

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Students: Get Free Help Completing the FAFSA at Montana College Goal Sunday**

A combination of the current economic crisis and the rising cost of postsecondary education present definite obstacles to families attempting to finance postsecondary education, but nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) assures Montana families that help is available.

For most families, the process of obtaining financial aid begins annually with the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and SAF and its community partners are prepared to assist with that process.

Each February, SAF, financial aid officers and volunteers gather at sites across the state for Montana College Goal Sunday to provide free, one-on-one guidance to students and families completing this important form.

This year, the event will take place at 18 sites on Wednesday, Feb. 18 and Sunday, Feb. 22. Not all sites will host the event on both days, so visit [www.CollegeGoalMT.org](http://www.CollegeGoalMT.org) or call 877-COLG4ME to check event details in your community.

In addition to receiving free assistance filling out the FAFSA, College Goal Sunday attendees may register to win one, \$500 scholarship to be used at the school of their choice at each event location.

“The FAFSA is a lengthy document and completing it can be quite time consuming,” said Rhonda Safford, state-wide coordinator for College Goal Sunday. “At College Goal Sunday, we try to make this necessary task flow as smoothly as possible for families in an effort to ensure that no Montana student misses out on financial aid opportunities.”

Safford added it’s an unfortunate fact that many families assume they won’t qualify to receive financial aid, and therefore don’t complete the FAFSA.

“Everyone should complete the FAFSA,” she said. “Many people who think they won’t qualify are actually eligible for some form of aid. In addition, many schools use information provided on the FAFSA to distribute institutional aid. It’s well worth the effort to complete the form.”

In 2008, 1,679 students and parents received help from Montana College Goal Sunday volunteers, bringing the total number of people served since the establishment of the event in Montana five years ago to more than 5,000.

College Goal Sunday is a national program that was originally created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association with funding from Lilly Endowment, Inc. and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education.

*Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to finance and pursue their postsecondary education. Funds generated by SAF are returned to Montanans in the form of education grants and public benefit programs - to date more than \$14.7 million. For more information, visit [www.SmartAboutCollege.org](http://www.SmartAboutCollege.org) or [www.safmt.org](http://www.safmt.org).*

## **Additional Information**

### **College Goal Sunday locations include:**

MSU-Billings in Billings, Montana State University in Bozeman, Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana Tech in Butte, Little Big Horn College in Crow Agency, Dawson Community College in Glendive, MSU-Great Falls College of Technology in Great Falls, Fort Belknap College in Harlem, MSU-Northern in Havre, Carroll College in Helena, UM-Western in Dillon, Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, Chief Dull Knife College in Lame Deer, Flathead Valley Community College-Lincoln County in Libby, Miles Community College in Miles City, The University of Montana in Missoula, Salish Kootenai College in Pablo and Fort Peck Community College in Wolf Point.

### **Don't forget to bring:**

- **FAFSA PIN Number** — to get your pin, log on to [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov)
- **Social Security Numbers** (students and parents)
- **2008 Federal Tax Returns** (or 2007 tax returns if 2008 returns are not complete)
- **W-2s, tribal income, other aid information** (TANF, child support, other benefits)
- **Additional asset information** (money market funds, stocks, other investments)