



Smart About College

S STUDENT ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION
Caring About Your Success

2500 Broadway,
Helena, MT 59601
www.safmt.org
(406) 495-7800
(800) 852-2761 toll free

Jim Stipcich,
President and CEO

Kelly Chapman,
EVP of Foundation
Activities

Libby Siebens, editor
lsiebens@safmt.org

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Foster Youth Graduates from College

Bozeman resident Katie Yother didn't have the smoothest start in life, and after she "aged out" of Montana's foster care system, she was pretty sure it wouldn't get any easier.



After all, it's difficult for students with even the most stable of families to achieve their dreams of higher education, let alone for foster care youths without that type of support to overcome numerous obstacles to attain their dreams of earning a degree.

Despite that, Yother graduated from Montana State University last year with a bachelor of arts in political science and she currently works at a local bank. In addition, she volunteers her time demonstrating to other foster care youths that the challenges they faced in the past don't need to dictate their futures.

"Go to college!" she encourages Montana foster care youths. "Don't stop or quit until you finish. The key is to follow through, and I now know this from experience."

According to Yother, the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program, sponsored by the Montana Foster Care Independence Program, the Department of Public Health and Human Services, Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) and more, played an integral role in her academic success. Yother is the first ETV program participant in Montana to graduate from college.

"Student Assistance Foundation is very proud of the accomplishments of Katie Yother," said Rhonda Wodnik, community outreach manager and coordinator of the ETV program for SAF.

ETV Dollars Available

Up to \$5,000 a year for the cost of attendance at accredited institutions of higher learning and training programs is available to foster care youths between the ages of 16 and 21 through the ETV program.

According to Rhonda Wodnik, community outreach manager and coordinator of the program for SAF, fewer than 10 percent of foster care children who leave the foster care system at the age of 18 pursue higher education.

For more information about the ETV program, contact Wodnik at (406) 495-7750 or rwodnik@safmt.org. Applications are due Jan. 15 for spring and summer sessions, and July 15 for the full year or fall academic sessions.

Foster Youth Computer Camp

Foster youth from around the state will gather in Helena for a college preparatory camp called "A Step Ahead" July 10-12 at Carroll College.

The camp is sponsored by Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) with the help of several other agencies around the state. A fundraising campaign makes it possible for the foster youth to attend at no cost.

Students learn how to set up a computer and to use the software. Each camper leaves with a free computer to take to college.

Youths must apply and meet several criteria in order to be accepted to the camp. For more information about the camp, contact Rhonda Wodnik at (406) 495-7750 or rwodnik@safmt.org.

More Than \$100,000 in Complementary Mission Grants Awarded

Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) recently awarded \$100,640 in Complementary Mission Grants to six community groups to aid them in their efforts to help Montana students realize their goals of higher education.

Grant recipients include American Indian Business Leaders-Missoula (\$25,000), Women's Opportunity and Resource Development-Missoula (\$16,640), Jobs for Montana Graduates-Billings and Butte (\$40,000), Junior Achievement of Southwest Montana-Bozeman (\$5,000), UM-Western's Learning Assistance Center for Excellence-Dillon (\$10,000) and Granite County Center Foundation-Philipsburg (\$4,000).

"Funding through SAF's Complementary Mission Grant is helping us reach some of Montana's most academically disadvantaged youth," said Naomi Thornton, program director for Women's Opportunity and Resource Development. "We can provide services that are designed to not only help them finish school or get their GED, but also to consider enrolling in postsecondary education and training programs that lead to high skill, high wage careers."

SAF offers Complementary Mission Grants annually to groups whose activities augment its own mission to provide Montana students with the tools they need to pursue their dreams of postsecondary education.

In the past two years, SAF has distributed more than \$300,000 in Complementary Mission Grants to organizations throughout the state.

\$1.2 Million in Acce\$\$ Grants to Montana Colleges

Student Assistance Foundation recently awarded \$1.2 million in Acce\$\$ Grants to Montana colleges and universities for the upcoming academic year.

Acce\$\$ Grants are SAF's largest grant fund both in dollars and number of students served. Since the program's inception, SAF has awarded \$4.5 million in Acce\$\$ Grants.

For many Montana students, affordability is a major barrier to pursuing their postsecondary education goals. SAF provides funding to help ease the financial strains on students and their families, and make it possible to continue their higher education.

Acce\$\$ Grants are awarded to students through the financial aid offices based on qualification criteria developed by each financial aid office. Financial aid officers determine individual award amounts in a manner that best meets the needs of the students.

"I am grateful and humbled to have been chosen to receive a scholarship from your foundation. As a nursing student I am required to travel some distance to hospitals in other cities to complete my clinical obligations. Without this scholarship I would not have had the funds for these clinicals. Thank you for making my dreams of attending school and becoming a nurse a reality."

