



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.

Mobile classroom from USA Funds keeps young patients on track to academic success

The new teachers, new classes and homework that the start of the school year brings can be overwhelming for any student. But students who have to miss school due to illness or injuries that require extended hospital stays face even greater challenges. Their time away from the classroom can leave them lagging behind in their schoolwork.



Stuart Dickinson, front, a frequent patient at Phoenix Children's Hospital, demonstrates for Henry Fernandez, USA Funds executive director of scholarships, outreach and philanthropy, how Dickinson makes use of the EduCat.

To address the educational needs of school-age patients who are hospitalized, USA Funds developed the idea for a mobile classroom designed specifically to allow hospitalized children to continue their studies. USA Funds, along with Carlos Sosa, president and design director of the SosaGroup, designed the cart with input from educators at Phoenix Children's Hospital's in-hospital school program.

USA Funds presented the nation's first EduCat mobile classroom to Phoenix Children's Hospital in March 2006. Suggestions from the hospital's staff and patients helped Sosa make adjustments to the cart's prototype.

The mobile classroom serves as a link from hospitalized students to in-hospital teaching staff and to schools and teachers. Each cart includes a laptop computer, printer, school supplies, Internet access and other media tools. Young patients can get homework help by sending e-mails to hospital

teaching staff, their school teachers and classmates. The EduCat encourages kids to complete their homework; it also serves as a tool to overcome communication challenges and stay connected with friends and family.

"Promotion of education is USA Funds' primary focus, so we have a special concern that children who are hospitalized for extended periods don't fall behind in their studies because of their hospital stay," says Carl Dalstrom, USA Funds president and CEO. "These carts permit children who are confined to their beds in the hospital to access their lessons and keep pace with their classmates in school."

Decorated with imagery featuring Garfield, the comic-strip cat, the EduCat was designed to make the cart fun for kids. Garfield is the product of Indiana-based cartoonist Jim Davis.

"It's hard enough to miss a day or two of school due to the flu or a minor illness," said Lori Schweighart, a child-life specialist at Phoenix Children's Hospital. "But for some kids, their illnesses and injuries are chronic, requiring multiple hospitalizations for several weeks to several months at a time."

Stuart Dickinson was the first patient to use the EduCat in Arizona. Because Dickinson has cystic



Kyle Malone, standing, USA Funds manager, philanthropy, talks with patient Blake Smith about the EduCat that USA Funds provided to All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Selected grants awarded by USA Funds April 1, 2006-June 30, 2006

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

Circle City Classic

Indianapolis

Project Youth Initiatives College Readiness Workshop/Youth Empowerment Series

Geographic Scope Indiana

Amount \$50,000

The quarterly workshop helps eliminate barriers that keep high-school students from attending college. The event features SAT- and ACT-examination preparation and sessions about test-taking strategies, financial aid and career development.

Hispanic Scholarship Fund

San Francisco

Project 2006 Alumni Hall of Fame

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$50,000

USA Funds is a corporate sponsor of the gala. Over the past 30 years, HSF has awarded Latinos more than 73,000 scholarships totaling nearly \$170 million.

Indiana Black Expo

Indianapolis

Project Youth Summit and Back-to-School Rallies

Geographic Scope Indiana

Amount \$50,000

Indiana Black Expo's youth summit encourages participants to have a meaningful and positive effect on society. The grant supports youth-development initiatives and local educational initiatives.

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Washington, D.C.

Project College Goal Sunday Training

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$40,000

NASFAA provided training for volunteers for College Goal Sunday events, which provide free assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Hispanic Scholarship Fund

San Francisco

Project Town Hall Meetings and Steps for Success Overview

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$35,000

These community-outreach programs seek to increase college awareness among Latino communities across the United States by providing user-friendly information about preparing and paying for college.

LaRadio/KOCA

Laramie, Wyo.

Project Latino Education in Frontier Settings Symposium

Geographic Scope Wyoming

Amount \$33,125

This symposium's discussion focused on establishing a common understanding about the education issues affecting Wyoming's growing Latino population.

Indianapolis Museum of Art

Indianapolis

Project Collaborative Arts Partnership Program

Geographic Scope Indiana

Amount \$25,000

CAP connects the skills, staff and resources of Indianapolis-area arts and social-service organizations; the program provides after-school arts programming for children age 5-17.

National Youth Sports Program Fund

Indianapolis

Project National Youth Sports Program

Geographic Scope Arizona, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi and Nevada

Amount \$25,000

NYSP is a five-week summer program that provides educational and sports-skills instruction for youth from poverty-level households. USA Funds supports the program's activities in six of the states in which USA Funds is the designated guarantor of federal education loans.

Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools for Public Policy (Parkside Campus)

Washington, D.C.

