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CONTACT:

Carolynn Bright

Media Relations Coordinator

(406) 495-7506

or

Libby Siebens

College Access Marketing Manager

(406) 495-7392

FREE Help Available to Students to Fill out FAFSA at College Goal Sunday

(HELENA) Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is an essential — though not particularly enjoyable — step in applying for financial aid.

And while it might be tempting for parents to avoid the hassle of the financial aid process by responding to advertisements from companies who offer to complete the FAFSA on a family's behalf for a fee, it's an unnecessary measure thanks to Montana College Goal Sunday, according to nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation (SAF).

“The operative word in FAFSA is free,” said Libby Siebens, college access marketing manager for SAF. “Through Montana College Goal Sunday, SAF, financial aid professionals and other volunteers from across the state ensure that students and families have the support they need to complete the FAFSA so they can save their money for paying for their postsecondary education.”

College Goal Sunday is a free event held annually at 17 locations across the state on the second Sunday in February. This year, that date is Feb. 10.

Each Montana College Goal Sunday location has three sessions to choose from: 1 p.m., 2 p.m. or 3 p.m. Reservations are not required at any of these locations: 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, UM-Helena College of Technology in Helena, 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.

In addition to receiving one-on-one assistance to complete the FAFSA on College Goal Sunday, event participants can enter to win a \$500 scholarship to be used at the school of their choice, according to Siebens. At least two scholarships will be randomly awarded at each site.

“Since SAF established this program in Montana four years ago, response from the public has continued to grow,” said Siebens. “Last year, we served 1,566 students and parents. This year, we hope to help even more Montana families complete this important step on the road to postsecondary education.”

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. Lumina Foundation provided grant funding to SAF to implement the program in Montana.

For more information about Montana College Goal Sunday, call SAF at (877) COLG4ME (265-4463) or visit www.collegegoalmt.org.

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 \$4.5 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org.