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Thirty high school graduates earned a financial boost for college thanks to the Burleson Opportunity Fund.

In its inaugural year, the Burleson Opportunity Fund has awarded 30 scholarships to students who will enroll at Burleson's Hill College campus.

The plan, which is part of the City of Burleson's Strengthening Families Initiative, is right on track toward the goal of starting modestly by granting a few scholarships to members of the 2007-2008 graduating class, then, in a few years, ensuring that every Burleson student graduating from high school has access to at least a community college education.

The endowment was discussed by SFI representatives from education, social service, city government, healthcare and faith based institutions in early 2007. The formal launch of the Burleson Opportunity Fund took place at Burleson High School in April 2008. The scholarships were awarded in June. The scholarship winners were treated to an orientation and luncheon Aug. 11 at Burleson's Hill College campus.



The scholarship recipients include Crossroads High School students Samantha Ahrens, Matthew Hurt, Morgan Love, Nic Polsen and Jordan Roberts. Burleson High School students include Brandy Allen, Cooper Bailey, Colby Barksdale, Stashia Beck, Brittany Clements, Cassandra Dodgin, Blair Falcone, Emily Galbraith, Kelsy Holt, Steven Holt, Bethany Kester, Jose Lagunas, Keenan Langford, Ashtyn Leslie, Nicholas Lewis, Patrick Martin, Kristen Lacy McGee, Jared Morton, Kodi Murdock, Brittani Oleksy, Lacy Plummer, Aaron Trebing, Kayla Vaughan, Jessica Williams and Rachel Young.

More than \$80,000 was donated to the Burleson Opportunity Fund by community groups and businesses as well as the City of Burleson, Hill College, and the Burleson Independent School District. The scholarships, which cover tuition and fees, fund 32 credit hours per student. Recipients must take a minimum of 12 hours per semester.

Those donating to the Burleson Opportunity Fund include Best Homes; S.B. Orthodontics; the Character Council; Mike Galasso; Gammon Financial, PLLC; McClendon Construction; Perdue, Brandon Fielder, Collins & Mott; Sheri Van Horn; SHW Group; Tiger Mart #18; Tulsa Community Foundation/Quik Trip Corporation and Victron Energy. The City of Burleson, Burleson Independent School District and Hill College provided seed money and/or in-kind commitments to establish the fund.

The goal is to be able to build a scholarship fund that would guarantee two years' tuition to any Burleson resident who has graduated from an accredited high school or home school association who wants to attend Hill College. Those scholarship recipients must maintain a satisfactory grade point average to retain their scholarship eligibility and must apply for federal financial aid (via the FAFSA) to be eligible for the Burleson Opportunity Fund scholarship.

Contributions to the Burleson Opportunity Fund are tax deductible. Currently, checks should be made payable to City of Burleson with Burleson Opportunity Fund in the memo line. The City has a dedicated line item set up while the 501©3 non-profit designation is being established.

For more information about the scholarship fund, call Kellye Cunningham at 817-447-5400, ext. 245. For more information about this release, call the public information officer at 817-447-5400, ext. 286.