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The City of Burleson is getting national attention at the National League of Cities 2008 Congress of Cities and Exposition in Orlando, Fla., this week.

On Saturday, Burleson Mayor Ken Shetter will join the mayors of Springfield, Ill., and Denver, Colo., to discuss innovative city responses to the high school dropout crisis. Burleson and Denver are involved in college scholarship funds.

The Burleson Opportunity Fund was discussed in early 2007. The goal was to grant a few scholarships in 2008, then, in a few years, work to ensure that every Burleson student graduating from high school has access to at least a community college education.

In the inaugural year, 27 high school graduates accepted a financial boost for college. 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.

Any Burleson resident who has graduated from an accredited high school or home school association who wants to attend Hill College is eligible. 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.

The City of Burleson is well represented at the 2008 Congress of Cities and Exposition. In addition to the mayor, those attending include Mayor Pro Tem Stuart Gillaspie, council members Jim Wadlow, Dan McClendon and Chip Stephens, Deputy City Manager Paul Cain, City Secretary Amanda McCrory, Management Assistant Kellye Cunningham and two members of the Mayor's Youth Council.

Youth council members, Caitlan Smelley, vice chairman, and A'ndra Ancy will attend the same workshops as the city council members, but they will also participate in a youth forum.

The Congress of Cities and Exposition offers Leadership Training Institute Seminars, peer-to-peer networking, workshops, showcases, and an exposition hall. The event is touted as the premier skills building and knowledge sharing event for city officials and employees.

For more information about this release, call the public information office at 817-447-5400, ext. 286.