



Educational Talent Search Parent Newsletter



A Publication of the Educational Talent Search Program at Clarion University

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CAN A PERSON UNDER 21 GET MONEY FOR SCHOOL ON THEIR OWN?

Many parents feel that due to circumstances in their life, they should not have to provide parental information for student financial aid. Although many people between the ages of 18 and 23 may be living on their own or doing things on their own (or parents may not be willing to support higher education), according to the eligibility requirements established by the federal government, a person is not eligible to receive need based aid without parental financial information unless:

- ✓ A person will be at least 24 years old by December 31 of the academic year for which the student is applying.
- ✓ A person is a veteran of the US Armed Forces.
- ✓ A person is working toward an advanced degree (beyond a bachelor's).
- ✓ A person is married.
- ✓ A person is an orphan or a ward of the court or was a ward of the court until age 18.
- ✓ A person has legal dependents receiving more than half their support from the applicant.

If a person can meet one or more of the criteria listed above, then they will be considered an "independent student" for eligibility purposes for financial aid. If a person does NOT qualify as an independent student, their financial eligibility will be based on the person's and their parents' income and assets, and they will be required to report parental financial information on all forms they complete. If a person feels special circumstances exist that will qualify them as an independent student, they should talk to the Financial Aid Officer at the school they plan to attend.

CAUTION TEEN AT THE WHEEL



It may be tempting for parents to allow their newly licensed teens to drive themselves to their friends' houses or pick up a few things at the grocery. After all, they are actually eager to do the chores parents have grumbled about for years. But before they sit back and leave the driving to their kids, parents need to be aware of some disturbing statistics. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), crashes are the leading cause of death among American teens, accounting for more than one-third of all deaths of 16- to 18-year-olds. This should be reason enough for parents to take their teens' driving very seriously and to insist that their teens do, too. And, if beginning drivers complain about too many limits and too little freedom behind the wheel, parents can show them the following data from IIHS:

- ✓ Teen drivers have the highest crash risk of any age group.
- ✓ Compared with crashes of older drivers, those of 16-year-olds more often involve driver error.
- ✓ More of 16-year-olds' fatal crashes involve only the teen's vehicle.
- ✓ Sixteen-year-olds' fatal crashes are more likely to occur when other teenagers are in the car. The risk increases with every additional passenger.
- ✓ Per mile driven, the nighttime fatal crash rate for 16-year-olds is about twice as high as during the day.
- ✓ Teenagers generally are less likely than adults to use safety belts.

Obviously teens need to drive to get experience, but that doesn't mean they should have unlimited access. Parents can make this time as safe as possible by accompanying them on their excursions, insisting on seat belt use, and allowing brand new drivers to use the car only during the day at first. As teens get more practice hours under their belts, parents can gradually allow them more freedom. As the statistics show, it takes more than a license to be a good driver - it also takes patience and practice, and good parenting.

COOKIN' IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Are you living near a meth lab? Meth labs are on the increase in Northwestern PA. In 2004, Northwestern PA produced over half of the meth labs seized in the state. Forty-one labs were seized in Crawford County and eleven in Venango County. Here are some things to watch for:

- ⊗ Unusual, strong odors (like cat urine, ether, ammonia, chemicals)
- ⊗ Residences with windows blacked out or open on very cold days
- ⊗ Renters who pay their landlord in cash (Most dealers deal exclusively in cash.)
- ⊗ Unusually high amounts of traffic at odd times (late night or very early morning)
- ⊗ Excessive trash including larger amount of containers for: antifreeze, kitty litter, lantern fuel, discarded coffee filters, drain cleaner, and duct tape
- ⊗ Clear glass containers or chemistry glassware brought into the house

Below is a partial list of items that could indicate the existence of a meth lab:

Alcohol	Freon
Iodine crystals	Ether
Hot plates	Acetone
Diet aids	Batteries/lithium
Bronchodilators	Rock salt
Cold tablet packs	Drano
Epsom Salts	Propane cylinders

If you suspect a lab in your neighborhood, do not approach it. Call the Pennsylvania State Police.

Information provided by the PA State Police, Clarion Barracks, 814-226-1710.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT DRUGS!

