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Her 2 sides of the story: Step Up For Students is a life-changer for all

BY LISA A. DAVIS

Kris Pupello has seen the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship up close from two vantage points: as both a private school and corporate donor employee. “I bring a unique perspective on Step Up For Students,” she said. “Many years ago, I worked at St. Joseph Catholic School in Tampa, which participates in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship. And for the past six years I’ve worked for Johnson Brothers, which donates funds to Step Up For Students to make these scholarships possible.”

Step Up For Students’ Florida Tax Credit Scholarship provides assistance for qualified lower-income students, homeless children and students in foster or out-of-home care to choose the school of their choice. The scholarship provides tuition assistance to the private school of their parents’ choice or financial assistance to offset the transportation cost to an out-of-district public school. Since 2001, Step Up has awarded more than 680,000 scholarships.

St. Joseph’s Catholic School has been a longtime participant of the program and serves a predominantly Hispanic population. While at St. Joseph, Pupello wore many hats, including working in the school office and in the classroom as a substitute teacher, and got a front-row look at how the scholarship helps children.

“After giving parents a tour of the school, many times I would hear them say how much they wanted to send their children to the school. They would say, they want this background for their kids, the sense of community at a small school, but simply couldn’t afford it,” Pupello recalled. “That’s when I had the privilege of telling them about the Step Up scholarship.”

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Kris Pupello, left, talks about the benefits of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program she has seen during the time she worked at a participating school, and now as an employee of a Johnson Brothers. She spoke at a company sales meeting in April when Johnson Brothers of Florida President Frank Galante, right, announced a \$9.6 million contribution to Step Up For Students.

Florida Legislature adds flexibility to corporate income tax credits

BY ANNE FRANCIS

Florida lawmakers have made several noteworthy changes to the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program in 2018 aimed at making the program easier for corporations to participate.

For all eligible tax credits, earned in a taxable year beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2018, the carry-forward period was extended to ten years for contributions made on or after Jan. 1, 2018. Additionally, unused tax credits will be carried forward automatically and companies no longer need to submit an application to the department. Contributions made in a taxable year prior to Jan. 1, 2018, fall under the previous limit of five years.

The most significant changes were made to corporate income tax credits. The new provisions make partnering with Step Up For Students even more appealing for corporations with a Florida corporate income tax liability:

Greater flexibility in when companies can earn their credits: Companies can now reserve credits and contribute to Step Up For Students on or before the date the corporate income tax payer is required to file its Florida corporate income/franchise tax return for that tax year, including any valid extended due date. Corporations should reserve tax credits within the fiscal year or before requesting an extension of time to file the return to avoid potential penalties associated with the failure to pay the required tentative taxes.

Greater flexibility in how the tax credit is counted: Contributions to Step Up For Students now count toward any estimated payment and reduce the corporation’s exposure for underpayment penalties. Coupled with the new flexibility related to earning credits, corporations are able to maximize the value of their money while reducing the risk with planning.

Up to 100 percent of a corporation’s Florida corporate income tax liability is eligible for the dollar-for-dollar tax credit. For more information, please refer to Florida Department of Revenue TIP No. 18ADM-03 or call (866) 344-9553.

New program allows corporate lease tax to fund scholarships

BY LISA A. DAVIS

Corporations leasing property for their businesses in Florida can now choose to use their commercial lease tax obligations to help some of Florida’s most disadvantaged children access educational opportunities that work best for them.

The new program, called the Florida Sales Tax Credit Scholarship Program for Commercial Leases, was created by the Florida Legislature during its last session. It allows any tenant that pays business rent tax to instead make a contribution to Step Up For Students and receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit from the state.

Contributions made through this program will fund K-12 scholarships for Florida’s most vulnerable children: children from low-income households within 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Line and children in foster care.

To participate, the corporate tenant reserves credits with the Florida Department of Revenue (DOR). Credits can be reserved as of July 1, 2018 and contributions to earn the rent tax credit are eligible beginning October 1, 2018. Credits are approved on a first-come, first-served basis. Businesses may apply for credits multiple times during the state fiscal year as long as the total statewide credits allocated have not exceeded the cap. Reserving credits does not oblige a company to remit the funds – it merely ensures that the annual maximum in tax credits is not oversubscribed.

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COMMERCIAL LEASE STORY FROM PAGE 1

Once the credits are approved by the DOR, the tenant will remit payment to Step Up and receive a Certificate of Contribution. The tenant will provide the documentation to their landlord and the landlord will claim the credit with the DOR on its monthly return.

So far, members of the Florida business world are already lauding the new program.

“As a founding donor to Step Up, it’s very rewarding to see students achieve success from attending schools that more fully meet their needs,” said Bealls CEO Steve Knopik. “I am a strong proponent of eliminating business rent tax, but I am glad to see a small portion of it be eligible for the scholarship program.”

R. Scott Shalley, President & CEO of the Florida Retail Federation, the state’s premier trade association, says it’s a move that not only helps students, but the future of Florida as well.

