

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Give the Gift of a Brighter Future This Holiday Season

A College Education Is a Gift That Keeps On Giving

ATLANTA, Ga.— Whether you are the gift giver that searches for the perfect holiday gift for everyone on your list, an avid online shopper who refuses to fight the holiday crowds or someone who just isn't sure what to get that special child in your life, there is one gift that is sure to be a hit this holiday season—the gift of a college education.

While it may sound like an expensive or extravagant gift, with as little as \$25, gift givers can contribute to a 529 college savings plan for children of all ages. Georgia's ***Path2College 529 Plan*** makes holiday giving easy with the "give a gift" section on its website, www.Path2College529.com. By clicking on this link, visitors can easily download a certificate for any occasion, add a personal message and give the gift of an education this holiday season. There are certificates for Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, birthdays, new babies and many more.

"It's always hard to make sure you have the right gift for all the children and young adults in your life," said Shannon Ferguson, director of the ***Path2College 529 Plan***. "We like to encourage people to give a contribution to a 529 college savings plan instead of, or in addition to, a toy or other gift. It's a great opportunity to help families prepare for future college costs, and college is a meaningful gift that lasts a lifetime."

In fact, the holiday season is the busiest time of the year for contributions and new account openings for the ***Path2College 529 Plan***. In 2009 and 2010, approximately 28 percent of the plan's contributions and 30 percent of new accounts were opened during this quarter.

Ferguson believes the holidays are a popular time for contributions because many parents don't want more toys and other items that their kids will quickly lose interest in, but instead would like help paying for a large expense that will benefit their children's lives.

"In an increasingly competitive job market, and with tuition at higher learning institutions rising, planning for a child's college education is more important today than it has ever been," said Ferguson. "So asking for a contribution to a 529 college savings plan is a great alternative for parents, and it's an easy gift for people to give."

Georgia's ***Path2College 529 Plan*** was recently rated "Above Average" by Morningstar, and it has maintained a 4.5 cap out of 5-cap rating from SavingforCollege.com for over eight years.*

“As a banker, I know the importance of saving for the future. My wife and I have an automatic deposit that puts small amounts into our children’s accounts twice a month. The contributions add up over a few months,” said Scott Hilton, a Path2College account holder from Atlanta. “For yearend giving we encourage our parents and grandparents to give toward the 529 plan in addition to their personal savings plans for our kids.”

Parents, grandparents, relatives and friends who are U.S. citizens or resident aliens and at least 18 years of age may open an account and contribute to the Path2College 529 Plan on behalf of a beneficiary.

“For as little as \$25, you can help provide a financial foundation for a child’s future,” said Ferguson. “Every little bit helps, and by saving small amounts over time, significant savings can accumulate, allowing a child to achieve his or her dreams of a college education.” (Of course, no method of investing can guarantee a profit or protect against loss).

About the Path2College 529 Plan:

The **Path2College 529 Plan** is a state of Georgia program that helps families prepare for the future costs of college tuition and other qualified expenses, such as fees, books, and certain room and board costs for colleges in Georgia and nationwide. The plan is easy to use and understand, with no sign-up, maintenance or third-party sales fees – just a low annual asset-based management fee, and an account can be opened online with as little as \$25.

Any earnings in the **Path2College 529 Plan** are federal and Georgia income tax-deferred and withdrawals for qualified higher education are federal and Georgia income tax free. In addition, the State of Georgia offers a state income tax deduction on contributions of up to \$2,000 per year, per beneficiary. (Transfers from another 529 plan are not eligible for the deduction. Recapture provisions apply.) Your account assets can be used at virtually any college or university in the country. The plan offers seven investment options and participants can arrange for automatic contributions to their accounts to be drawn directly from a bank account or made through payroll deduction with participating employers.

The **Path2College 529 Plan** is managed by TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc., which is part of the TIAA-CREF group of companies. The **Path2College 529 Plan** has more than \$1 billion in assets under management and more than 122,000 accounts as of July 1, 2011.

*Morningstar, 2011 529 College Savings Plan Research Paper and Industry Study, October 2011.

Consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses before investing in the Path2College 529 Plan. Please visit www.path2college529.com for a Disclosure Booklet containing this and other information. Read it carefully.

Before investing in a 529 plan, you should consider whether the state you or your Beneficiary reside in or have taxable income in has a 529 plan that offers favorable state income tax or other benefits that are only available if you invest in that state’s 529 plan.

We are required to notify you that the tax information contained herein is not intended to be used, and cannot be used, by any taxpayer for the purpose of avoiding tax penalties. Taxpayers should seek advice based on their own particular circumstances from an independent tax advisor. Non-qualified withdrawals may be subject to federal and state taxes and the additional federal 10% tax.

Account value for the Investment Options is not guaranteed and will fluctuate based upon a number of factors, including general market conditions.

TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc., Program Manager.

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