



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Grants Help Union Members Save for College

With the economy in a seemingly endless free fall, the rising cost of a college education is putting working families in a bind. However, if you open a new college savings account, your union may be able to help.

The new Union Plus College Savings Grant offers \$500 to qualified union members who open a new tax-free "529" college savings or prepaid tuition plan by June 30, 2009. You are eligible for the \$500 grant if you have had a Union Plus Credit Card, Mortgage or UnionSecure Insurance policy for one year and contribute at least \$1,000 dollars in the account by Nov. 30, 2009.

Members with a previously opened education savings accounts are not eligible to apply for a grant.

The 529 savings plan is one of several savings programs that can help you afford a college education, which is becoming more and more important in our information-fueled economy (see accompanying box).

The 529 plans, operated by each individual state, encourage people to save for future college costs. The Union Plus College Savings Grant underscores the importance that unions place in higher education.

The college grant is part of a \$3 million initiative introduced this year by Union Plus to assist union members facing financial hardship during the current recession. The program – called Union SAFE, for Security, Assistance and Financial Education – provides a wide array of benefits for qualifying members – from financial counseling to help with hospital payments to job loss protection to help avoiding foreclosure.

For more information or an application, please visit UnionPlus.org/CollegeSavings.

[Editors note: content below for a sidebar]

College Saving Tips

Education is an investment in a career and helps to increase future earning potential. With the cost of education increasing by nearly 6 percent each year, financing that investment can be overwhelming. But with careful planning you'll be well on your way to affording that education. Start your plan now by looking into these resources:

- Qualifying union members may be able to get a \$500 grant by opening a 529 college savings account created this year. (see article)

- Consider a state prepaid tuition account to lock in current tuition prices and avoid future inflation.
- Put away \$2,000 each year and use the money, tax-free, to pay for college expenses with a Coverdell Education Savings Accounts (ESAs).
- Learn what the benefits of Roth IRA plans are. As long as you only withdraw contributions and not earnings, you can pay for college expenses without having to pay income tax or an early withdrawal fee.
- Research all available grants and scholarships, including federal Pell Grants aimed at assisting low-income families.
- As a union member, you also may be eligible for special union scholarships, including the Union Plus Scholarship Program.

Visit UnionPlus.org/Education for more information on ways to save money for higher education.

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Union Privilege

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