

## Mississippi, Nevada College Access Efforts Get Boost From USA Funds

The federal College Access Challenge Grant Program aims to foster partnerships among government, private and philanthropic organizations, through matching challenge grants that help increase postsecondary education preparedness and success.

Created through the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, the program provides two-year funding to states to meet the college and career planning and preparation needs of underrepresented students and families. Federal funds pay for two-thirds of the cost of project activities, and CACG grantees must provide the other funds from nonfederal sources.

USA Funds® has partnered with two states where it is the federally designated guarantor of education loans — Mississippi and Nevada — in support of CACG initiatives in those states.

“Mississippi and Nevada have several programs in place that are effectively making a positive difference in the college-going rates of their residents,” says Kyle Malone, USA Funds manager, access and outreach. “We are pleased to provide support for these College Access Challenge Grant initiatives and work with Mississippi and Nevada to change the learning environment for students.”

### Boosting ‘College Knowledge’

In Mississippi, USA Funds has provided \$150,000 to support the College Knowledge Project. Coordinated by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, the project is using integrated classroom instruction to increase awareness of college and career paths, bolster knowledge of financial aid options and college entrance requirements, and improve student financial literacy.

College Knowledge targets middle school students and their families, as well as school counselors.

The program focuses on schools in two pilot regions, the Mississippi Delta and Southwest Mississippi, areas identified as having the greatest financial need. The grant funds will support four outreach coordinators in these areas. These coordinators work closely with local middle schools to reach students and their families, to facilitate community-based partnerships and college and career outreach events for families.

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Students at Bassfield High School in Mississippi receive certificates for completing the Financial Fitness for Life program, a part of the College Knowledge Project. USA Funds supports College Knowledge, a College Access Challenge Grant initiative.

# Selected Grants Awarded by USA Funds Jan. 1–March 31, 2009

USA Funds awards grants to advance its nonprofit mission to enhance postsecondary education preparedness, access and success.

**Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center Inc.**  
*Indianapolis*  
**Project** Learning Communities Initiative  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$149,952

As a part of the Learning Communities initiative, USA Funds works with this organization to significantly increase the number of local youth who complete high school and successfully pursue postsecondary education.

**Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund**  
*Washington, D.C.*  
**Project** APIASF/USA Funds Scholarship Program  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

The Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund is devoted solely to the financial and scholarship needs of Asian and Pacific Islander American students.

**U.S. Dream Academy Inc.**  
*Columbia, Md.*  
**Project** Eighth Annual "Power of a Dream" Gala  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

The U.S. Dream Academy's eighth annual gala raises funds in support of programs for youth with a family history of incarceration and children at risk of falling behind in school.

**Business Higher Education Forum**  
*Washington, D.C.*  
**Project** The College Readiness Initiative: Agenda for College Readiness, Access and Success  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$50,000

This initiative aims to engage corporate, academic and foundation leaders to address key issues in education for students in grades kindergarten through 12 and promote college readiness.

**Hispanic Scholarship Fund**  
*San Francisco*  
**Project** Alumni Hall of Fame Gala  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$50,000

USA Funds is a corporate sponsor of this annual gala. In its 33-year history, HSF has awarded more than 86,000 scholarships totaling \$247 million to students at nearly 2,000 colleges and universities.

**Nevada Public Education Foundation**  
*Carson City, Nev.*  
**Project** Nevada ACCESS  
**Geographic Scope** Nevada  
**Amount** \$50,000

Nevada ACCESS: Academics + Careers + College and/or Training Equal Student Success events encourage and motivate students to pursue postsecondary education. The Nevada Public Education Foundation will host the events during the 2009-2010 academic year.

**Starfish Initiative**  
*Indianapolis*  
**Project** One-on-One Mentoring  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$50,000

USA Funds partners with the Starfish Initiative to cultivate promising low-income youth as leaders through an intensive academic and support program designed to promote college entrance and success.

**Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education**  
*Phoenix*  
**Project** Developing Arizona's Human Capital: Addressing Today's Postsecondary Challenges Conference  
**Geographic Scope** Arizona  
**Amount** \$35,000

This conference provides a forum for legislators, policy-makers and assorted stakeholders in the Arizona postsecondary system to address concerns about postsecondary education policy.

**University of Wyoming Foundation**  
*Laramie, Wyo.*  
**Project** College Goal Sunday  
**Geographic Scope** Wyoming  
**Amount** \$33,000

This funding supports College Goal Sunday 2009 in Wyoming. The event provides students and parents free assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

**Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning**  
*Jackson, Miss.*  
**Project** College Goal Sunday  
**Geographic Scope** Mississippi  
**Amount** \$20,000

This funding supports College Goal Sunday 2009 in Mississippi.

**National Association of Latino Elected Officials Educational Fund**  
*Los Angeles*  
**Project** NALEO 26th Annual Conference  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$20,000

The conference is the largest gathering of Latino elected and appointed officials in the nation. USA Funds' contribution supported a session about the importance of Hispanic student access to postsecondary education.

**Think Ahead Inc.**  
*Dresden, Maine*  
**Project** Maryland College Aid Calculator  
**Geographic Scope** Maryland  
**Amount** \$18,000

USA Funds for the sixth year sponsored the Maryland College Aid Calculator in conjunction with the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The calculator gives visitors to the MHEC Web site — [www.MDGo4it.org](http://www.MDGo4it.org) — access to a tool that helps determine their Expected Family Contribution for college costs and eligibility for need-based financial aid.

**National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education**  
*Silver Spring, Md.*  
**Project** 35th National Conference on Blacks in Higher Education  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$10,000

This annual conference engaged a diverse array of stakeholders in discussions about critical issues of importance to African-Americans in higher education.

**National Society of Hispanic MBAs**  
*Indianapolis*  
**Project** Project Stepping Stone  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$10,000

This educational program prepares and exposes Hispanic youth to postsecondary education opportunities.

# USA Funds Program Helps Employees Give to Their Communities

As a nonprofit organization, USA Funds exists to provide programs and services that are of public benefit. The organization fulfills its mission by promoting preparation for, access to and success in education. And USA Funds takes its nonprofit mission a step further by encouraging its employees to keep the philanthropic spirit alive with their own pursuits.

Through the Community Assistance Reaching Everyone program, USA Funds employees are encouraged to strengthen the communities in which they live by volunteering. Through this program, full-time employees may volunteer up to 40 hours per calendar year during regular work hours at an organization that meets certain qualifications. Part-time employees may volunteer up to 20 hours per calendar year.

"We truly believe in our role as a nonprofit organization," says Bob Ballard, USA Funds senior vice president, program and corporate development. "We encourage our employees to seek out opportunities and ways to make the community in which we live a better place. It not only benefits our community, but I feel it makes us a stronger organization as well."

Eligible organizations are those that are recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as tax exempt and a designated public charity or as an instrumentality of a state or local government.

Another facet of the CARE program provides financial support for those organizations for which employees volunteer.

Employees who dedicate at least 40 hours of service in a calendar year to a qualifying organization can request a donation of up to \$500 from USA Funds to that organization. Employees who volunteer at least 20 hours can request a donation of up to \$250. Additionally, all employees — regardless of their level of volunteer support — can request a total of \$500 in support from USA Funds to the nonprofit organizations of their choice.

In 2008, 50 USA Funds employees participated in the CARE program. They contributed 947 volunteer hours and dedicated more than \$50,000 in monetary contributions to the various nonprofit organizations they supported.

## Providing meals to the needy

"The CARE program just blows me away," says Valerie Walthall, USA Funds customer relations manager for Kansas and Wyoming. "To allow me 40



Valerie Walthall, USA Funds customer relations manager for Kansas and Wyoming, delivers meals to the needy in Lawrence, Kan., as part of a USA Funds program promoting employee volunteerism.

hours to volunteer for an organization I believe in is almost unheard of, but then to provide financial support to that organization on my behalf is just tremendous."

