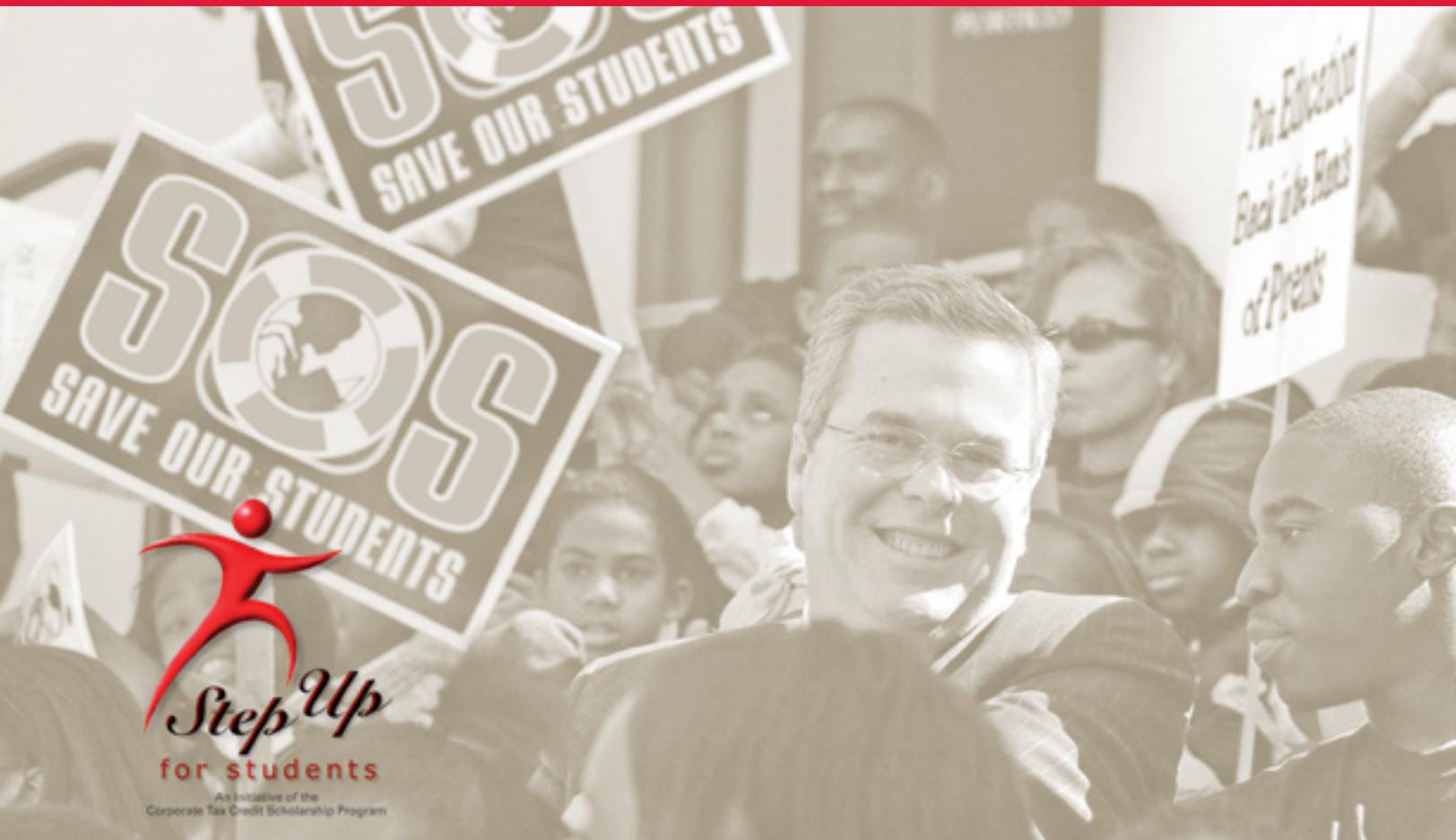


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IMPORTANT UPDATES ON SCHOOL CHOICE IN FLORIDA



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF STEP UP FOR STUDENTS

RENEWAL APPLICATION CALENDAR AND CHECKLIST



It is time to re-apply for your scholarship!

