



Education Partnerships

USA Funds® is a nonprofit corporation that works to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services.

Orlando community seeks brighter future for youth through USA Funds-supported initiative

From early-childhood education for young children to leadership initiatives for teens, Frontline Outreach's broad range of programs support the transformation of low-income communities in Orlando, Fla. So when the organization's president, Arto Woodley Jr., learned about the new, USA Funds®-supported Learning Communities Coalition, he knew Frontline Outreach would be a perfect partner in the coalition's efforts.

"There's a lot of synergy between what Learning Communities is about and what we're doing," Woodley says. "It's a unique opportunity for us to expand and be more organized about what we do. It's beginning to be a great marriage, and it will be a great marriage long term."

The Learning Communities Coalition is a group of organizations focusing services on six pilot communities — including the Washington Shores area in Orlando — in a bid to improve access to postsecondary education for low-income students. USA Funds, a member of the coalition, is contributing more than \$500,000 in funding as well as staff and programmatic support to the national effort.

Coalition partners offer their communities a coordinated set of programs and other resources that address barriers that keep students from pursuing higher education. The Orlando effort involves Washington Shores elementary, middle and high schools, as well as a local church.

Frontline Outreach got involved in the Orlando work through contact with Learning Communities Coalition member U.S. Dream Academy, an organization that focuses on reaching at-risk children of prisoners.

Woodley says that his community's approach is two-pronged and starts with the formation of a Dollars for Scholars chapter to coordinate scholarship opportunities for local youth. Dollars for Scholars is a national network of scholarship foundations; the program is coordinated nationally by Scholarship America, the nation's largest nonprofit scholarship and education-support organization and another member of the Learning Communities Coalition.

To complement the coordination of scholarship-raising efforts, the Orlando Learning Community will use other resources from Scholarship America and USA Funds to train students and their families about postsecondary-education opportunities and how to prepare for them.

"The unique part of the plan is training parents," Woodley says. "This is a key piece. A lot of people think it's just lack of money that keeps kids from going to college. But a lot of times, it's the inability to know what's available to you."

In addition to Washington Shores in Orlando, the following areas are pilot Learning Communities:

- Sunnyside Unified School District, Tucson, Ariz.
- Washington Community School, Indianapolis.
- Okalona School District, Okalona, Miss.
- Benning Heights, Benning Terrace, Washington, D.C.
- Wind River Reservation, Wyo.



Photo provided by Frontline Outreach

Children in Frontline Outreach's early-childhood programs attend graduation. The organization plans to incorporate its programs in the Learning Communities project.



Photo by Ted Hallins

Pat Roe (back row, left), USA Funds philanthropy manager, and Vicky Keller (back row, middle), USA Funds customer-relations manager for Florida and Mississippi, join Frontline Outreach children at a recent luncheon.

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Selected grants awarded by USA Funds July 1, 2005 – Sept. 30, 2005

Scholarship America

Minneapolis

Project 2005 Disaster Relief Fund for Postsecondary Students
Geographic Scope National
Amount \$1,790,000

USA Funds is providing assistance to low-income students attending schools in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas counties designated as federal disaster areas by the Federal Emergency Management Agency following hurricanes Dennis, Katrina and Rita. In addition, assistance will be provided to low-income students displaced from colleges in the Hurricane Katrina disaster areas and to residents of those disaster areas who are attending college elsewhere. USA Funds' total financial commitment following these hurricanes reached \$2.3 million.

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

Washington, D.C.

Project Spanish-Language Early Awareness Program
Geographic Scope National
Amount \$377,376

USA Funds is collaborating with NCEP to develop a Spanish-language video and training material that will provide an overview of financial-aid options, and explain the family's role in supporting their children in the college-admissions and financial-planning process.

Scholarship America

Minneapolis

Project Dollars for Scholars and ScholarShop Expansion in California
Geographic Scope California
Amount \$373,376

USA Funds is supporting the expansion of Scholarship America initiatives Dollars for Scholars and ScholarShop in California. Dollars for Scholars is a national network of scholarship foundations, while ScholarShop is a curriculum and multimedia resource center to motivate and prepare young people to achieve their full potential.

Scholarship America

Minneapolis

Project 2005-2006 Learning Communities Coalition
Geographic Scope National
Amount \$300,700

USA Funds' grant will help improve access to postsecondary education for low-income students in six selected communities. USA Funds and Scholarship America are part of a nine-organization coalition focused on this effort. In total, USA Funds is contributing more than \$500,000 in funding as well as staff and programmatic support to the effort.