Walthall started volunteering at the Lawrence, Kan., Meals on Wheels three years ago as part of a community service requirement for her son's church confirmation. Her son's confirmation hours were fulfilled, but Walthall kept volunteering.

Meals on Wheels is a national organization that provides home-delivered meal services to people in need. The Lawrence Meals on Wheels currently serves more than 130 clients.

Jeanne Longaker, program assistant, Lawrence Meals on Wheels, has worked closely with Walthall.

"Valerie has such a warm personality — the clients just love her. After some of her visits, we've received calls from clients thanking us for sending her because she just made their day," says Longaker. "Not only do the clients love her, but she is a great volunteer for Meals on Wheels. We can call Valerie on the spur of the moment, and if her schedule permits, she is there. She is such an asset to us."

Due to Walthall's travel schedule with USA Funds, it is difficult for her to have a set route each week, so she is as a "floater," filling in each week as needed. On each route she typically visits six clients and delivers their meals.

"For some of these clients, I might be the only person they see that day. It's such a great feeling to brighten their day and bring them a nutritious meal," says Walthall. "They are so appreciative to have someone to visit with them and bring them their meal."

## Supporting affordable housing

Stacey Moore, USA Funds director, human resources, uses her CARE time to volunteer as a board member at the University Center in Indianapolis. The University Center provides affordable housing for seniors. She became involved several years ago when her grandmother and aunt were residents, and even though they have since passed away, her involvement continues.

"I have a passion for older people and the wisdom they can offer," Moore says. "Oftentimes we forget how much they've done in their lives and how much they have to offer us. Everyone there is so appreciative when we do things for them. These people are the wise ones."

Moore also uses her monetary contributions through CARE to support the University Center. This year some of the funds from her donation helped to purchase a new television for the community room.

Walthall uses her monetary contributions through CARE to benefit Lawrence Meals on Wheels, and those contributions do not go unnoticed.

"Valerie's contributions and the monetary donations from USA Funds are such a blessing," says Longaker. "Of our clients, 85 percent can contribute little financially or none at all. We could not exist without monetary contributions. And because of people like Valerie, and companies like USA Funds, we are going into our 40th year of providing meals for those in need."

"We simply could not exist without this type of generous support."

# College Access Efforts Get Boost

Continued from page 1

The grant also will support the development and distribution of college toolkits, to show adults how to help students go to college, as well as college planning booklets for middle school students and those for parents.

“Schools don’t exist in a vacuum,” says Marsha Watson, director of the College Knowledge Project. “We want to draw the community into working with us toward the mutual goal of increasing college-going rates of Mississippi students.”

The College Knowledge Project also will offer a professional development course that focuses on helping middle school counselors better advise their students and families in college and career planning. USA Funds is funding the development and implementation of the 12-session course, which will be offered at no cost to participants. The curriculum will include in-person events this summer as well as online sessions beginning in the fall.

Content will include sessions on course selection in middle school and high school, college entrance exam preparation, college choice, the financial aid application process, and other similar college planning and career pathway topics that often are not a regular part of the counseling curriculum.

“We want to make sure counselors have the necessary skills for this role because their professional development training and subsequent advising is vital to improve college-going rates and the attitudes about college going in Mississippi,” says Watson.

Another aspect of the grant initiative is the Financial Fitness for Life curriculum, coordinated by the Mississippi Council on Economic Education. The curriculum employs a grade-appropriate approach to teach financial literacy skills.

Fifty-seven percent of the nearly 7,000 students who completed the curriculum this school year showed a knowledge growth of at least 20 points compared with testing prior to the training.

