

# GUIDANCE GAZETTE

Mt. Vernon Township  
High School

mvths.org

February, 2008

## Financial Aid Seminar

February 6

*Deciphering FAFSA*

During the first semester, seniors were encouraged to apply to the colleges or universities of their choice. The next step in this application process is to apply for financial aid.

The process begins with the completion of the FAFSA form (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Information gathered for the 2007 1040/1040A income tax form is needed to complete the FAFSA. This information is used to determine the student's eligibility for most federal and state assistance, and to calculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Colleges/Universities determine a student's "financial need" by subtracting the EFC from the cost of attendance; a financial aid award is then packaged and sent to the student for acceptance or rejection. An award package could include loans, grants, work-study, and/or scholarships.

To prepare the FAFSA for filing, gather pertinent information that includes:

Social Security number and driver's license number; income tax returns, W-2 forms, and 1040 forms from 2007; records of other untaxed income, such as welfare benefits or social security income; current bank statements, records of investments, and mortgage information; business or farm records; records explaining any unusual financial problems, such as recent death, divorce, or loss of employment.

To complete the FAFSA:

Use your legal name; use the 1040 Federal tax return, not the W-2 form, for income reporting and reporting taxes paid; include a stepparent's information, and in families where parents are divorced or separated, the parent with whom the student lives will fill out the FAFSA.

To file the FAFSA:

The preferred method for filing FAFSA is online. FAFSA on the web worksheets may be picked up in the Guidance Office and give detailed instructions on how to complete the filing process. Paper FAFSAs are not available to schools this year. To obtain a paper FAFSA, call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or visit [www.edpubs.org](http://www.edpubs.org). New for 2008-09 is a PDF version of the FAFSA that students can submit for processing. Download the PDF at [www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov](http://www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov). This form can be completed on the computer or by hand, and mailed to the address provided.

*STILL SOUND DIFFICULT AND CONFUSING?* Come to the **Financial Aid Seminar** sponsored by the MVTHS Guidance Department on **February 6, 2008**. Mr. Doug Carlson, financial aid consultant at Rend Lake College, will conduct a very helpful session for parents and students in Room 119H at 6:30 p.m. that evening. This timely session is open to **ALL PARENTS** interested in learning the financial aid ropes for students who plan to go to college.

## News for Seniors

### College Day Forms

Students who plan visit a prospective college on a school day must complete a *College Day Request Form* and return it to the Guidance Office at least one week prior to the scheduled visit. Forms require the signatures of the student, parent, and the student's teachers. If the procedures listed on the form are not followed, the absence may be unexcused.

### Attending Rend Lake College in the fall 2008?

- ▶ Last chance to take the **ASSET** placement test on our campus is **Thursday, February 21**. Students must register in the Guidance Office by Friday, February 15 to take this test. There is no charge.
- ▶ RLC Counselors will be on our campus on **March 4 & 5** to register students for next year's classes. Listen to the announcements or check in the Guidance Office in mid-February for a sign-up schedule. Students will need to make an appointment in the Guidance Office in order to see a Rend Lake counselor.

### Scholarship Information

**Local Scholarships:** Each year a number of local organizations offer scholarship opportunities to our seniors. Graduating seniors are generally awarded over \$60,000 in local scholarship money. The application titles and descriptions are listed in a handout which will be given to all seniors at the end of January. The applications will be available to seniors beginning February 1, 2008, and most will be due in early March.

- **H. B. Reynolds & Harold Hutchins Trust Scholarships:** These scholarships may be used at the college, university, trade school, or vocational school of the recipient's choice. Due March 17.
- **Illinois Sheriffs' Association Scholarship:** The Illinois Sheriffs' Association will award \$500 scholarships to 105 seniors throughout the state. Scholarships must be used at a school in Illinois. Due March 6.
- **Crossroads Hospital Auxiliary Scholarship:** This \$500 scholarship will be awarded to a student who will pursue a medical related profession. Applicants must have a 3.0 GPA or higher. Due March 7.
- **Illinois Elks Physical/Occupational Therapy Scholarship:** Applicants must have a B average or higher and plan to enroll full time in a physical/occupational therapy program, pre-therapy, or therapy assistant program. Students may reapply for this scholarship for up to six years. Due February 29.
- **Illinois PTA Lillian E. Glover Scholarship:** Seniors who rank in the upper 25% of their graduating class and plan to major in education may apply for this scholarship. Due February 29.
- **Charter Communications Collegiate Scholarship Program:** Charter Communications will award ten \$500 scholarships to students in their service area. Applicants must have at least a 2.8 GPA. Due March 6.
- **ISAC Administered Scholarships**—The Illinois Student Assistance Commission offers scholarship opportunities worth checking out. Go on line, [www.collegezone.com](http://www.collegezone.com), click on "Publications and Applications" for these online applications:
  - \* **Illinois Future Teacher Corps Program** for future teachers in teacher shortage disciplines in the state of Illinois.
  - \* **Minority Teachers of Illinois Scholarship** for African American/Black, Hispanic American, Asian American, or Native American students who plan to teach.
  - \* **Illinois Special Education Teacher Tuition Waiver** program for students planning to major in special education.

