

Reliable Educational Assistance for College Hopefuls

"REACH"

"If we believe it, we can achieve it." This statement was part of a speech which I directed to my senior class in 1986. Twenty-one years later I stand before you with my daughter, in her own senior year, believing with all that I am that these words still ring true. My daughter first learned of the REACH program through an article in a local paper. Kaitlyn took it upon herself to spread the word of REACH by making flyers and handing them out at cheerleading practice. Even her school guidance counselor was impressed and congratulated her efforts in support of the program. This is a topic which has stoked the political interest of the average teenager, a platform they can directly relate to and benefit from. I never dreamed that an opportunity such as REACH would be possible for our children, however, after doing my homework I learned that the implementation of REACH would not only ease the burden of tuition costs to families, but encourage economic growth as well.

Personally, coming from a family with eleven children, college was a dream, with full time employment as the reality. I've always regretted not obtaining a degree and I've promised my husband, myself and my daughters that someday my time will come. For now, the goal is making sure that my daughters and others like them get the education they desire and the degree that is a necessity. Nothing in life is free. This is a lesson we teach our children beginning at a very young age. We also instill the belief that hard work is rewarded. This program offers individuals the incentive to work hard, behave and attend school regularly. The payoff is that we keep our students off the streets and in the classroom and, following graduation, we keep our well-educated graduates within the Commonwealth so that they may enter the local work force and offer continuous support as residents, as taxpayers, as voters.

By educating our residents we have the ability to boost our local economy and ease the burden of supporting our increasingly growing senior population. Look at our southern neighbors in Georgia and you'll see that programs such as this work. Georgia's general population has increased since the implementation of their own HOPE program; the number of businesses has risen and the housing industry is busy in an effort to accommodate the increased need for local residential development.

Let us offer this opportunity, let us give hope to all who are willing to grab it. Please let us REACH. After all these years I still feel that "if we believe it, we can achieve it." With your support, I know we will.