Recently, a local man was sentenced for drug possession. My seven-year-old son overheard a family conversation about it. He wanted to know what we were talking about. This began our conversation about drugs and alcohol, and the consequences of drug use, possession, and selling. Wow, what an hour that was!

Following are some recommendations for talking with your child:

AGES 13 - 18: Provide open communication. Teens need to be able to talk more now than ever. This is a time when critical decisions are made.

- ✓ Educate your child on the dangers of drinking and driving. Explain the laws and consequences. Use real life stories.
- ✓ Create a contract with your child. The contract should address issues around drug use, possession, and driving under the influence.
- ✓ Offer to pick your child up at any time with no questions asked at that time. It is important to give the option of calling you, instead of driving or riding home impaired. **DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS.** Simply pick up your child and go home.

Any child can get caught up in experimenting with drugs and alcohol. You may provide a good home environment and your child may be very responsible and get straight As. This, however, does not mean that your child will not experiment. If your school offers an anti-drug program, take part in it. Be aware of your child's whereabouts and get to know their friends. Remember that children are most likely to try drugs:

1. If their friends are doing it.
2. If they feel socially isolated.
3. If there is a sudden tragedy in their life.

The best thing you can do for your child is to open the lines of communication! Your child will trust and respect you more if he can talk to you when he has a question or a problem. Remain non-judgmental and honest with your child and you will build the bridge to guide your child in the right direction.

Below are some websites that may prove useful in dealing with this difficult topic:

www.theantidrug.com/advice
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/drugs/
<http://kidshealth.org/parent>
www.drugpolicy.org/safetyfirst
www.drugfree.org
www.talkingwithkids.org
parentingteens.about.com/od/
 (select teen drug use)
www.pamf.org/teen/parent/risk/drugs.html

GET INVOLVED: VOLUNTEER

According to the US Department of Labor (<http://www.bls.gov/cps/>), between September 2004 and September 2005, 65.4 million Americans volunteered through or for an organization. This is about 28.8% of the population.

Volunteers do work for or through an organization for which they are not paid. Teens have a volunteer rate of 30.4%, perhaps reflecting the push for volunteerism by some schools. For those 16-19 years-old, the median hours spent volunteering for one year were 36 (median, not average).

Youth age 16-19 who volunteered were most likely to work for/with educational or youth service related programs (36.5%), religious organizations (27.5%), or social or community service projects (13.6%).

The Costs and Benefits of Volunteerism published at Michigan State University Extension (<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/aoe/volunteerism/VolunteerCostBenefit.pdf>) provides a listing of benefits to the the volunteer and to the community or program. Below are listed some of those which would benefit you and/or your child:

- Increased self-esteem
- Personal development
- Increased/new skills
- Opportunity for recognition
- Meet new people
- Network with other community members
- Gain work experience
- Increase community awareness/ownership
- Personally benefit from service
- Your community benefits
- Fresh ideas to existing programs
- Sense of purpose
- Connection to future job/career
- Increase physical health
- Increase mental health
- Pay back your community
- List on scholarship applications
- List on job applications!!

So, looking for something new, a way to spend your time, an opportunity to meet people, or even have some fun? Contact groups, agencies, or organizations in your town and join the nation - VOLUNTEER!

*Volunteers are not paid -
not because they are worthless,
but because they are priceless.
- Unknown*

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: COMMUNITY YOUTH VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OF VENANGO COUNTY

The Salvation Army of Oil City is host to an innovative youth volunteer program that rewards students for their hours of service to local non-profit agencies. Although community service and volunteer work should be reward in and of themselves, providing retail vouchers as an incentive is a way to encourage involvement. There are currently 250 students participating at various levels.

Venango County residents between the ages of 10 and 18 complete an application which starts an account. (Students are eligible until the end of the summer after their senior year.) Students donate the first three hours of service, meaning there is no compensation for those hours. After the initial three hours, students earn \$3.50 per hour which is banked in an account until they request a voucher. Hours are accumulated on a calendar year basis, and accounts have to be cleared by the end of the year (December). The maximum hours a student can earn credit for in one year is 80 hours.