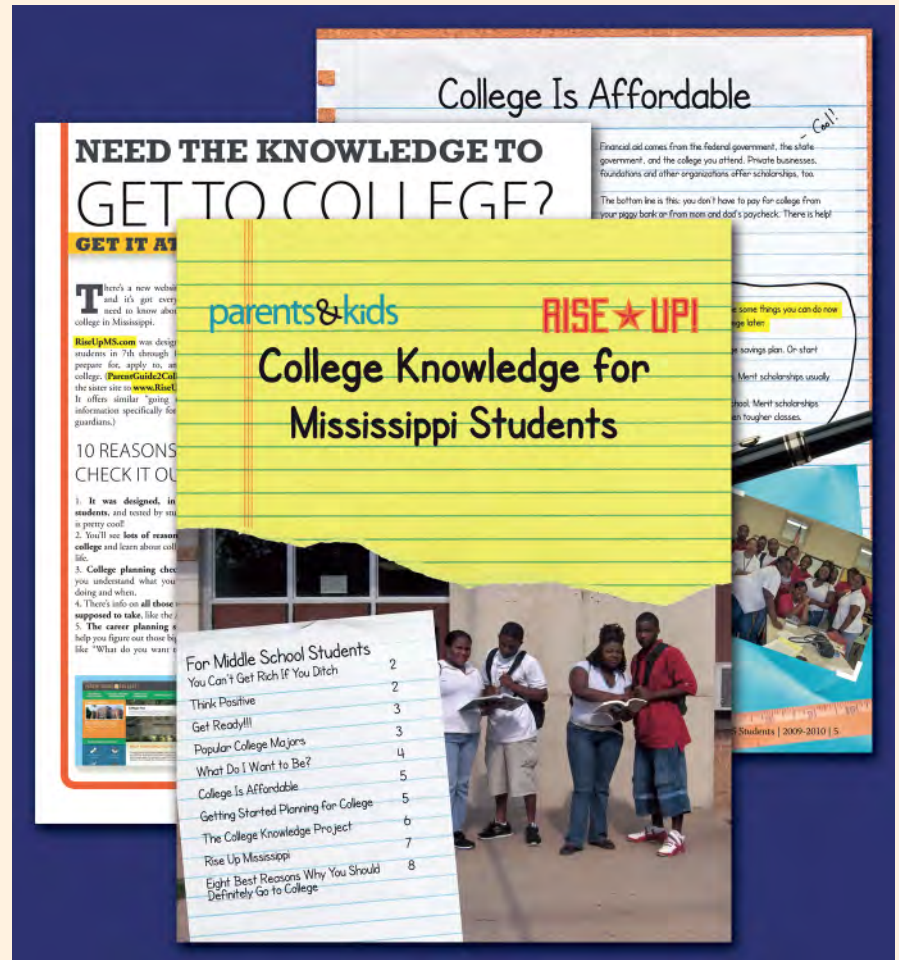
## Promoting college-going culture

In Nevada, USA Funds is supporting an initiative whose goal is to foster a college-going culture throughout the state. Nevada’s P-16 Advisory Council, in partnership with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and the Nevada System of Higher Education, are using CACG funds to support the Go To College campaign.

Go To College is targeting every student and parent or guardian in the state, with special emphasis on:

- ◆ Students in the third, sixth and eighth grades in low-income schools.
- ◆ High school students applying for college financial assistance and those preparing to enter the work force.

The College Knowledge Project in Mississippi includes development of college planning booklets for middle school students.



The campaign is developing messages for print and electronic media in multiple languages and reflecting the cultural diversity of the audiences. Additionally, members of the higher education and business communities will visit classrooms to discuss the importance of learning beyond high school. Middle school and high school teachers and counselors will work with students in programs that prepare them for college and work force entry.

A Go To College brochure will outline the steps students and their families should take in grades six through 12 to make postsecondary education a reality.

The final piece of Nevada’s program is to conduct three regional forums that will bring together high school counselors and others to discuss the challenges and potential solutions to college planning and work force readiness.

“We’ve received great feedback from our school superintendents,” says Sharon Wurm, director of financial aid, Nevada System of Higher Education. “Our schools and the public are starting to gain interest in the program — and that is going to be the key to our success.”

