Stanford Achievement Test to measure students’ progress. Tuition ranges from $6,095 for kindergarten to $10,995 for students in grade 12.