News for Seniors continued on next page →

## Scholarships: *What's Due in February?*

February 1—**Phi Delta Kappa** (online)

February 8—**AXA**

February 7—**Chamber of Commerce Student of the Year & RLC Tuition Waiver**

February 21—**AMVETS, NDTA, Oddfellow-Rebekah, Peoples Bank**

February 22—**U of I Children of Veterans, RLC Foundation** (paper)

February 29—**RLC Foundation** (online)



⇒ **CHECK OUT THE WEB:** If web-surfing is something your student loves to do, check out other financial aid search websites: Try the College Board's site ([collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com)), or listings on FastWeb ([fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com)). Other listings can be found on Sallie Mae's site ([collegeanswer.com](http://collegeanswer.com)), and the Scholarship Research Network Express ([srnexpress.com](http://srnexpress.com)).

⇒ **BUYER BEWARE:** Scholarship scams exist, and the Federal Trade Commission offers these cautions to parents and students. Be cautious if the scholarship source claims: "The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back," "You can't get this information anywhere else," or "I just need your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship." Generally, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is! If an offer seems suspicious, check it out thoroughly.

## From the Desk of the Career Center Facilitator

Career planning at MVTHS is in full swing with the district's Career Center, located in 206, B Building. Under the watchful eye of Mrs. Margaret Truitt, Career Center Facilitator, students can be found here on any given day doing a variety of career-related activities: working on portfolios, researching college websites, doing a career search, finding college applications or scholarships, or completing an interest inventory, or visiting with a college or military representative.

### So what exactly is a "Career Center"?

A Career Center was specifically designed to allow students a place to gather updated career and post-secondary information so that they can make informed career choices. The Center gives students a centralized, organized, technically-connected place to do:

#### ✓ Career Research.

Students can take interest inventories to connect current interests to potential careers. Career exploration can be done either as a computer-aided search, or the looking in the extensive career brief files.

#### ✓ Post-Secondary Research.

This area allows students to look for the training needed for career choices. Shelves are stocked with in-state and out-of-state college/university catalogs, plus information about technical/trade schools, apprenticeship programs, and the military. This is the area where students are able to meet with college representatives from across the region. Students have access to ACT prep tests via internet. Additional information has been added to assist the non-traditional student. Information can be found for various accelerated college programs designed for the working adult.

#### ✓ Financial Aid Research.

This area gives students the information and technology needed to do scholarship searches. Current scholarship applications are also kept on file here as well as in the Guidance Office.

## News for Juniors

How early should students begin making plans to attend college or vocational/technical schools after high school? It is never too early to start. Consider these junior year guidelines:

*Sept. - March* Identify important factors in choosing a school. Two year? Four year? Vocational school? Cost? Location?

*March - Aug.* List colleges you are considering and collect information. Take necessary entrance exams (i.e.: ACT, SAT I, ASSET, ASVAB)

There are two more opportunities to take ACT on a national test date this spring: April 12 and June 14. The registration packets are available in the Guidance Office. Once the registration folder is completed, it is mailed directly to ACT. Registration deadlines are important so that students do not have to pay a late fee.

All juniors will also take the ACT as part of the state-wide Prairie State Achievement Exam on April 23. The Work Keys portion will be taken on April 24. An orientation will be held to acquaint the juniors with these upcoming tests.

Preparation for these exams is important. Students can:

- review the study materials given as part of the registration packets.
- participate in Prairie State exam review.
- take an ACT review class offered by RLC from February 23-April 5 (Information available in the Guidance Office).
- go online, <http://clearlearning.com/ISBE/> to view sample ACT tests.
- set aside time to go to the Career Center to view sample questions using the CD-ROM software *ACTive PREP: The Official Electronic Guide to the ACT Assessment*.

Once a score has been achieved, students often ask if there is any advantage to taking the ACT test again. Recent ACT research shows that of the students who took the test again, 77% scored at or above their former composite score. Students might consider re-testing if one of these conditions applies to them:

- not feeling physically well on test day or difficulty understanding test directions
- discrepancy between ACT scores and high school grades
- attempting to meet requirements for scholarship programs or admissions eligibility

Before retaking the ACT, students need to evaluate their previous experience, and become more familiar with the content of the ACT assessment.

## Career Fair Day

The 17<sup>th</sup> annual Career Fair Day is scheduled at Mt. Vernon Township High School on Friday, February 22, 2008, from 8:20 a.m. to 3:05 p.m. The goal of this event is to allow area business representatives from a variety of occupations an opportunity to present career information to students in a "show and tell" format. They describe and demonstrate actual job responsibilities for the students, and explain what types of training/education would be needed for entry-level positions.

Since this event is designed especially for freshmen, students will be attending as part of their Civics class or Career Education class. They will be asked to select at least 5 presentations during their class period, interview the presenters, and write about their experiences.