Project SAT Preparation Course

Geographic Scope Washington, D.C.

Amount \$5,000

Chavez schools offer a college-preparatory curriculum focusing on public policy and providing students with direct experience working in the public interest. The grant supported SAT preparation provided by the school, a participant in the USA Funds-supported Learning Communities initiative.

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

San Antonio, Texas

Project Championing Hispanic Higher Education Success Conference

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$5,000

This 20th-annual event provided a forum for sharing information and ideas about best practices in educating Hispanics. HACU's member institutions educate more than three-fourths of all Hispanic college students.

YMCA of Greater Indianapolis — Urban Mission Branch

Indianapolis

Project From Day 1 Summer High School Transitional Camp

Geographic Scope Indiana

Amount \$5,000

This camp introduced incoming freshmen to high school, helping participants develop realistic goals and expectations before beginning the high-school experience.

Arizona Quest for Kids

Phoenix

Project Various Programs

Geographic Scope Arizona

Amount \$2,500

Arizona Quest for Kids provides middle-school students with mentoring, financial literacy, family resources and college guidance.

College Mentors for Kids

Indianapolis

Project College Mentors for Kids

— Martin University

Geographic Scope Indiana

Amount \$2,500

College Mentors for Kids pairs children with college-student mentors for activities on a college campus. USA Funds' grant supports this program's work at Martin University in Indianapolis.

Foothills High School

Bakersfield, Calif.

Project AVID About College Recognition Awards

Geographic Scope California

Amount \$2,500

Advancement Via Individual Determination works to ensure student success in rigorous curricula, participation in extracurricular activities, increased enrollment in four-year colleges, and the development of responsible leaders. The program at Foothills High School will feature 2006-2007 academic-year college tours, supported by USA Funds.

Hawaii Maoli Inc.

Honolulu

Project National Hawaiian Education Summit

Geographic Scope Hawaii

Amount \$2,500

USA Funds' grant supports the recording and sharing of the summit's findings with a variety of groups.

Institute for Higher Education Policy

Washington, D.C.

Project IHEP Summer Academy

Geographic Scope National

Amount \$2,500

The event hosted teams from more than 35 four-year Minority-Serving Institutions. Participants designed action plans for increasing the success rate of students of color in higher education.

Jobs for Arizona's Graduates

Scottsdale, Ariz.

Project Governor's Ball — Pool Our Luck for the Future of Our Youth

Geographic Scope Arizona

Amount \$2,500

The third-annual event, benefiting JAG and YMCA, celebrated education partnerships in Phoenix.

Summerbridge Sacramento

Sacramento, Calif.

Project Saturday College Visit and Angel Island Visit

Geographic Scope California

Amount \$2,500

Summerbridge — a year-round, tuition-free college-preparatory program — provided a college visit. The program targets academically motivated students attending low-income middle schools.

USA Funds employees become youth mentors at Big for a Day

The recent Big for a Day event that paired USA Funds staff members with “littles” from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Indiana was a win-win-win situation.

The seven USA Funds employees were winners because they spent an afternoon at the ballpark making a difference in the lives of nine Indianapolis-area children.

The littles were winners because they took part in a fun activity with other littles and adult volunteers while awaiting placement with permanent mentors, or “bigs.”

And to top it off, the home team, International League baseball’s Indianapolis Indians, won the game 5-2.

“It’s a very rewarding experience for me,” says Karen Backus, USA Funds executive assistant. “Just thinking that we had such a good time and that the kids would be talking about it to others is nice.”

Backus is in her third year of helping to coordinate Big for a Day for USA Funds.

Big for a Day is an activity in which Kids on Deck — children who are waiting to be matched with permanent big brothers and big sisters — take part in one-time events with adult volunteers. The volunteers typically are from local companies, fraternities, sororities, church groups or other organizations.



Stephanie Bullard, left, USA Funds Web writer, takes in the baseball game with her “little,” Tyler.



Alicia Roberts, right, USA Funds philanthropy assistant, spends the afternoon as Radasia’s big sister at Big for a Day.

Seeing interaction between the potential littles and the adult volunteers helps Big Brothers Big Sisters staff determine the specific needs of the Kids on Deck. The activity also helps volunteers who are interested in becoming bigs to decide if it’s right for them.

“Big for a Day and volunteers like those from USA Funds are very important,” says Esther Harrington, Kids on Deck program coordinator for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Indiana.

“Unfortunately, we have kids who may never be matched, and we want to keep them engaged.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters is the oldest and largest youth-mentoring organization in the United States. The Central Indiana chapter serves 1,800 children between the ages of 8 and 14 in the Indianapolis area each year. Children who are referred to Big Brothers Big Sisters typically wait three months to a year to be matched with bigs.

