



Promise Scholarships Being Offered To All LCS Seniors Who Attend College Locally

Lynchburg Beacon of Hope is building a pathway from high school to higher education through a new scholarship program available to all LCS graduates beginning with Class of 2019

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Seniors at E. C. Glass and Heritage High Schools soon will have an added incentive to go to college or pursue a vocational career.

Beginning in the spring of 2019, all graduates of the two schools—approximately 550 students—will be eligible for scholarships to attend local colleges, universities or accredited technical certification programs. The *Stay Close, Go Far Promise Scholarship Program* is sponsored and funded by Lynchburg Beacon of Hope in partnership with six of the area's institutions of higher learning. They include Liberty University, Centra College of Nursing, Central Virginia Community College, Randolph College, Sweet Briar College and the University of Lynchburg.

[LINK to video clip featuring CVCC President John Capps: https://vimeo.com/288332285](https://vimeo.com/288332285) "I'm convinced [The Promise] is going to have a profound and transformational effect on the City of Lynchburg," said CVCC President John Capps. "The higher the level of education the lower the level of poverty and the greater the quality of life."

Stay Close, Go Far will invest up to \$8,000 per student over two years to attend Central Virginia Community College and a like amount over four years to attend any of the other schools. Ten more scholarships will be provided on a competitive basis to Lynchburg City Schools (LCS) graduates who continue their postsecondary education outside the area.

The program is the first local initiative of its type in Virginia. It is unique compared to other free community college programs because it also offers a financial incentive to attend school beyond the two-year community college level. Students are able to choose the postsecondary education that best meets their individual needs. And the Beacon of Hope High School Future Centers and LCS Counseling resources help young people identify a pathway to post-secondary education.

Stay Close, Go Far was announced September 12 at a ceremony at E. C. Glass attended by seniors from both the city's high schools. LCS seniors qualify for scholarships by going to either Glass or Heritage for four years, using the career planning resources provided by Beacon of Hope Future Centers at each school, and remaining academically eligible at the local college or university of their choice.

"It's a wonderful time to be a student in Lynchburg City," said Lynchburg City Schools Superintendent Dr. Crystal M. Edwards. "The support Beacon of Hope provides in partnership with LCS—both through the scholarships and the Future Centers-- provides an amazing opportunity to take our students not just to graduation but beyond. That is what makes this initiative so unique and exciting." [LINK to VIDEO CLIP: https://vimeo.com/288404645](https://vimeo.com/288404645)

Beacon of Hope Executive Director Laura Hamilton said the goals of *Stay Close, Go Far* are twofold: to help eliminate the financial barriers that prevent students from attending college and to both train and retain Lynchburg's workforce of the future. "Lynchburg's Promise is really quite different from other Promise programs around the country, she said. "It is a bi-lateral approach. Beacon of Hope works hand-in-hand with Lynchburg City Schools through the Future Centers to eliminate the academic, social,

organizational barriers that may have derailed students in the past—and the Promise helps to close the financial gap, remove the financial barriers that can roadblock our students' futures.”

Data collected by the organization over the past six years shows that the average last dollar financial gap preventing LCS graduates from continuing their education is about \$3,000 per year. “It’s important to fill that gap because a postsecondary degree—either from a college or a technical school—is no longer a luxury, it’s a necessity,” Hamilton said.

According to Marjette Upshur, City of Lynchburg Director of Economic Development, on average, Americans who complete college or technical certification degrees earn much more than those with a high school diploma, are less likely to fall into the grip of poverty, and are more secure when they retire. They work in safer environments, are more likely to have health insurance and stay employed, are better satisfied at work and live longer. **LINK TO VIDEO CLIP:** <https://vimeo.com/288332385>

Hamilton likewise stressed the economic benefits of a better-educated workforce. “By investing in our young people today, we’ll increase the region’s pool of employees equipped to handle the jobs of tomorrow,” she said. “That’s a priority for our local businesses and industries.”

Gary Mignogna, president and CEO of Framatome and a member of the Beacon of Hope Board of Directors, echoed that point. “Framatome recognizes that we, along with the other major corporate entities in Central Virginia, must invest from within—in order to remain successful,” he said. “We hire technicians, we hire engineers, we hire scientists and we really needed a good pipeline. So, it’s great to have a homegrown program that encourages students to get into a curriculum of their choice after high school, to complete their education, and then to stay right here.” **LINK to video clip featuring Gary Mignogna:** <https://vimeo.com/288332133>

Capital Campaign Underway

Beacon of Hope also announced that it has launched a \$5.0 million capital campaign, with \$3.6 million currently committed. Proceeds will be used to support *Stay Close, Go Far* scholarships and the Future Centers at E. C. Glass and Heritage high schools.

Funds also will be earmarked to expand related activities in the city's elementary and middle schools, and to begin an educational support initiative for scholarship recipients attending Central Virginia Community College. In addition, the campaign will create an endowment that continues programming well into the future.

About Beacon of Hope

Beacon of Hope was established in 2011 to remove the barriers that prevent students in Lynchburg City Schools from attending college. The organization has provided nearly 70 scholarships to date, as well as operating Future Centers at both E. C. Glass and Heritage high schools. The centers, which increase access to postsecondary education and prepare students to enroll in college, touch almost every LCS senior. **Link to video clip featuring LCS seniors 2018:** <https://vimeo.com/channels/1137372/274420365>

The organization also offers tutoring and mentoring support to the city’s middle school students, a College Readiness Symposium and Heroes Program. And it sponsors a *Kids to College* program for nearly 2,000 kindergarten-through-fifth-graders that encourages them to start thinking about their futures at an early age.

Beacon of Hope is funded entirely through private donations.

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