

Program: Teen Tracks College Access Initiatives

Initial Posting: Mar
15,
2007

Agency: [Commission on Economic Opportunity of Luzerne County](#)

Last Revised: Jan
28,
2010

Purpose

The Commission on Economic Opportunity established Teen Tracks to help increase access to college among low-income high school students.

Description

The [Commission on Economic Opportunity \(CEO\)](#) created [Teen Tracks](#) to offer several types of assistance to help low-income students pursue higher education opportunities including a Youth Savings Account Program, an SAT Preparation Course, and College Scholarship Awards.

Youth Savings Account Program

The [Youth Savings Account Program \(YSA\)](#) gives income-eligible high school students an opportunity to gain important financial and educational skills while saving money to use toward a specific goal. State funds are used to match \$1.00 to every dollar saved, up to \$2,000 according to provisions specified in a [YSA Program Agreement](#). Students are required to save for a minimum of one year, but most save for the maximum time which is either two or three years depending on their enrollment date. Involvement is required in workshops on important topics, such as [financial literacy](#), car purchase and maintenance, and S.A.T. preparation. Individual counseling and guidance is also available throughout the entire process.



SAT Preparation Course

An intensive [SAT Preparation Course](#) is offered for low-income high school students who may not otherwise have opportunities for either SAT preparation or college tuition assistance. [Information about the course](#) including the registration form is forwarded to guidance counselors in order to receive nominations of students for the course. The course focuses on the dynamics of the test itself, how to make the most of what skills one already has, and how to evaluate what types of remedial instruction may help raise SAT scores. The course is free and is held for 16 hours over two consecutive weekends. CEO offers the course annually during the school year – usually in February.

College Scholarships

[College Scholarships](#) are awarded each year to help with tuition for up to five years of undergraduate and graduate school. [Material about the scholarship program](#) is sent to every public and private school to receive nomination of students for scholarships. The program was created under the leadership of CEO Board President Monsignor Andrew McGowan. In addition to the extensive efforts of Monsignor McGowan, the William McGowan Foundation has been a source of support for graduate scholarships. William, the founder of MCI was Andrew's brother, who as a graduate student could not afford a second year at Harvard Business School to earn his MBA degree. After receiving Harvard's Baker Scholarship, he was able to complete his MBA and launch a successful business career as founder and chairman of MCI Communications. Mr. McGowan never forgot about the generosity that got him where he wanted to go, so he created enduring funds that would allow other students to improve their lives. His sense of social responsibility has been astounding. He gives back to the community and has remained attached and aware of his roots, allowing him to understand the predicaments of financially burdened youths and rewarding them for their outstanding achievements and passions.

Outcomes

CEO began accepting high schools students into the YSA Program in the summer of 2004. Ten high school students graduated from the program, 5 used the match towards education and the other 5 for vehicle purchase to and from school and/or work. The total saved by students was \$20,168.89 plus total match received of \$18,524.15. Two students were still active in the program as of January 2010.

37 students participated in the SAT Preparation Course during the 2008-2009 school year.

The undergraduate scholarship program started with only one scholar per year, but the candidates were so compelling in their need and obstacles they've overcome that it has recently been averaging about 10 per year. CEO awarded 13 scholarships in 2006. There were 41 active scholars as of February 2007. This now amounts to \$61,500 per year in scholarships (\$1,500 x 41). Over time, there have been 152 scholars and only 14 did not complete their college education.

Contact

Name: [Kathy O'Neill](#), Director of Planning

Phone: 570.826.0510 ext. 217

Name: [Natalie Nilon](#), Family Savings Account Coordinator

Phone: 570.826.0510 ext. 275