

De La Salle Individual Development Account (IDA) Program for Eighth Graders

In the fall of 2003, Christy Finsel, a De La Salle volunteer and then Washington University in St. Louis MSW practicum student, began to design an Individual Development Account, IDA, program with support from Bob Sweeny, then President of De La Salle, Fr. Mark McKenzie of St. Matthew's Parish, Fr. Bill Hutchison of Northside Community Center, and Steve Hutchison, Director of Revitalization 2000, Inc. (R2K). In the spring of 2004, Christy launched and then administered that program with Fr. Mark's and Steve Hutchison's assistance. Since then, Christy Finsel, Steve Hutchison, and various R2K and DLS staff have offered IDAs for De La Salle eighth graders.

IDAs are matched savings accounts that create a way for participants to save their own money in a custodial savings account and to have that money matched by the organization administering the program. IDAs were initially developed by Michael Sherraden at Washington University in St. Louis, as a way to level the asset playing field. Along with IDA programs, many organizations administering IDAs also offer financial education classes. Participants also often develop, or strengthen, their savings habit as they make their monthly savings deposits.

For the first five years of this program, we matched the student's savings at a 4 to 1 match rate for a total of \$600.00 (\$120.00 of students savings and \$480.00 in match funds). From 2009 to 2010, we matched the savings at a 2 to 1 match rate for a total of \$360.00 (\$120.00 of students savings and \$240.00 in match funds). In 2011, we matched the savings at a 5 to 1 match rate for a total of \$720.00 (\$120.00 of student savings and \$600.00 in match funds). From 2004-2011, we have had 94 IDA graduates and 112 students complete the IDA financial education classes. In the past, the students have used their savings to purchase high school tuition, books, uniforms, and other educationally related assets. We offer employment options for those students needing opportunities to earn money for their monthly deposits.

Steve Hutchison, through his direction of R2K, has solicited private donations for our match funds since the inception of the program. R2K is a non-profit organization serving St. Matthew's Parish and the Ville neighborhood. From 2005-2006, Brian Christopher, S.J., worked with Christy Finsel to administer the program.

During the 2011 and 2012 academic years, DLS has supplemented match funds by leveraging a Missouri Department of Higher Education College Access Challenge Grant.

Since 2007, at the yearly eighth grade IDA parent meeting and in follow-up correspondence, in addition to sharing information about the program, we have offered information about free tax preparation sites, Earned Income Tax Credits, adult IDA programs in the area, 529 College Savings Plans, and Coverdell ESAs to 75 parents/guardians.

For the past five years, the IDA program has been co-coordinated by Melissa Brickey, DLS Graduate Support Coordinator, and Christy Finsel. Last year, Dan McCarthy, then Assistant Graduate Support Director, assisted with the IDA program. This year, Christine Holladay, Assistant Graduate Support Director, and Christy Finsel will co-coordinate the program. If DLS parents and students have questions about the program, please be in touch with Ms. Holladay. For others interested in information about the IDA program, please contact Christy at cfinsel@gmail.com.

We thank Mr. Quinn, Mr. Pusateri, Steve Hutchison, IDA donors, and the DLS staff and parents for their support of this program. This year is the ninth year of the IDA program!