This year’s event marks the third year of USA Funds’ involvement with Big for a Day. Employees who participated in the Wednesday afternoon activity took advantage of USA Funds’ Community Assistance Reaching Everyone program, which allows employees up to 40 hours of paid time off each year to devote to volunteer work with nonprofit organizations.

USA Funds supports Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Indiana as part of a commitment to assist individuals and charitable organizations in the areas where USA Funds’ offices are located. ■

Mobile classroom

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fibrosis, he has been in and out of Phoenix Children’s Hospital for years. But with help from hospital staff and teachers and access to the EduCat, Dickinson graduated with his classmates from Arizona’s Peoria High School in May 2006.

In addition to Phoenix Children’s Hospital, USA Funds has provided EduCats for All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg, Fla., and St. Vincent Children’s Hospital in Indianapolis.

Nine-year old Blake Smith of Venice, Fla., was the first patient to have access to an EduCat in Florida. Smith spent several weeks at All Children’s Hospital this summer as he recovered from leg fractures sustained in an all-terrain-vehicle accident, and the EduCat gave Blake access to fun, educational software and the opportunity to chat online with his friends at summer camp.

“We’re fortunate that USA Funds is so committed to helping youngsters overcome all types of obstacles to their academic success,” says Gail Armstrong, All Children’s patient academic services coordinator. “The EduCat helps conquer communication and academic challenges that may arise from an extended hospital stay and

encourages kids to not only complete their schoolwork, but stay connected with friends and family.”

Armstrong adds that staying current on schoolwork and in contact with friends are normal activities in an otherwise unfamiliar hospital routine. The EduCat makes it easier for young patients to keep up with their peers in the classroom, and that is important when the patients are well enough to return to school.

USA Funds encourages each hospital to customize the carts to meet that hospital’s individual needs. Future versions of the mobile classroom may allow for webcams to connect patients with their home schools, participate in lectures, and communicate with peers and teachers from their hospital rooms. The EduCats also may facilitate virtual visits between patients and their younger siblings who, during certain times of the year, are not permitted to visit the hospital because of a common respiratory virus.

USA Funds donates EduCats to hospitals that focus on health care for children in states where USA Funds serves as the designated guarantor of federal education loans and in other key states. ■

Enhancing access to education for hospitalized children

By William Neale
Chairman, USA Funds Board of Trustees



Photo by Shaun Spence

William Neale

Imagine yourself as a child, confined to bed in the hospital for treatment of cancer or repair of a badly broken leg. In addition to the pain and stress of the hospital regimen, you're isolated, except for visiting hours, from family and friends. You can't run around with your playmates. The familiar surroundings of home have been replaced by the strange and scary sights, smells and sounds of the hospital.

While you are restricted to your hospital room, your classmates at school are moving forward with their studies. You risk falling behind in your education.

When the plight of young patients in children's hospitals first was brought to USA Funds' attention by St. Vincent Children's Hospital in Indianapolis, the hospital's request for funds for a classroom in the hospital seemed like an excellent fit with USA Funds' mission of enhancing preparation for, access to and success in higher education. Members of the USA Funds board of trustees were enthusiastic supporters of the project.

Although beneficial to many patients, the classroom had the drawback of not addressing the needs of those bed-bound patients who could not get to the classroom. Working with hospital officials, USA Funds came up with a better idea: Instead of making the patients go to the classroom, why not bring the classroom to the patients?

So was born the idea that became the EduCat, a mobile classroom that can be rolled to the bedsides of patients who have limited mobility. Working with staff, patients and their families at St. Vincent and at

Phoenix Children's Hospital and All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Fla., as well as with the Indianapolis design firm SosaGroup, USA Funds refined a prototype to serve as a true mobile classroom for hospitalized children.

Decorated with themes from the fun-loving cartoon cat Garfield, the EduCat gives hospitalized children access to a laptop computer, printer and supplies and a connection to the Internet, so they can

keep up with their schoolwork. The EduCat helps children confined to a hospital bed stay active and mentally engaged. Most importantly, it allows the children to keep pace with their classmates, so they don't lose ground in their education. That's why USA Funds' investment in the EduCat is the right thing to do.

We hope to enhance the EduCat to provide connections to the school classroom and to help hospitalized patients visit online with their siblings and classmates. We also hope to deliver additional EduCats to hospitals that primarily serve children and youth in the states that USA Funds serves as the designated guarantor of federal education loans. Those states are Arizona, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada and Wyoming. We're also offering EduCats to hospitals in other select states.

For the past 46 years, USA Funds has worked to help Americans overcome obstacles, financial and otherwise, to the rich rewards that flow from postsecondary education. In that tradition the EduCat represents a new and unique way to enhance preparation for, access to and success in higher education. ■

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