— Callie, Salish Kootenai College student

2007 Acce\$\$ Grants	Grant Amount
Blackfeet Community College	\$14,638
Carroll College	\$36,596
Chief Dull Knife College	\$7,319
Dawson Community College	\$10,979
Flathead Valley Community College	\$58,553
Fort Belknap College	\$6,099
Fort Peck Community College	\$10,979
UM Helena College of Technology	\$23,202
Little Big Horn College	\$9,271
Miles Community College	\$13,418
Montana State University Billings & College of Technology	\$141,504
Montana State University	\$264,514
Montana State University-Northern	\$36,596
Montana Tech of the U of M & College of Technology	\$64,043
Montana State University-Great Falls College of Technology	\$34,961
Rocky Mountain College	\$24,397
Salish Kootenai College	\$24,397
Stone Child College	\$6,099
University of Great Falls	\$19,518
The University of Montana & College of Technology	\$363,640
The University of Montana-Western	\$29,277
Total Acce\$\$ Grants Awarded	\$1,200,000

Pablo Resident Wins Montana College Goal Sunday Car Raffle

Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) recently announced that Jered Messerly of Pablo is the lucky winner of a 2006 Subaru Outback through the first Montana College Goal Sunday car raffle.



"I was speechless," said Messerly after hearing about his good fortune. "I called around and told everyone I won the car."

Volunteers from across the state sold about 5,000 raffle tickets as part of a promotional effort geared to raise awareness about Montana College Goal Sunday events. The effort was supported by Subaru USA and Montana Subaru dealers.

Twenty-nine community groups partnered with SAF to sell the tickets and received \$1 from each \$5 ticket sold to support their group's activities. Those groups collected a total of \$4,000 for their efforts.

Montana College Goal Sunday is a free, statewide program that helps students and their families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Completing the FAFSA is an important step on the road to obtaining higher education.

This year, Montana College Goal Sunday was held at 17 locations across the state on Feb. 11. More than 1,500 Montanans participated in the event.

For more information or to participate in the fundraiser this fall, contact Kris MacIntyre at (406) 495-7312 or kmacintyre@safmt.org.

To learn more about College Goal Sunday, log on to www.collegegoalmt.org.

Rural Montana Saves Project Helps Families

Families receiving cash assistance (TANF-Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) at any time in the past two years may have a chance to boost their savings for college tuition or employment-focused training for a family member.

The opportunity is part of a demonstration project called Rural Montana Saves currently available in 16 rural Montana counties. Families may earn a 6-to-1 match on family savings in an Individual Development Account (IDA).

"If a family saves \$500, they will earn a \$3,000 match as long as they fulfill other participation requirements of Rural Montana Saves," said Jeanne Saarinen, director of Montana Credit Unions for Community Development.

Rural Montana Saves is a project of Rural Employment Opportunities, Montana Credit Unions for Community Development, Student Assistance Foundation and participating credit unions from across the state. Funding is provided through a grant from the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services through a Family Economic Security Initiative.

For more information and applications contact Dawn Curtis, project coordinator at (800) 546-1140 or dawnc@reomontana.org.

Listed below are the 16 counties currently participating in Rural Montana Saves. If your rural county is not listed, please contact Curtis to find out how you can participate.

Rural Montana Saves participating counties:

Beaverhead	Deer Lodge	Lincoln	Richland
Carbon	Fergus	Madison	Stillwater
Custer	Glacier	Pondera	Toole
Dawson	Hill	Ravalli	Wheatland

Max Media Promotes Scholarships

Scholarships are a great source of free money to help pay for college, though they can be difficult to find. For the second year, Max Media is helping spread the word about scholarships to Montana students.

Each week in Western Montana and Billings, Max Media shines a spotlight on a specific scholarship from the Montana Career Information System (MCIS). MCIS is a free, online database available to all Montana residents with information on more than 3,200 scholarships. Anyone can log on by visiting www.safmt.org and clicking on the "Start planning Your Future with MCIS" link on the right side of the page.

New Outreach Office Opens at Montana Tech - Butte

Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) opened a new outreach office on the campus of Montana Tech in April. In addition to serving students in Butte, the office serves University of Montana-Western students in Dillon.

Students in Butte may recognize outreach manager, Shauna Savage. She worked in the financial aid office at Montana Tech for 14 years and actually began her career in financial aid as a work study student. In addition to her duties at the office, she serves as past president of the Montana Association of Financial Aid Administrators (MASFAA).

"I'm excited to have the opportunity to serve students on an individual basis," said Savage. "Students can stop by my office with questions ranging from how to set up a

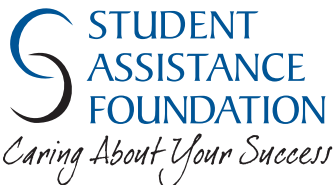


budget for college to consolidation of student loans."

In addition, Savage can assist students with the FAFSA, student loan repayment, filing loan deferment or forbearance forms, default resolution and more. Savage also helps the financial aid offices on both campuses with student loan entrance and exit counseling, financial aid presentations, College Goal Sunday and in any other capacity as needed.

SAF provides outreach and support to students, parents, educators, financial aid staff and communities across Montana. Additional outreach locations are located on the campuses of The University of Montana, Montana State University, MSU-Billings, Miles Community College and Flathead Valley Community College.

Would you like free copies of this newsletter for your students? Contact us at (800) 852-2761 or lsiebens@safmt.org.



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Our Mission

The mission of Student Assistance Foundation is to provide students and their families with the knowledge and tools to finance and pursue their postsecondary education.