



FEBRUARY '04

NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of the Florida Association of Scholarship Funding Organizations

A Note For Our Readers

Since planning is already underway for the 2004-2005 school year, area Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFOs) are on-hand to provide support to educators, corporate donors, Scholarship recipients and parents. Your local SFO can address questions about donations, funding, application waiting lists, or Scholarship renewals.

Children First Central Florida:

Sally Simmons, (407) 702-2607

Florida PRIDE:

Heather Moore, (813) 318-0995

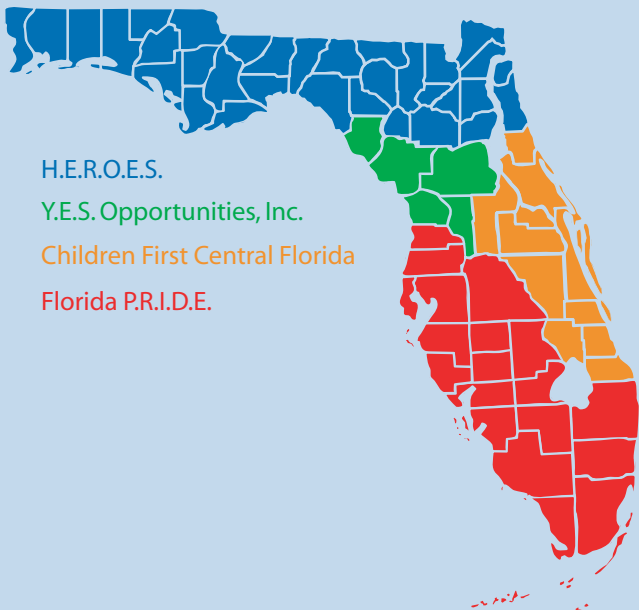
H.E.R.O.E.S.:

Cindy Forster, (904) 247-6033

YES Opportunities:

Dorothy Rice-Cobbs, (866) 297-7272

The Florida Association of Scholarship Funding Organizations



Exercise Your Freedom of Speech on the Capitol Steps

Let's Rally!

You are wanted on the Capitol steps of Tallahassee on March 9, 2004! Join thousands of parents, school administrators, students and school choice advocates for this year's Step Up For Students Rally. This will be the single most important event and an ideal way for you to express your support of the CTC Scholarship program. Participate in an event with impact and let your legislators know how much the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship program has provided a Step Up for Florida's Students.

Last year's rally was a tremendous success as thousands of supporters traveled to our state capitol to celebrate and thank legislators for the CTC Scholarship program. Parents

shared their inspiring stories, banners were carried with pride, and hundreds of students brought the true meaning of school choice to life. Florida Chief Financial Officer Tom Gallagher praised school choice by reiterating, "One of the most important factors in a child's success is parental involvement."

This year's rally comes at a critical time in our state's educational history – please show your support of the Scholarship program to our political leaders and to our generous donors. To learn more about this year's rally, visit www.stepupforstudents.com or call (813) 318-0995.

Transportation and lunch will be provided! Space is limited, so sign up now.



Students show their support at last year's Rally in Tally.

Inside: How You Can Be in the News!

Renewals

At the end of February, current Scholarship recipients will have the opportunity to renew their Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship for the 2004-2005 school year. Don't miss out! To be accepted, Renewal applications must be postmarked by May 30, 2004. Here's how it works:

- ✓ By the end of February, all parents should have received the Scholarship Renewal applications. Parents - if you have not received yours by this time please contact yourchild's school.
- ✓ Mail the completed application, along with a money order for the processing fee, to the address provided on the application.
- ✓ The Renewal application is not intended for use by anyone other than the current scholarship recipient.
- ✓ Parents who will not be renewing the scholarship for the 2004-2005 school year are kindly asked to call the appropriate SFO so other applicants can be notified of the open space.

Need additional information? Call your local Scholarship Funding Organization:

Children First Central Florida: (407) 702-2607

Florida PRIDE: (813) 318-0995

H.E.R.O.E.S: (904) 247-6033

YES Opportunities: (866) 297-7272

Important Tax Notice

Many scholarship families may qualify for a refund on their income tax return through the Earned Income Tax Credit Program. AARP is offering you FREE assistance in preparing your income tax return. You could possibly be eligible for a refund of up to \$4,000 this year. Call 888-AARP-NOW, (888-227-7669), for an office near you or visit www.aarp.org/taxaide. **This will not affect your eligibility for a Scholarship.**

Legislative Update

On October 16, 2003, the Florida Department of Education recommended formal accountability measures for non-profit Scholarship Funding Organizations, or SFOs. As a result, State Representative Don Sullivan's sponsored legislation is sure to become law, and parents and schools need to comply with additional regulations. Here's a look at some of the changes, which we think are great! They require greater accountability, which only improves this outstanding program. Read on....

- Participating students must comply with school attendance policies and code of conduct.
- Parents of students must comply with the school's parental involvement requirements.

- Students shall participate in nationally norm-referenced tests given by the school (such as SAT-9, CAT, ITBS).
- Parents must personally sign each scholarship check. In other words, schools cannot use the power of attorney to substitute for parents personally signing every check.
- Students cannot receive scholarships from more than one SFO, nor can the student also receive a McKay or Opportunity Scholarship.

The new legislation also makes it clear that you must comply with these rules, or you will lose the CTC Scholarship.

Call To Action - You Have a Voice!