Learn More Resource Center

Bloomington, Ind.

Project Learn More Resource Center Hotline
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$266,666

USA Funds supports a telephone hotline that provides career- and education-planning information for students and their families, as well as educators. Learn More Resource Center's programs make the process of selecting, applying to and funding higher education easier for Indiana families.

Brevard College Corp.

Brevard, N.C.

Project Maryland Higher Education Retention Conference
Geographic Scope Maryland
Amount \$135,750

USA Funds-sponsored sessions about student retention and success focused on first-year students. Professional-development-workshop participants represented two- and four-year, public and private, nonprofit and for-profit campuses.

United Negro College Fund

Indianapolis

Project 2005 Gala and Regional Receptions
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$70,000

USA Funds is a corporate sponsor of UNCF's annual fund-raising events. Over 60 years UNCF has raised more than \$2 billion to help more than 350,000 students attend college.

Lawrence Township Foundation

Indianapolis

Project Advancement Via Individual Determination — Lawrence Township
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$70,000

The AVID program is a rigorous academic program for students who rank in the middle of their classes. USA Funds' support of the program in Lawrence Township Schools increases students' accessibility to a college-preparatory curriculum.

American Indian College Fund

Denver

Project 2005 Flame of Hope Gala and Grantmakers for Education Reception
Geographic Scope National
Amount \$65,000

The American Indian College Fund provides scholarships and other support for the nation's 33 tribal colleges. USA Funds was the corporate sponsor for the annual gala and hosted a reception for the organization during the Grantmakers for Education conference.

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Annapolis, Md.

Project Study of Effective Postsecondary-Education Statewide Models to Guide Maryland-Model Development
Geographic Scope Maryland
Amount \$60,000

USA Funds supports MHEC's development of a postsecondary-education model that addresses the impact of tuition policy and financial aid on student access to higher education. The findings will help develop a model aimed at ensuring Maryland citizens' access to postsecondary training.

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

Jackson, Miss.

Project E-Learning Center — Delta State University
Geographic Scope Mississippi
Amount \$50,000

The E-Learning Center at Delta State University is designed to allow school districts in the Mississippi Delta to offer selected college-preparatory subjects that those schools otherwise could not provide.

Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas

Wichita, Kan.

Project YEK Classroom Program and Textbook Support
Amount \$50,000
Geographic Scope Kansas

YEK provides students with business and entrepreneurial education and experiences that help them become contributing members of society. USA Funds' grant provided entrepreneurial-education textbooks to high-school youth.

Circle City Classic

Indianapolis

Project 2005 Classic College-Readiness Workshop
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$50,000

This quarterly workshop helps eliminate barriers that keep high-school students from attending college. More than 250 students take part in a workshop that includes SAT and ACT practice examinations, a test-taking-strategies seminar, a financial-aid-information session, and a career-development session designed to prepare students for the work force.

Jobs for Arizona's Graduates

Scottsdale, Ariz.

Project JAG Activities
Geographic Scope Arizona
Amount \$50,000

JAG provides each of its participants classroom instruction, student-organization activities, small-group and one-on-one counseling, tutoring, remediation, employer marketing, job development and follow-up services.

Starfish

Indianapolis

Project Starfish Initiative
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$50,000

USA Funds enters its second year of support to the Starfish Initiative, which seeks to cultivate promising low-income youth into leaders through an intensive academic and support program designed to promote college entrance and success.

Police Athletic League

Indianapolis

Project PAL Youth-Education Programs
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$50,000

USA Funds supports PAL efforts to involve the at-risk youth of Indianapolis in educational, cultural and fitness activities that aim to deter crime, increase self-esteem and promote a positive relationship with the police. This grant encourages mentoring and leadership opportunities for Indianapolis youth.

YMCA of Greater Indianapolis — Urban Mission Branch

Indianapolis

Project Y Teen Achievers Program
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$50,000

Y Teen Achievers helps provide social and financial access for low-income scholars by connecting them with adult mentor-coaches and facilitating placement and tuition assistance for high school and college.

Hispanic Scholarship Fund

San Francisco

Project 2005 HSF Alumni Hall of Fame Gala
Geographic Scope National
Amount \$30,000

Entering its 30th year, HSF has awarded more than 68,000 scholarships in excess of \$144 million to Latinos from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands attending more than 1,700 colleges and universities. USA Funds provided corporate sponsorship for the annual fall gala.

