

MEDIA ADVISORY:

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SAF to Host College Prep Camp for Foster Youths at Carroll College July 12-15

(HELENA) Thirty foster care youths from across Montana will arrive at Carroll College on Tuesday, July 12 to participate in nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation's annual "A Step Ahead" College Prep Camp.

"This marks the sixth year that SAF has coordinated this free camp for foster care youths who want to pursue their dreams of higher education," said Rhonda Safford, camp coordinator. "We strive to provide these teens with instruction on how to get to college and how to succeed once they get there. This may seem pretty basic, but many foster care youths lack the support systems that other Montana students take for granted."

While at the free, four-day camp, the foster youths experience college firsthand, staying in the dorms and eating in the cafeteria.

They receive classroom instruction in areas including basic computer skills, debt management techniques, and how to use the Internet to research scholarships, colleges, careers and more.

In addition, Safford provides detailed instruction regarding the purpose of Foster Youth Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) and how to properly complete the application forms. Foster care youths are eligible to receive up to \$5,000 per year to pay for their college expenses through the ETV program.

Between "classes," campers participate in a variety of team-building exercises and leisure activities designed to bring them closer to their fellow camp participants, and to give them ideas of low-cost, safe, and fun recreational opportunities for college students.

Finally, campers leave "A Step Ahead" with a free laptop computer to use as they work toward their education goals.

"About a quarter of our campers are enrolled in postsecondary education, and that number has increased by 10 percent over the past five years" said Safford. "When you consider that national statistics show that barely half of the nation's foster youths graduate from high schools and only 7 to 13 percent attain a bachelor's degree, I'd say we are making progress."

To arrange a visit to the camp, and schedule interviews with coordinators and campers, contact Safford at (406) 438-6933.

Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to pursue and fund 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 \$22.4 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.