

Dear Sir or Madam---

I write today in support of a program my family has participated in--the Kansas KIDS 529 grant. For more than 10 years, my family has found this to be the ONLY way we were able to save ANY money for our children's post-secondary education. We are a farm family who has also had to have off farm income to survive. My four children quickly learned that education is a priority for our family and saving for that time was important. In order to fund the account, sometimes that meant taking another short term 'side hustle', other times it was a partnership between us as parents and our children to get the money for the year saved. They took it in stride.

Unfortunately, we lost one of our children as he was about to begin college and the people of the KIDS program were more than understanding of how we didn't want his legacy to be lost...he worked so hard to build that account...for that, we are so thankful. It is a small bright spot in a heartbreaking situation.

We also have a child who is a firefighter about 90 miles from home, whom with his savings and scholarships was able to graduate from a Kansas junior college and enter the workforce. He plans to return to school in a few years to complete a bachelor's degree so he can advance in his career as well as teach fire science. His savings will continue to help him do that sooner, rather than putting it off.

Our third child is graduating from high school this year. Her long-term goal is to be an occupational therapist, which is now a doctorate degree, and to come back to a rural community to serve the needs of the people. Every dollar she can save will further ensure her success long after she graduates from college and provide a better chance to return to the rural area, rather than take the same job for higher pay in larger metropolitan areas. After completing the federal financial aid application (FAFSA), it was quite clear how very important her savings will be to her eventually. She is a 4.0 student with a 29 ACT score, and she still had to decide not to attend university, due to the cost. She is going to go to a Kansas junior college first instead to save money.

Our fourth child is considering forensic science, graphic design or agriculture as her career...again, the less she has to borrow, the more successful she will be in her first ten years post-graduation. In fact, she likely won't go if she has to borrow a lot, as keeping debt to a minimum has been a value in our family, which in this downturn farm economy, has proven to be important.

With the cost of post-secondary education today, one must look at return on investment....education expense used to be a great return on investment. That general statement is not so easy to defend today. My children have been counseled to choose their education path wisely.

The KIDS 529 program is changing lives--in families who want an education for their children, an opportunity for those children to meet their potential, for families who maybe would not or could not save. Kansas' investment in these children have the potential to pay dividends to our state in the future through skilled workforce, lower unemployment and overall citizen productivity. Please support the continuance and expansion of this program for Kansas kids.

Thank you,
Renae Riedy
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