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Almost 1,000 Montanans Helped at College Goal Sunday

(HELENA) Nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation (SAF), financial aid professionals and other volunteers helped 986 students complete their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms at 18 Montana College Goal Sunday sites last month.

According to Rhonda Safford, state coordinator for College Goal Sunday, overall attendance at the event geared to providing one-on-one assistance with the FAFSA was down slightly from last year. However, the number of attendees who actually filed this important financial aid document remained steady.

“It seemed like we had fewer parents and friends accompanying the FAFSA filers to College Goal Sunday this year,” said Safford. “I interpret that to mean we have proven ourselves as a reliable resource for Montanans in this arena, and families felt comfortable letting their children come to us on their own for help completing this crucial form.”

Safford added that 2009 marked a couple of “firsts” for the Montana College Goal Sunday program.

“We were pleased to welcome The University of Montana – Western in Dillon as a College Goal Sunday site,” Safford said. “They had a total of 85 filers come to the event on campus — a very successful inaugural event.”

Plus, 2009 was the first year that all College Goal Sunday site coordinators had the option of hosting the event on Wednesday, in addition to, or excluding, the regular Sunday date. Safford said adding that flexibility to the College Goal Sunday schedule was appreciated by site coordinators and students alike.

“I’m proud to say that Montana College Goal Sunday has served more than 5,000 FAFSA filers in the five years SAF has coordinated the program, and if you add parents and family friends, that number climbs to about 6,600,” said Safford. “Plus, it’s important to say that we couldn’t have done it without the dedication of our volunteers. This year, 273 volunteers devoted their time to the event.”

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 or www.safmt.org