This legislative session is critical to the future of the CTC program. Parents and Scholarship supporters need to take a moment to connect with their legislators and let them know how the CTC Scholarship has helped Florida's low-income students. Make it a priority in February to spend 15 minutes writing to a voting member of Florida's legislature. To make your comments powerful:

- ✓ Include statistical data that proves a child is doing better in school. Some of the most powerful examples are citing improvements on national standardized tests. Also look at a child's ranking compared with other students,

grade level improvements, etc.

- ✓ Include a child's involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- ✓ Mention local, state or national award recognition for outstanding achievements.

To write your legislator, visit www.stepupforstudents.com and click on Parents. To find the legislators in your area, click on "Find Your Legislator" and simply enter your zip code.

Send your legislator a letter or an email today!

Florida Family Magazine Highlights Academy Prep Grand Opening

"After two-and-a-half years of planning, Academy Prep, a privately funded school serving Tampa's inner-city children, had its grand opening. Tampa Bay Buccaneer's Quarterback Shaun King was on hand along with Mayor Pam Iorio and other dignitaries, to launch the extraordinary school. All Academy Prep students are inner-city youths on full scholarships from the Florida Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship."



Shaun King with students at Grand Opening of Academy Prep Center of Tampa

Family Corner

Single mom Dedra Houston and her seven-year-old son Morris are the newest family to be featured in the Step Up For Students ad campaign. Dedra and Morris are representative of the nearly 13,000 families receiving CTC Scholarships in Florida. The ad campaign highlights their unscripted, real-life story, and serves as a true testament to those whose lives have been impacted by the Florida Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship.

Here's their story:

Living under his grandparent's roof, and worried about his mother's serious medical disability, Morris suffered horrible migraine headaches that brought him to tears each morning before school. Stressed out and misunderstood, Morris was put on medication for anxiety in the second grade, when he was held back because of failing grades. His mother was at a loss.

Enter the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship program.

Morris was placed in the Yvonne C. Reed Christian School in St. Petersburg, Florida, where he thrived in a nurturing environment. His teachers mentored him, coached him through his



Dedra and Morris Houston

academic studies, and addressed his emotional issues. With the appropriate guidance, Morris was able to make his first year of attending private school a true success story.

The result: Morris made honor roll four out of five marking periods and did very well on his national standardized tests.

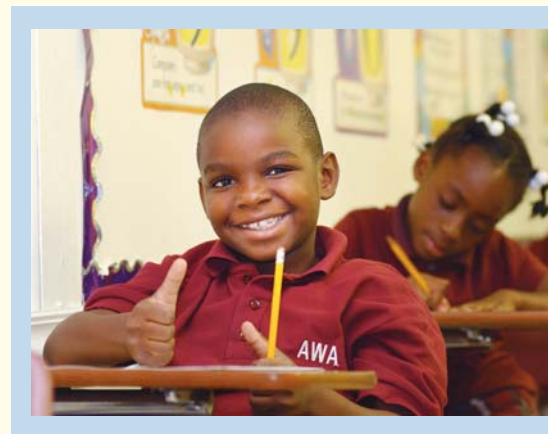
Look for Dedra and Morris in coming weeks, or view their ad on www.stepupforstudents.com.

Donor Corner: A Two Million Dollar Priority for Albertsons



Albertsons is proud to partner with Florida's parents to help them obtain the best possible education for their children. A founding participant of Step Up For Students and supporter of the Corporate Tax Credit program, Albertsons has generously invested approximately \$2 million in this initiative.

One of the largest retail food and drug chains in the United States, Albertsons prides itself on adapting to the changing needs of customers



and their communities. Albertsons motto is "Helping make your life easier." Thanks to Florida Division President Larry Walstrom, Albertsons participation in the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship has affected the lives of almost 550 Florida children.

Thanks, Albertsons, for your loyalty and support!

For more information on becoming a corporate sponsor, please call Kerri Vaughan at (786) 314-5609.

Are You Keeping It a Secret?

Don't keep the CTC program a secret from others who could benefit. Let your friends know how they can get on the waiting list for an application. The Florida Association of Scholarship Funding Organizations (FLA-SFO) has two ways to register:

Option 1:

Log onto www.stepupforstudents.com where you'll find details on eligibility requirements. Once on the website, click on Parents in the menu items, which links you to your Waitlist Application Form.

Option 2:

If you do not have access to the Internet, you may call (813) 318-0995 to have your name added to the application waitlist.

Scholarships are offered when funding becomes available or when current recipients graduate, move, or are no longer eligible for the CTC Scholarship program. Scholarships will be awarded only to students who qualify for the federal government's free or reduced lunch program. Every applicant is verified annually for eligibility.

Everyone Has a Story to Tell - What's Yours?

Students, parents, and donors now have the opportunity to "Step Up For Students" by contributing stories about how the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship is making a difference in their life. You, too, have a story if you can answer just some of these questions:

- Do you know a person who has overcome tremendous obstacles thanks to the CTC?
- Has a CTC recipient received national or state awards for art, sports or science?
- Do you have compelling photos or videos that reinforce the power of your story?

News Tip: February is Black History Month. Do you know a special African American teacher, principal, administrator or leader involved in the Scholarship program? If so, let us know!

Call our Step Up For Students Newsletter Hotline at (305) 572-2159, or drop us an email at stepupforstudents@yahoo.com to report stories you think are newsworthy regarding the CTC Scholarship, your school, or a special student.