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The St. Louis Community Foundation Blog



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Boosting Education Achievement and Equity in St. Louis

Study after study shows that access to education – or the lack of it – significantly affects social, economic and institutional equity. In St. Louis, two initiatives are working to bridge this gap by helping young people from under-served communities access transformational educational opportunities.

What do the two initiatives have in common? Unwavering support from the St. Louis Community Foundation.

- **The QUEST Scholarship Fund** – Two St. Louis Community Foundation donors, who were both exchange students themselves, started the Quest Scholarship program after learning that New York, Houston, Chicago and Los Angeles have scholarships in place to help high school students, who may not have the means, experience the wonder of spending a summer studying abroad in a country of their choice.

The donors set out to establish a similar program in for St. Louis area students. They reached out to the Community Foundation and the Quest Scholarship fund was born.

Among the first students helped by the Quest fund were twins Tracy and Stacy Vilsaint (photo above), who visited Ghana and Costa Rica, respectively.

“Never in a million years, did we dream we could do something like this,” says Tracy. “It was an amazing experience,” Stacy chimes in.

The twins are now graduates of Lift for Life Academy and are taking a year to be Congress-Bundestag scholars in Germany before they attend college.

High school students may apply to the program through their school counselors. Tax-deductible donations to the Quest Scholarship Fund at the St. Louis Community Foundation are also welcome. For more information about the program and how to apply, [visit HERE](#). To make a tax-deductible donation to the fund, visit here and select “Quest Scholarship Fund” as the Fund Designation in the drop down menu.

- **St. Louis Graduates** – Right now, 42 percent of all adults – but only 27 percent of African Americans – in the St. Louis region have an associate’s or a baccalaureate degree. That has and will continue to improve, thanks to the ongoing work of St. Louis Graduates.

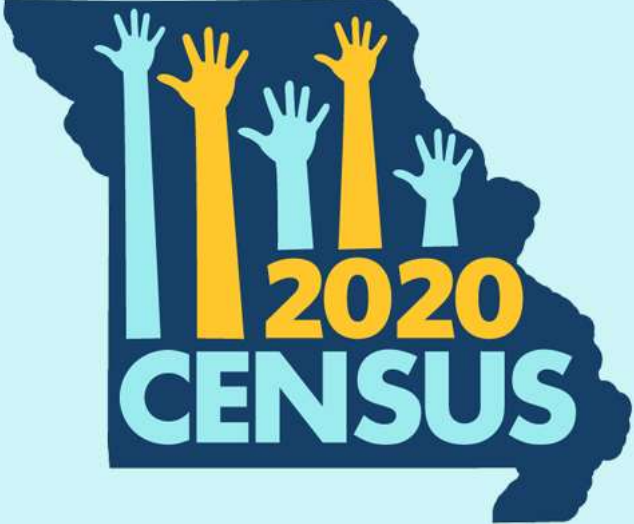
With an emphasis on low-income, first-generation, and students of color in the region, St. Louis Graduates is working toward a goal of 60 percent of adults in the region having a post-secondary credential or degree by 2025.

How? By leveraging its collaborative network of K-12 and higher education youth-serving nonprofit organizations, and business and philanthropy funders. To help accomplish the ambitious goal and drive system change to support students, St. Louis Graduates focuses on four critical areas:

1. **Scholarship Central** – [Scholarship Central](#) connects students to more than 120 scholarship and interest-free loan programs. In 2017, more than 5,000 students used the portal to connect to \$6.6 million.
2. **Building Professional Capacity and Training** – Help those professionals advising students on post-secondary planning build capacity and efficiency by offering a series of professional development programs.
3. **Research**: Better understand what is working, find gaps, and strengthen support systems by commissioning objective, third-party research.
4. **Advocacy: Support federal, state, and institutional policies that will promote educational access and affordability.**

Want to learn more about these initiatives, the St. Louis Community Foundation, and how to help? Visit [here](#) for more information about the Foundation’s initiatives.

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