

MENTORS KEY TO BLOUNTACHIEVES SUCCESS

Krissy DeAlejandro, Executive Director of knoxAchieves, shared recently that a report by the Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce predicts that 63 percent of all jobs will require at least some postsecondary education by 2018. At this rate, the United States is facing a 300,000 college graduate deficit every year.

People often speak about the need to reform education and improve workforce. Two years ago in Knox County Mayors Haslam, Ragsdale and local Business Executive Randy Boyd launched knoxAchieves, a scholarship program that sought to help the student who might not have otherwise had the opportunity to go to college. Hoping to transform their community they created and raised nearly \$2 million for knoxAchieves.

We here in Blount County, as a direct result of the Martin Luther King Jr, Celebration Business Luncheon, were challenged by Oliver “Buzz” Thomas to do the same, and ***blount.Achieves*** was launched. We are in the process, “full press mode”, of raising the funds required to make possible scholarships for Blount County students.

While the money is obviously important, however, it is the mentoring component that truly sets ***blount.Achieves*** apart from other programs. Each student is assigned a volunteer mentor who agrees to help the student eliminate the barriers associated with college access. So, a “full press mode” for recruiting mentors is also in progress. We are seeking mentors from all walks of life; retired teachers, CEOs, individuals with college degrees and those without. All will pull together for the common goal of helping our students reach their potential.

Blount.Achieves mentors will support the student through admission and financial aid paperwork, motivate the student to meet deadlines and, perhaps more importantly, encourage the student to succeed. They will lessen the “intimidation factor” often associated with the transition from high school to college.

The mentors are the heart and soul of ***blount.Achieves*** and the largest factor associated with future accomplishments. They are education’s greatest champions!

blount.Achieves is a “last dollar” scholarship program that affords Blount County public high school seniors the funding to attend Pellissippi State Community College. While all students are eligible for ***blount.Achieves***, the focus is primarily on students who are the first in their families to attend college.

The first scholarships will be offered to the graduating seniors of the class of 2011. ***blount.Achieves*** has the potential to change the life of this graduating class...and countless others.