La Plaza Inc.

Indianapolis

Project El Puente Program
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$30,000

USA Funds supports this youth-oriented educational partnership between La Plaza and the Center for Urban and Multicultural Education, a unit of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis' education school. Through *El Puente*, La Plaza provides Hispanic youth with the experiences necessary to achieve educational success, economic productivity and civic engagement.

Girls Inc. of Indianapolis

Indianapolis

Project Operation SMART
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$30,000

Operation SMART builds girls' interest in science, math and technology. The mission of Girls Inc. is to inspire girls to be strong, smart and bold.

Indiana Latino Institute

Indianapolis

Project ILI Education Initiative
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$30,000

USA Funds supports this community partnership, which provides program services for Hispanic/Latino high-school students, their families, local-school personnel and others interested in increasing these students' participation in higher-education programs in Marion County, Ind.

Central Indiana Community Foundation Inc.

Carmel, Ind.

Project Mexican Scholarship Fund
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$30,000

The Mexican Scholarship Fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation encourages Indiana students of Mexican descent to pursue higher education.

Indiana Dollars for Scholars

Carmel, Ind.

Project Hoosier Heroes 2006
Geographic Scope Indiana
Amount \$25,000

Indiana Dollars for Scholars sponsors Hoosier Heroes, a program in which Indiana students identify citizens of the state who have made significant contributions to society and serve as role models.

Frontline Outreach Inc.

Orlando, Fla.

Project Read and Succeed
Geographic Scope Florida
Amount \$25,000

Read and Succeed focuses on helping students to read at their appropriate grade levels and on exposing them to opportunities beyond high school. Frontline Outreach is a partner in the Learning Communities Coalition effort, which focuses on improving access to education for youth in six communities.

USA Funds employees take to the community for Day of Caring

Twenty-eight USA Funds employees and family members spent a recent Friday lending a hand to others in the community as part of the United Way of Central Indiana's Day of Caring.

From painting a porch ceiling to trimming trees, one group of the employees tackled 27 tasks to spruce up the home of a Hamilton County, Ind., woman in need. Another group worked with individuals at a local center serving adults with developmental disabilities.

Kelly Wolfe, USA Funds assistant controller, and her husband were among those who worked at the home of longtime suburban-Indianapolis resident Gretchen Logan. Wolfe coordinates USA Funds' involvement in Day of Caring.

"It was a lot of hard work, but it was gratifying," Wolfe says. "Mrs.

Logan said she couldn't believe how much we helped her. We have a friend for life."

The 2005 Day of Caring marked the fifth-consecutive year of involvement for USA Funds, which allows its employees a paid day to participate. In past years USA Funds staffers provided Day of Caring assistance at other private homes of community members in need, as well as at the site of a children's camp and a facility that pro-

vides horse-riding therapy. This was the second-consecutive year that USA Funds volunteers worked with the developmentally disabled in Noble of Indiana's day program in Carmel.

"Our company just puts so much into emphasizing the importance of Day of Caring," Wolfe says.

"USA Funds has a philosophy of 'community matters, employees matter and their time matters.'"

USA Funds supports the United Way of Central Indiana's Day of Caring as part of a commitment to assisting individuals and charitable organizations in the areas where USA Funds' offices are located.

Logan, whose husband recently passed away after years of health problems, needed a variety of repairs to her home. The team of 19 USA Funds volunteers solved that problem.

"This home meant everything to my husband," says Logan. "He wanted to stay. And it might seem silly, but I do too. There are certain things that I can't do, though, and those are the things that the USA Funds group did for me. I just can't tell you what it meant to me."

USA Funds volunteers at Noble of Indiana assisted with the facility's clients and with administrative duties — with work ranging from helping with a bingo game to sorting files.

"Touching the lives of our clients was the most important part of all," says Susan Miller, manager of the day program at Noble of Indiana's Carmel location.

More than 300 volunteers from 11 companies took part in United Way Day of Caring activities in Hamilton County. Stacey Crawford, USA Funds business manager, is a member of the United Way of Hamilton County's advisory board and co-chaired the county's Day of Caring. USA Funds, she says, has become a key player in the annual event.

"More than half of our Indianapolis employees volunteer on Day of Caring," Crawford says. "USA Funds is instrumental in meeting the needs of those in Hamilton County." ■



Tasks performed by USA Funds volunteers during the Day of Caring ranged from painting to assisting the disabled.