This year, Children First-Florida will charge a penalty fee for the extra time required to process applications with incomplete information and documentation. Be sure to complete your application soon; scholarships are awarded on a first completed, first awarded basis.

March 2006: Scholarship Applications Available

May 1, 2006: Renewal Application Deadline

June 30, 2006: Applications for Children First-Florida New Students Deadline

- ✓ Answer every question completely.
- ✓ PRINT CLEARLY.
- ✓ Include all information and proof of income required.
- ✓ Do not staple anything to the application form.
- ✓ Make a copy of the application package for your records.
- ✓ Send all of your family's applications in one envelope.
- ✓ Use proper postage.
- ✓ Include a money order for the non-refundable processing fee.

If you choose not to renew any or all of your children's scholarships, please contact your SFO as soon as possible so that scholarship can be awarded to another student.

RALLY IN TALLY '06

4,000 Parents, Students and Teachers Work to Protect Scholarship Programs.

Parents, students and teachers traveled to Tallahassee from as far away as Miami and Ft Myers to rally for the protection of Opportunity Scholarships, McKay Scholarships and Corporate Tax Credit (CTC) Scholarships. Wearing t-shirts with the message "S.O.S. Save Our Students", participants asked the state legislature to do whatever is necessary to protect the scholarship programs that are benefiting more than 30,000 Florida students.

Speakers included elected officials, school leaders and scholarship parents. The highlight of the day was the keynote address by Governor Jeb Bush. Following the rally, some participants met with their elected officials to explain the benefits of the scholarship programs in their communities.

The Florida Supreme Court ruled in January that Opportunity Scholarships violate the state constitution. To protect the educational options of current Opportunity Scholarship students, Gov. Bush proposed legislation that would allow Opportunity Scholarship students to transfer to the CTC Program. The Governor also announced a joint resolution that would place the issue of state-funded K-12 scholarships on the November ballot, allowing parents

and families, rather than lawmakers, to make decisions about education.

Sponsored by the Florida Alliance for Choices in Education (FACE), the Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools, the Black Alliance for Educational Options and the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options, the rally was the largest school choice rally in U.S. History and gave a clear signal that Florida's scholarship programs are working wonders for the students they serve. Undoubtedly the most important scholarship rally we have ever held, this year's event accomplished many goals, thanks to the dedication of our participants. Thanks to everyone who made it possible!



Bishop Harold Ray greets 4,000 parents, students and teachers at the Tallahassee Rally.



YOUR CHILDREN MAY QUALIFY FOR LOW COST HEALTH INSURANCE



The Florida Healthy Kids Corporation is working to get all eligible children insured! If your children do not have health insurance and they meet the income standards to qualify for a Step Up For Students Scholarship, they may also qualify for Healthy Kids!

Healthy Kids provides health insurance to children ages 5-18 who are uninsured and whose family income exceeds Medicaid eligibility. Other eligibility requirements may also apply.

- Monthly premiums depend on your household size and income. Most families pay \$15 or \$20 a month.
- You may have to pay small charges or co-payments for some services.

Enrollment is open year-round and it is easier than ever to apply. There are two simple ways you can apply:

- Go to the website www.healthykids.org and apply online.
- Call Healthy Kids at 1-888-540 KIDS (5437) to request an application packet by mail.

If you apply online, a checklist of required documents will be printed for you. These documents can then be e-mailed, faxed or mailed to:

Florida KidCare

Mail: P.O. Box 980, Tallahassee, FL 32302-0980

FAX: (850) 681-2131

Overnight:

661 East Jefferson Street, 2nd Floor,

Tallahassee, FL 32301

E-mail: apply@healthykids.org

If you have additional questions or need help completing the application, call the **Florida KidCare Hotline** at 1-888-540-5437.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The 2006 Florida Legislative Session is the most important law-making session for educational issues since the beginning of Florida's school choice programs. There are two major areas on which Step Up For Students is focusing our legislative outreach: the joint resolution on scholarships and scholarship accountability legislation.

