

# **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services**

Information for Foster Care Youth Going to College

## **TTU PEGASUS Program**

When Texas foster care youth graduate from high school or turn eighteen years old, they are required by law to provide for themselves. As foster care youth, they typically leave state support with their clothes, personal items, and limited state and federal funds if they are eligible.

## **Background**

Foster care youth in the Lubbock area need household items as they transition out of the state's care and live on their own without the benefit of a family to support them. In partnership with Texas Tech University's PEGASUS Program, "Hope Chests" for high school graduating seniors that are in foster care in our area are provided.

## **How Hope Chest Helps**

The hope chest honors South Plains foster care youth for their perseverance and achievement of finishing high school despite their difficult circumstances. A luncheon is held to pay tribute to them during which new household items are provided for them to settle into their new living situations and responsibilities. They deserve new items for their new start: new towels, new dishes, and new sheets, etc. This is often a life-changing transition and donations to purchase new items make it happen.

## **Donors and Sponsors**

Extended families, organizations, and individuals sponsor a youth or donate funds to purchase some of the items on the list. Hope Chest coordinates what is needed and organizes the purchase of the items.

## **Celebration Luncheon**

Guest speakers for the Celebration Luncheon have included the former Director for Human Protective and Regulatory Services for the state of Texas and a county judge who grew up in the foster care system. Graduating students will be presented with the items that your donations purchased along with a certificate from the Governor of Texas. Each organization that participates sends representatives to the Celebration Luncheon on Friday, June 6, 2009.

## **College Weekend at A&M**

Texas A&M University at Commerce holds a college weekend each spring. Approximately 70 youths who plan to attend college participate in two days of workshops related to attending college. Youths are offered individualized assistance filling out financial aid applications, etc.

## **College Partnerships at TAMC**

Texas A&M University at Commerce offers an unlimited number of \$1,000/year scholarships for residential housing, and staff or faculty mentors for youth. The University of Texas at Arlington provides a 50 percent discount on residential housing. The University of Texas at Pan American provides up to six residential housing scholarships per year. Southwest Texas State University

and Western Texas College provide general scholarships. Texas A&M University at College Station is providing a supportive staff person to assist PAL students at the university.

### **Resource for Youth Leaving Care**

The Texas Youth Hotline is a resource for youths who are under 21 years of age, including those who have aged out of the foster care system. Youth may contact the statewide hotline at 1-800-210-2278 for telephone counseling and information and referrals. The hotline can help young adults locate services available in their communities.

#### Sources:

- [www.fgc.ttu.edu](http://www.fgc.ttu.edu)
- [www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Preparation\\_For\\_Adult\\_Living/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/default.asp)