“Retailers have long supported Step Up For Students and its mission to provide educational opportunities to Florida’s underprivileged students,” he said. “The recent legislation to add business rent tax to the list of eligible tax credits will give another avenue for retailers to support this worthy program. Capped at just \$57.5 million, it is a small allocation of the overall pool and I’m happy to see these dollars can be put to a good cause that helps the state of Florida and our future workforce.”

For the 2017-18 school year, Step Up For Students served about 110,000 students through the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program for lower-income children and the Gardiner Scholarship for children with certain special needs.

Scholarships Available For:

- BULLIED STUDENTS
- READING HELP
- SPECIAL NEEDS
- LOWER-INCOME

LEARN MORE

Step Up for students

Step Up now offers four scholarships

During this year’s Florida Legislative session, lawmakers created two new scholarships: The Hope Scholarship and the Reading Scholarship Accounts. Step Up For Students is excited to run these two programs for Florida schoolchildren.

The Hope Scholarship Program is a tuition-assistance scholarship offered to schoolchildren who are bullied or victims of violence in a public school. The scholarship gives parents the opportunity to transfer their child to another K-12 public school with available capacity within the school district, receive a scholarship to transport the student to a public school in another school district, or to request a scholarship for the student to attend an eligible private school. A qualifying incident must have taken place at a public K-12 educational institution, any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity, riding on the school bus or waiting at the school bus stop.

The Reading Scholarship Accounts program is a program for public school students in grades three to five who struggle with reading that to fund reading enrichment.

The program offers parents access to educational savings accounts, worth \$500 each, to pay for tuition and fees related to part-time tutoring, summer and after-school literacy programs, instructional materials and curriculum related to reading or literacy.

These are in addition to the **Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program (FTC)** for lower-income students, and the **Gardiner Scholarship** for children with certain special needs.

To learn more about all Step Up For Students has to offer, please visit our website at www.StepUpForStudents.org.

Monin helps quench palates and nourish young brains

BY LISA A. DAVIS

If you don’t know Monin by brand name, you surely know its taste. From nutty to buttery to fruity and spice, or the good old standards of chocolate or vanilla, Monin products show up in coffees, smoothies and even ice cream sundaes worldwide.

The century-old producer of premium syrups, gourmet sauces, fruit purées, mixes for coffees, iced teas, lemonades, cocktails and more, has expanded its reach several times over from Bourges, France in 1912, to a manufacturing site in Clearwater, Florida, in 1996, and beyond.

But what adds to the global appeal of this company that tempts taste buds in more than 140 countries, is its dedication to social responsibility. Step Up For Students is one way the company supports the community it serves. This is the second consecutive year Monin has partnered with Step

Up For Students, bringing the company’s total contribution to \$130,000.

“Monin embraces the meaning of generosity and giving back to our community. Our partnership with Step Up For Students allows us to support and improve the lives of people in our Tampa Bay community through K-12 educational scholarships,” said Bill Lombardo, Monin CEO. “We are proud of our support of helping develop future leaders.”

The Monin U.S. Headquarters and Flavor Innovation Center are based out of Clearwater, Florida, where more than 150 employees create and produce new flavors to satisfy anyone’s palate. The team there also oversees all of Monin’s sales and operations throughout North America, South America and the Caribbean.

Step Up helps administer the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program for lower-income K-12 school children, allowing recipients to choose between a scholarship to help with



Monin CEO Bill Lombardo (forth from right) presents Step Up For Students President Doug Tuthill (middle) with a \$70,000 check to provide scholarships for underserved Florida schoolchildren at an event earlier this year at Guardian Angels Catholic School in Clearwater. Joining them are Guardian Angels Principal Mary Stalzer and several Step Up scholars benefiting from the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program

private school tuition and fees, or a transportation scholarship to attend an out-of-district public school.

“Providing access to educational options and finding the right learning environment for all students is vitally important today. We’re grateful that Monin joins us in our mission to provide these opportunities to families that otherwise would not be able to access them,” said Doug Tuthill, Step Up For Students president. “On behalf of Step Up and the families we serve, we thank Monin for your continued support.”

For the 2017-18 school year, Step Up served about 100,000

students with the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program throughout Florida with tuition scholarships valued at up to \$6,343 per student for kindergarten through fifth grade, \$6,631 for sixth through eighth grade, and \$6,920 for ninth through 12th grade. More than 1,900 private schools participate in the scholarship program statewide.

For more information about Monin, visit www.monin.com. To learn more about Step Up’s scholarships or to apply, visit www.StepUpForStudents.org.

DONOR CORNER



Frontline Insurance Vice President of Business Development Brian Smith (behind check left) presents Step Up For Students CFO Joe Pfountz (behind check right) with a \$1.1 million donation. The donation will provide 163 scholarships for Florida schoolchildren through the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. They are joined by several students from Holy Cross Lutheran Academy in Sanford who are benefiting from the scholarship.

Frontline Insurance donates \$1.1 million to Step Up For Students Program

BY PAUL SOOST

Frontline Insurance, provider of property and casualty insurance for coastal homeowners, announced on May 10 a \$1.1 million donation to Step Up For Students, helping lower-income children attend the K-12 school that best fits their learning needs.

The contribution was celebrated at Holy Cross Lutheran Academy in Sanford with an activity helping students get prepared for the upcoming hurricane season.

