

# Cincinnati

# BEST HIGH SCHOOLS

How to  
Find the  
Right  
One for  
Your Kid

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PUBLIC AND  
PRIVATE



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CSF recipient  
Chris Tieke  
and family

## STILL GIVING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

The Cincinnati Scholarship Foundation bestows some \$2 million each year to deserving students—and would like to hand over much more. **by Coleen Armstrong**

### Every scholarship donor can tell a story.

Alexander Griffin worked for the Cincinnati Public Schools board for 34 years. Although neither he nor his wife Helen Godfrey Griffin graduated from high school, both were lifelong proponents of education, something that their 12 adult children now regard with respect and admiration.

No wonder, then, that once both parents had passed, the kids decided to honor their names with a memorial fund through the Cincinnati Scholarship Foundation. In September, at a rally on Fountain Square, \$500 was presented to a CPS senior who will be attending University of Cincinnati next fall with a major in criminal justice. Several of the Griffin children were present—and applauding.

To those who might question how far \$500 might go, Cincinnati Scholarship Foundation president Ned Hertenberg points out that it covers a semester's worth of textbooks. Also, it's 60 hours that a student doesn't have to work part-time. Most importantly, he adds, it carries the reassurance that someone out there who's already established and successful cares enough to propel someone else in a similar direction.

"We strive to keep donors in touch with recipients if they wish to be, so imagine being an incoming freshman and receiving a letter from a

top local executive who says, 'I believe in you,'" says Julie Rose, a public relations specialist for CSF with Mahan Advertising Inc. "That's absolutely huge for someone who's still struggling."

And so many young children are. With a flurry of dubious investments out there, we all know that education is one to bank on. But it's expensive—unaffordable, in fact, for too many 18-year-olds and their overburdened families.

Enter CSF. Created in 1918 by a circle of civic-minded Cincinnati-area women who witnessed many young boys abruptly quitting high school, the group resolved to investigate the problem—and then find a remedy.

What they discovered was that most had either lost their fathers to World War I combat or else saw them returning home so gravely wounded that they were unable to find work. The boys stepped in to become their families' sole breadwinners, with their schooling quickly becoming another casualty of war.

The Foundation decided to offer several months' support, thus allowing them to earn their high school diplomas. During the 1920s, it also began offering financial assistance to those seeking higher education at the University of Cincinnati, and in 1946 it became a nonprofit organization. Today it works with some 300 colleges and universities nationwide, and each

year it meets The Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability, which are extremely rigorous in terms of how funds are collected and spent.

More than 90 years after its original inception, CSF now distributes approximately \$2 million annually in college scholarships. Hertenberg reports that if more funds were available, they could easily dispense three to four times that much.

Some donors, such as Cincinnati Bengals' coach Marvin Lewis and former pro athletes Johnny Bench and Anthony Muñoz, enjoy being involved in the recipient selection process. Indeed, their high-profile presences at events will often inspire additional pledges. Countless others, though, (both individuals and corporations) prefer to remain anonymous. All contributors are free to customize donations by designating their own parameters.

"You might want to extend a hand to someone graduating from your own high school, someone planning to enter your own professional field or someone targeting a specific major," Hertenberg explains. "We can always find a student who qualifies."

Because the Foundation maintains more than 100 separate funds, a contribution can take on many different forms. It can be a one-time-only estate bestowal or an annual gift, or it can

become an income-driven endowment account that lives forever. It can also carry your name, your company's name or that of a loved one. CSF's cut-to-the-chase, streamlined handling makes the process easy. "Very easy," Hertenberg laughs. "Just call me!"

A sidelight to granting college scholarships is the continuation of the organization's original mission: dropout prevention. The High School Scholarship Program encourages students to stay in school, graduate and achieve their highest academic potential. A monthly stipend of \$40 to \$60 can motivate a student to achieve higher grades and can mean a student graduates from high school academically prepared for college.

Additionally the High School Scholarship Program works hard to teach its participants about the importance of a college education and helps to prepare them through college awareness workshops. Each school year, more than 250 financially needy Cincinnati Public School students participate in the program and make a commitment to change their future by attending college after graduation.

All scholarship and stipend recipients are required to write thank-you notes to donors, which are sent to CSF to be passed along. There's a built-in fail-safe, Hertenberg explains: "We bestow the money quarterly, so the second payment is not made until we have that note in hand." Gratitude comes naturally for students; putting it into words is sometimes more difficult. Awkward messages, however, can be the most heart tugging.

"Nobody just wakes up one morning with killer amounts of self-confidence," Rose says. "Young people need a lot of help, guidance and encouragement along the way—and they know that. Starting college with a check in hand makes everything feel far less intimidating."

CSF can point to dozens of former recipients with some very recognizable names: philanthropist Yvonne Robertson, WKRC-TV meteorologist John Gumm, Art Beyond Boundaries gallery director Jymi Bolden. Where would they be today without those initial monetary boosts?

Hertenberg pauses. "That," he says finally, "is a very good question." ■

### Cincinnati Scholarship Foundation

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