



Rensselaer Republican > Local News

College Goal Sunday provides free help to Indiana students filing for financial aid

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College Goal Sunday is a charitable program of the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association (ISFAA) that provides free information and assistance to Indiana families filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Now in its 20th year, College Goal Sunday has helped more than 70,000 Indiana students and families complete the complicated FAFSA form properly and on time, and has been cited as a valuable resource for first-generation college students and at-risk youth.

For Indiana students seeking undergraduate admission to a college or technical school in 2009, it is important to file the FAFSA – the form required by educational institutions nationwide – so that it is received by the federal processor by March 10. By filing on time, students have an improved chance of receiving federal and state grants, loans and scholarships, as well as other financial aid.

College Goal Sunday 2009 will be held locally from 2 - 4 p.m. CST Feb. 15 in the Banet Core Education Building on the campus of Saint Joseph's College.

At this event, financial aid professionals will be available to answer families' individual questions and help to complete the FAFSA. FAFSA filing online capability will be available as well as a Spanish interpreter.

It is important to note that even though the site is being held at Saint Joseph's College, this event is for students (of all ages) who intend to pursue any type of higher education beginning after June 1, 2009, whether it be vocational, technical, 2- or 4-year colleges.

For more information, visit www.CollegeGoalSunday.org.

Students should attend College Goal Sunday with their parents or guardians and bring their parents' completed 2008 IRS 1040 tax returns, W-2 Forms and other 2008 income and benefits information. If students worked last year, they should also bring their income information. Students 24 years of age or older may attend alone and bring their own completed 2008 IRS 1040 tax return, W-2 Form or other 2008 income and benefits information. Pens and FAFSA Worksheets will be provided, but students are encouraged to bring their own FAFSA Worksheet and their U.S. Department of Education Personal Identification Numbers (PIN) if filing online.

Parents will also need to obtain PINs to file online. To obtain a PIN go to www.pin.ed.gov.

Students attending College Goal Sunday qualify for a chance to win an educational prize to help with their higher education expenses. Three educational prizes, worth \$300 each, will be awarded statewide – one for northern Indiana, one for central Indiana and one for southern Indiana. The winners will be notified in March; prizes will be sent directly to the higher education institutions selected by winning students. To enter the drawing, students must attend College Goal Sunday and submit a completed evaluation form.

Each year, ISFAA is fortunate to have the support of hundreds of volunteers from the financial aid and education communities who help on average about 5,000 students and parents complete the FAFSA at College Goal Sunday.

“We have seen firsthand the disappointment of students who don't complete their financial aid paperwork properly or in a timely manner,” said Becky Shide, site coordinator for College Goal Sunday and financial aid specialist, Saint Joseph's College. “That's why ISFAA continues to provide College Goal Sunday for Indiana students and families. If our assistance gives students a better chance at higher education, we're fulfilling our mission.”

College Goal Sunday has more than tripled its reach from 10 sites statewide, in its first year, to 36 sites currently, and it has become a national model to other College Goal Sunday programs. In addition to Indiana, College Goal Sunday now takes place in more than 25 other states.

ISFAA's College Goal Sunday is one of the highlights of Financial Aid Awareness Month. In February, students and their families can call the Learn More Indiana helpline at 800-992-2076 and have their questions answered by financial aid professionals. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education supports the helpline. For more information about College Goal Sunday or Financial Aid Awareness Month, call the helpline or visit www.CollegeGoalSunday.org.