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CONTACT:

Carolynn Bright
Media Relations Coordinator
(406) 495-7506

College Goal Sunday Helps More Than 1,000 Students Complete the FAFSA

Nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation (SAF), financial aid professionals and other volunteers helped 1,039 students complete their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at 18 Montana College Goal Sunday sites recently.

“We are extremely pleased that we were able to provide free, one-on-one FAFSA completion assistance to so many Montana students and their families at our College Goal Sunday locations across the state,” said Rhonda Safford, state coordinator for the event. “This brings the total number of students and families served through College Goal Sunday in the six years we have coordinated the program in Montana to almost 8,400.”

This year, the event was held at locations throughout the state on Sunday, Jan. 31 and Wednesday, Feb. 3.

Among all the sites, College Goal Sunday saw a 5 percent increase in the number of FAFSA filers over the previous year, and a 28 percent increase in the attendance of students and parents over 2009.

Safford said she was particularly pleased with the response to a new component of the College Goal Sunday event — Webinars hosted at sites in Baker, Columbia Falls, Drummond and Glasgow.

Forty-nine students completed their FAFSAs with assistance through the Webinar programs, while a total of 105 students and families received information about the FAFSA completion process.

“By using Webinars, we were able to extend our reach to areas of the state from which FAFSA filers would have had to travel greater distances to receive our assistance at a traditional College Goal Sunday site,” Safford said. “Thanks to the Webinar tool, students were able to receive help from experts from the comfort of the computer lab at their school.”

Safford expressed her gratitude to the 312 individuals who volunteered their time to assist with the event, in addition to the generous donors who helped fund 19, \$500 scholarships that were awarded to students through drawings at each College Goal Sunday site (including one for the Webinar sites).

Safford reminds Montana students and families that, if they haven’t completed the FAFSA, they still have time and help is available. To receive free assistance, they can contact their high school counselor, or the financial aid officer at the college of their choice. In addition, SAF staff

members are always available to help and can be reached by calling 877-COLG4ME (265-4463).

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 \$16.8 million. For more information, visit www.SmartAboutCollege.org or www.safmt.org