Every month, a newsletter goes out to participants with information about opportunities with local agencies, along with contact information. Then, students call that agency to volunteer. The agency with whom the student volunteers provides documentation of the hours served which is turned in to the Youth Volunteer Program Director, Becky Moore. That information is then credited to the individual's account.

Some examples of local agencies and activities include: YMCA - cleaning during shut down week, baby sitting; YWCA - baby sitting, putting up posters; Salvation Army - after-school tutoring; 4-H Fair - ticket booth, games; and the Oil Heritage Festival - Fun Fair, pool party, judging the kiddie parade.

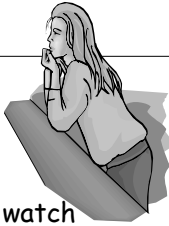
Some of the retailers where students can redeem vouchers include: Wal-Mart, JC Penney, The Bon Ton, FYE, and The Shoe Dept.

This is an excellent program which encourages volunteerism and independence. At the same time, it provides increased awareness of community and the service opportunities that are available.

For more information contact:

Becky Moore
Community Youth Volunteer Program
The Salvation Army
(814) 677-4056

"SPEAK" UP FOR TEENS



This past Labor Day weekend I found myself flipping through the channels, trying to find something worthwhile to watch (and that is getting more difficult). I stumbled onto a program that intrigued me, kept my attention, and had me thinking long after the two hour show. The movie was "Speak" and was adapted from Laurie Halse Anderson's award winning book of the same title. Melinda (the eighth grade heroine) attends a party with drinking and something really bad happens. It's so bad she won't tell anyone. Her one attempt at getting help results in being alienated from her friends. When she starts ninth grade, she is shunned by all the cliques. As the school year progresses, Melinda's grades suffer; she skips classes; and her desire and ability to speak deteriorate. The traumatic event that happened was date rape. Melinda chose to keep silent; her parents didn't notice her silence. She goes through the motions and doesn't seek assistance until her art teacher assigns a project that helps her express herself. The story deals with several serious issues that teens may face - date rape, depression, underage drinking, and cliques.

Of course, the only way you can form an opinion about the messages conveyed by the book or movie is to read/view it. The DVD was released in September of 2005 and the book was published by Farrar Straus Giroux 1999 or Penguin USA in 2001. But it does SPEAK about difficult issues teens face.

Depression is one of those issues. It's easy to attribute the lack of communication between you and your teen to a "phase." This story points out how important it is to check in with your teen. Take note if your teen is eating, closeted in his or her room when they normally would be shopping or at a sporting event, or bursts into tears for no apparent reason.

Depression affects as many as one in eight teens. Females experience depression more than males during adolescence and adulthood. There is no single cause for depression. Factors like genetics, alcohol and drug abuse, self-esteem, environment, or medical conditions play a role. So how do you recognize the warning signs or symptoms in your teen?

Signs and Symptoms of Depressed Students

- ✓ low mood or sadness most of the time (for what may seem like no reason)
- ✓ lack of energy and feeling tired all the time and inability to enjoy things that used to bring pleasure
- ✓ withdrawal from friends and family

- ✓ irritability, anger, or anxiety
- ✓ inability to concentrate
- ✓ significant weight loss or gain
- ✓ significant change in sleep patterns
- ✓ feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- ✓ aches and pains (even though nothing is physically wrong)
- ✓ pessimism and indifference (not caring about anything in the present or future)
- ✓ thoughts of death or suicide

A person is probably depressed if they exhibit five or more of these signs over a period of two weeks or longer. Depressed teens may have increased problems at school because of skipped classes, lack of interest or motivation, or poor concentration and low mental energy caused by depression. Some teens drop out altogether, expecting to fail. They also may express feelings of anger or indifference by drinking or doing drugs. Some teens may cut themselves or have eating disorders due to intense feelings of worthlessness.

Eighty percent of the people who get help for depression go on to have a happy and productive life. Therapy sessions help teens talk, understand their depression, and what to do about it. Sometimes medication is prescribed. What works for one person may not work for another. **Don't wait** and hope it will go away. Parents, friends, and family may need to step in when a person doesn't ask for help. Even parents with a strong relationship with their teen have to realize that their teen may be more comfortable talking to a teacher, guidance counselor, religious leader, or professional counselor. Don't be offended, just get help.