At the Tallahassee Rally on Feb. 15, Gov. Jeb Bush proposed a joint resolution that would put the issue of state-funded scholarships on the ballot in November. The Supreme Court ruled in January that Opportunity Scholarships are unconstitutional. The ruling signals danger for the McKay and CTC Scholarship Programs, but the Governor's proposed amendment would protect those programs in case of a future legal challenge. Three-fifths of the legislature must agree for it to be included on the ballot. Step Up For Students applauds the Governor for putting school choice back where it belongs – in the hands of parents. To ask your elected official to support the joint resolution, visit www.face.org and click on Email Legislators on the left menu bar.

To learn more about the current accountability legislation being considered, visit <http://capwiz.com/face/issues/bills/>.

To help ensure the McKay and CTC Scholarships continue to improve the lives of thousands of Florida children, Step Up For Students supports accountability legislation for program participants. We have worked closely with schools and other organizations to develop requirements that help the public measure the value and stability of the programs without being so strict as to prevent good schools from participating. One of the reasons the Supreme Court cited in its opinion on Opportunity Scholarships for not supporting the program was lack of accountability. It is crucial, then, that we put into law the good standards and practices already in place at the vast majority of schools who accept scholarships.



DONOR CORNER

ACCREDITED SURETY
AND CASUALTY:STOPPING THE
CYCLE... ONE
STEP AT A TIME

Step Up For Students donor Accredited Surety and Casualty, one of the nation's top bail underwriting firms, is owned and run by a Florida family who truly value education. Principals and sisters Deborah and Sharon Jallad and the whole Jallad family have supported the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program since 2003, during which time they have donated nearly half a million dollars.

Accredited was founded in 1971 by Hardy Snow, Jr., Deborah and Sharon's father. In 1993, after he suffered a debilitating stroke, the sisters – along with their husbands (who happen to be brothers) – decided to keep the business in the family. In the 12 years since the family four-some took the reins, Accredited has grown from an eight-state, mono-line insurance company into a 50-state national insurance company offering non contract commercial surety bonds and bail.

Deborah and Sharon consider education the key to success. Prior to joining the family business, Sharon taught middle school and is the Vice President of the Adult Literacy League and serves on its Board of Directors. Deborah has home schooled her son, now a 10th grader, since he was in the fifth grade and plans to continue until he graduates.



Deborah Jallad



Sharon Jallad

In both their professional roles, Deborah and Sharon have seen firsthand the vital role education plays in helping children overcome life's challenges. Well-educated children are empowered to make good life choices and have the opportunity to improve their own circumstances and their community.

"A good education makes a positive impact on how a child feels about his or her place in the community. It can give a disadvantaged child the boost he or she needs to succeed in the future," says Sharon. "Our family is proud to support Step Up For Students and we look forward to working with this valuable organization."

Not only are Deborah and Sharon two of the only – if not the only – women to own and operate a privately held property and casualty insurance company in the country, they also are shining examples of how business leaders can use their expertise to truly make a difference in the community.

Step Up For Students thanks Accredited Surety and Casualty and the Jallad family for their commitment to education and improving the lives of thousands of Florida students.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Step Up For Students parents Kerry and David Ryan of Cape Coral know something about the challenges of educating unique children. They have eight adopted and five biological children, some of whom use a Step Up For Students Scholarship to attend the school of their choice, including fourth grader Kaylee, who attends Evangelical Christian School in Ft. Myers.



Kaylee Ryan

Kaylee's biological mother abused drugs and was in prison when she was pregnant with Kaylee. She was adopted by the Ryans, who had already adopted two of her siblings, when she was two weeks old. Mrs. Ryan had home schooled her children for 12 years before Kaylee reached school age. No longer able to home school nine children, Mrs. Ryan was thrilled to learn Kaylee qualified for the Step Up For Students Scholarship program.

Kaylee has refused to be held back by asthma and ADHD and has succeeded wonderfully at her chosen school. She is now an A and B student whose maturity and leadership have made her family and her school proud. She is an active member of her church and enjoys family outings. Her success puts her in good company with her siblings, among whom are three National Honor Society members, two National Honor Society inductees and an autistic sister who has been named a Who's Who Among High School Students.

Step Up For Students congratulates Kaylee and the whole Ryan family for their commitment to education and their shining success in the face of adversity. Keep up the good work!

Want to nominate your student
for our Student Spotlight?
Visit [www.stepupforstudents.com/
parents.htm](http://www.stepupforstudents.com/parents.htm)
to send us your story.