Holy Cross fifth-graders learned about hurricanes and how they can help make sure their families are prepared, should a hurricane threaten Florida. Students assembled safety kits to take home for their families.

During the event, Frontline Insurance Vice President of Business Development Brian Smith presented the \$1.1 million check to Step Up For Students. The donation will fund 163 K-12 scholarships for the 2017-18 school year through the Florida

Tax Credit Scholarship Program, which serves lower-income children in Florida so they can attend the school of their choice. About 90 students at Holy Cross use the tax-credit scholarship.

“Frontline Insurance is proud to be active in our Florida communities, educating children and families on the importance of being prepared for hurricane season,” said Smith. “We’re even more excited to help Florida children and families prepare for a successful future through our support of educational choice and the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program. Finding the right learning environment for every child will help put them on the path to future success.”

During its four-year partnership with Step Up, Frontline Insurance has donated \$3.56 million dollars to Step Up For Students, the nonprofit that administers the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program for financially disadvantaged schoolchildren. The program is funded with tax-credited donations and allows parents and schoolchildren to choose

between a K-12 scholarship that helps with private school tuition and fees, or one that assists with transportation costs to out-of-county public schools.

“Since 2014, more than 570 Florida schoolchildren have been able to attend the school of their choice thanks to the generosity of Frontline Insurance. We are truly grateful that Frontline Insurance joins us in our mission to provide educational options for deserving families,” said Step Up CFO Joe Pfountz. “On behalf of Step Up and the families we serve, we thank Frontline Insurance for its continued commitment and support.”

For the 2017-18 school year, Step Up For Students served more than 100,000 students throughout Florida with tuition scholarships valued at up to \$6,343 per student for kindergarten through fifth grade, \$6,631 for sixth through eighth grade, and \$6,920 for ninth through 12th grade. About 1,900 private schools participate in the scholarship program statewide.

TAXIMIZE Verb: (tax/suh/myse)

To optimize your Florida corporate tax liability by investing in K-12 scholarships for underprivileged schoolchildren in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit.

When companies invest in Step Up, they make a lasting impact on the lives of scholarship students and inspire a brighter future through personalized education. Since 2001, the corporate community has pledged more than \$3.3 billion to this initiative, providing more than 680,000 scholarships for economically disadvantaged children. Taximize is the word we’ve coined to describe how a company can optimize its tax liability to invest in underprivileged students through dollar-for-dollar tax credits.

Will you taximize? Call 866-344-9553 for more information.





JOHNSON BROTHERS STORY FROM PAGE 1



Johnson Brothers of Florida President Frank Galante, right, presents Step Up For Students President Doug Tuthill, left, with a contribution of \$9.6 million during Johnson Brothers General Sales Managers' meeting on April 25. The donation will fund 1,468 scholarships for lower-income Florida schoolchildren to attend the K-12 school of their choice. Joining them is Brenda Henson Budd, principal of St. Joseph Catholic School, a school in West Tampa that participates in the scholarship program.

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This is the official newsletter for Step Up For Students, published four times a year.

Pupello would get to know scholars and notice their demeanor and outlook on life change after settling into to St. Joseph.

“These were poor kids. You would see these kids’ personalities transform. You know kids who were shy, you just watched them blossom.

What the scholars and their families seemed to benefit most from is the school’s family-like atmosphere and smaller classroom size.

“I’ve seen it transform kids who came in with no hope in their eyes become hopeful. Kids who had no basis for succeeding, no thoughts that they were every going to do anything with their lives transform. They became top students,” Pupello said. “I saw children go onto achieve great things through the benefit of the Step Up scholarship.”

And now at Johnson Brothers of Florida, a wine, spirits and beer distributor located in Tampa, with headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota, she has seen what it means to work with a company that makes these scholarships possible through dollar-for-dollar tax-credited corporate donations. In fact, until recently, she had no idea her employer donated to the scholarship program she knows so well, and whole heartedly supports.

“The reason I had no idea was because Johnson Brothers is a company that does things behind the scenes. They don’t do it for the glory,” she said. “You don’t do things for the recognition, or for the pat on the back, or to have your name in the paper, you do it because it’s the right thing to do, it’s what matters. And that’s Johnson Brothers. That’s how this company operates. They are the silent heroes.”

Johnson Brothers has donated to Step Up For Students for the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program for six consecutive years, most recently with a \$9.6 million contribution. This donation alone allowed more than 1,468 K-12 students to attend the school of their choice during the 2017-18 school year.

“Finding the right school for your child to attend is important to every family, regardless of their income and the neighborhood they live in. Johnson Brothers is thrilled to support a program that so positively affects the lives of Florida children,” said Frank Galante, president of Johnson Brothers of Florida. “We are proud of the difference we are making in our community and look forward to our continued partnership with Step Up For Students.”

It’s that sentiment that makes Pupello enjoy her work with Johnson Brothers ever more.

“Working here makes me proud to know they are offering the tools to children who might not otherwise have them,” she said. “And they are handing them to the children and saying, ‘Go be great.’ You have your dreams and we’re giving you the chance to make them come true.”