Sometimes we have to "speak up" for others until they get their voice.

For more information about teen depression, check out these resources:

www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind
www.focusas.com
www.about-teen-depression.com

Happiness cannot come from without. It must come from within. It is not what we see and touch or that which others do for us which makes us happy; it is that which we think and feel and do, first for the other fellow and then for ourselves.

— Helen Keller

MEGAN'S LAW

On July 29, 1994, seven-year-old Megan Kanka was lured into her neighbor's home (in Hamilton Township, New Jersey) with the promise of seeing a puppy. Instead, Megan was raped and murdered by a convicted sex offender. In 1981, he had been convicted of additional sexual crimes. Eighty-nine days after Megan's disappearance, New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman signed the first state-level version of what we know as Megan's Law. This eventually led to the May 1996 passage of a federal law - also known as Megan's Law.



As soon as your children can articulate, they can begin learning how to protect themselves. Here are some scenarios for starting discussion:

- ♦ If you are in a public place and get separated from your parents, don't wander around. Go to a checkout counter, security office, or the lost and found and tell the person in charge that you need help.
- ♦ Do not get into a car or go anywhere with anyone unless your parents tell you it is okay.
- ♦ If someone follows you on foot or in a car, stay away! Do not go near the car.
- ♦ Adults who need help should not ask children for help; they should ask other adults.
- ♦ No one should ask you for directions or for help looking for a "lost puppy," or tell you that your mother or father is in trouble and that he or she will take you to them.
- ♦ If someone tries to take you, quickly get away and yell or scream, "This man/woman is trying to take me away," or "This is not my father (mother)."
- ♦ Take a friend with you; never go places alone.
- ♦ Always ask your parents' permission to leave the yard/your home or to go into someone's home.
- ♦ Never hitchhike. Don't try to get a ride home with anyone unless your parents have told you it is okay.
- ♦ If someone wants to take your picture, tell him or her no and tell your parents or teacher.

- ♦ No one should touch you in the parts of the body that would be covered by a bathing suit, nor should you touch anyone else in those areas.

Information on people determined by a court to be sexually violent predators under Pennsylvania's "Megan's Law" is available on the internet. The information, which includes a photograph and a current address for each predator, can be accessed on the PA Power Port at www.state.pa.us PA Keyword: predator, or directly at www.psp.state.pa.us.

Pennsylvania's Megan's Law, which was developed during the 1995 Special Session on Crime, helps protect our children from individuals convicted of sexually violent crimes. Under Megan's Law in Pennsylvania, a sexually violent predator is a sexual offender who is found to possess a mental abnormality or personality disorder that makes the individual likely to engage in predatory, sexually violent offenses. The sentencing court determines whether a person convicted of a sexually violent offense is a sexually violent predator. Those determined to be predators are subject to lifetime registration of their address with the State Police and to community notification whenever the individual changes address.

Source: www.psp.state.pa.us

PROMOTE COMPUTER SAFETY



1. Do you monitor what your child does on-line?
2. Do you keep the computer in a visible spot?
3. Do you teach your child about internet safety?
4. Do you ask your child to tell you if they see questionable things on-line?

Check out the following websites for more information about keeping your child safe on-line:

www.safekids.com
<http://kids.getnetwise.org/safetyguide/>
www.ftc.gov/privacy/index.html
www.safeteens.com
www.netsmartz.org
www.getnetwise.org
www.netfamilynews.org
www.protectkids.com
www.wiredkids.org
www.BeSafeOnline.org

ATTENTION PARENTS!

Don't delay!



*Complete the Free Application for Federal
Student Aid (FAFSA).*

*Applications must be received by May 1st to
be considered by PHEAA for 2006-07.*

*If you have any questions, please contact
ETS at 814-393-2071 or 1-888-533-6487.*

Visit www.clarion.edu/ets for upcoming
programs and valuable links.

For more information on postsecondary
education or questions pertaining to
Educational Talent Search, contact:

Phone: 814-393-2071

Toll Free: 1-888-533-6487

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