# Partnerships Are Key to College Success



By  
Kim Kiely  
Executive Director  
National College Access Network

As those working in the field of college access know well, partnerships are the key to college success. We need policy-makers, parents, students, teachers, counselors, families, admissions officers and financial aid administrators to work together to help students make the transition to college from high school. That circle of partners widens to include our partners in higher education as we encourage that student to move toward the ultimate goal of college completion.

Members of the National College Access Network work to foster these partnerships every day. Our core members are independent, tax-exempt organizations using private, and sometimes public, funds to help students get to and succeed in college through a variety of services. Those services include school-based advising, campus visits, financial aid information and, in some cases, last-dollar scholarships that fill the gap of unmet financial need. These college access programs often continue to advise the students through college to ensure their ultimate success and graduation.

Partnerships abound in our work, beginning with the essential connection between a student and family. In its commitment to serve a school district, a college access program connects to community leaders to leverage private dollars against federal and state student aid.

Increasingly, college access programs are joining forces with institutions of higher education to support the student through the college years. Many states — including Indiana, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Virginia and others — have formalized this collaboration by creating statewide College Access Networks that support programs and partnerships.

The College Access Challenge Grants highlighted on Page 1 in this issue of USA Funds *Education Partnerships* are a wonderful example of these partnerships in action, and of the role that our federal government can play in encouraging such collaboration. By providing funding to the states to support statewide and local activities to increase the college-going rate, we open the door to new partnerships in support of student success and foster new relationships among these many partners — in the kindergarten through 12, higher education, community, public and private sectors — necessary for student achievement.

NCAN members responded to this opportunity and are working with state agencies to implement the work of the College Access Challenge Grants.

- ♦ The College Forward program in Austin, Texas, is using funds to support AmeriCorps members providing mentoring and financial aid counseling to low-income high school students in central Texas.

- ♦ The California Student Aid Commission funds several Cal-SOAP outreach programs as well as the California Cash for College campaign.
- ♦ Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm recently announced the launch of the Michigan College Access Network, made possible with funding from this grant.
- ♦ The Chattanooga, Tenn., Public Education Fund receives support from the grant for its College Access Mentor program.
- ♦ The Virginia College Access Network has provided professional development for middle and high school counselors and admissions and financial aid officers.

These are clear examples of the partnerships intended by the College Access Challenge Grants and work that we hope will continue.

These uncertain economic times call for more coordination and collaboration to stretch limited resources in response to increasing student needs. Lessons learned from the experiences and partnerships formed with the support of the College Access Challenge Grants not only will serve our students well, but also will lay the foundation for lasting relationships that encourage access and success.

We hope that these partnerships will continue to flourish and that proposed new federal initiatives to help students succeed in higher education, such as the College Access and Completion Fund, continue to support their work.

## About NCAN

Incorporated in 1995 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., the mission of the National College Access Network is to improve access to and success in postsecondary education for disadvantaged, underrepresented and first-generation students. NCAN works toward this mission through the following activities:

- ♦ Supporting a network of state and local college access programs that provide counseling, advice and financial assistance.
- ♦ Sharing best practices among the network.
- ♦ Providing leadership and technical assistance.
- ♦ Helping establish new college access programs.

For more information visit [www.collegeaccess.org](http://www.collegeaccess.org).

## In This Issue of USA Funds Education Partnerships

### Mississippi, Nevada College Access Efforts Get Boost From USA Funds

Learn about College Access Challenge Grant initiatives that USA Funds is supporting to bolster college preparedness and success in Mississippi and Nevada.

### USA Funds Program Helps Employees Give to Their Communities

See how local communities are benefiting from a USA Funds program that promotes staff volunteerism.

### Partnerships Are Key to College Success

Read why the National College Access Network's executive director says the partnerships fostered by College Access Challenge Grants are vital to promoting higher education success.



Bassfield (Miss.) High School students attend an awards ceremony through the state's College Access Challenge Grant program, College Knowledge, supported by USA Funds.

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