USA Funds employees take part in the recent Day of Caring, conducted by United Way of Central Indiana.

Orlando community seeks brighter future

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Following the year-long pilot period, representatives from USA Funds and Scholarship America will conduct site visits to the communities to evaluate project outcomes and challenges. Long-term plans call for finding additional funding from national sources to implement programs from coalition partners in all the pilot communities.

"We seek to complement and support the educational goals of the local communities," says Carl Dalstrom, USA Funds president and CEO. "Ultimately we will encourage the building of Learning Communities throughout America by sharing with other communities and educational, business and philanthropic leaders what we learn."

The five-year goal of Orlando's Learning Community is for 80 percent of its high-school graduates to complete postsecondary training. Frontline Outreach, however, is committed to the effort beyond that time period, Woodley says, and hopes to expand Learning Communities initiatives to other low-income areas in the city.

"The work of the Learning Communities Coalition is vitally important to the communities," Woodley says. "It shows that, in spite of what people say about a community, the children and parents of the community make it what it is. It says, 'You can succeed, you are valuable, and we want to reward you for your hard work.'" ■

Learning Communities Coalition members

- America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth.
- Communities in Schools.
- Merimar Productions.
- National Association for College Admission Counseling.
- National Mentoring Partnership.
- Paws Inc.
- The Sallie Mae Fund.
- Scholarship America.
- USA Funds.
- U.S. Dream Academy.

Community involvement crucial to effective education reform

By Hector Garza, Founding President,
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships



In recent years U.S. colleges and universities have seen modest increases in the enrollment rates of low-income and minority students. But the rates remain low, as too many students continue to encounter significant barriers to higher education. These barriers include poor academic preparation, little or no access to information regarding financial aid, and the lack of previous higher-education experience.

Many low-income students attend poorly funded elementary, middle and high schools characterized by overburdened teachers, outdated curricula, insufficient numbers of college-preparatory courses, and few guidance counselors. Improving the academic achievement of our nation's low-income and minority youths is an increasingly urgent national priority requiring the involvement of government as well as the business, education, philanthropic and local communities.

In 1998 the U.S. Congress authorized Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, or GEAR UP. This public-private partnership enlists the formidable resources of education, government, business, labor and community groups and faith-based organizations in the cause of helping minority and low-income students prepare for and succeed in college.

GEAR UP serves students beginning in middle school and continuing through high school and college admission. The program serves entire classes of students — and it is a true working partnership, uniting communities in the effort to improve students' academic achievement. By working specifically to ensure students' proficiency in math, science, reading and technology, GEAR UP prepares students for college and employment.

GEAR UP is effective. Currently serving 1.2 million students in 400 communities and 800 school districts nationwide, the program is transforming schools, communities, individuals and institutions. GEAR UP is successful in part because it is designed to work both within and outside of schools. Local GEAR UP projects not only improve classroom instruction and student learning in reading, math, science and technology, but they also interface with community resources. This wide range of resources includes after-school activities, mentoring/tutorial services, leadership-development programs, college tours and cultural events, to name but a few.

We can use the lessons we have learned from our positive experiences with GEAR UP to develop other community-based education-access programs. Consider the following traits of successful community-based access programs:

- They clearly articulate the local partnership's goals, objectives and focus.
- They are committed to working closely with partners from the government, education and business sectors to realize partnership goals.
- They coordinate supplemental student services with those services offered by local schools.
- They enlist the support of the media in promoting awareness of and expanding community involvement in local education-reform efforts.
- They continuously evaluate and assess the effectiveness of local partnership efforts.

Every sector of society has a vested interest in improving the academic achievement of all students. Federal, state and local governments depend on the active participation of a literate citizenry. Businesses require employees to possess an array of skills ranging from literacy to numeracy to critical thinking. Local communities prosper when their residents contribute to their neighborhoods' economic and social vitality.

Improving students' academic achievement is not the sole responsibility of schools and colleges. Rather, it is the joint responsibility of government, business, education, foundations and local communities.

To ensure that as many students in our nation as possible succeed academically, local communities must become active participants in community/education partnerships. They must invest in the future: our — and their — children. After all, there is no higher priority than improving the education of all of our nation's children. Educating our children is *everybody's* business. ■

NCCEP supports partnerships of colleges and universities, local K–12 schools, parents, corporations, government agencies, foundations and community-based organizations in their efforts to increase low-income and minority students' academic-achievement levels and expand their access to higher education.

The views expressed in this column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of USA Funds.