



**OFFICE OF
STATE TREASURER
DENISE L. NAPIER**

NEWS

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New Public Education Campaign Stresses Need for Early Start to Saving for College

Treasurer Nappier and TIAA-CREF launch public awareness effort as Connecticut's college savings program continues to attract new accounts

State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier announced today that the state's college savings program, the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET), has begun a new public education campaign highlighting the importance of saving for the costs of higher education and encouraging families across the state to "Check CHET Out".

"Higher education is more important and more expensive than ever," Nappier said. "One's ability to pay for college tomorrow depends on the quality of the investment program started today.

That's why it is so important that Connecticut families continue to be reminded of the benefits of CHET."



CHET is managed for the State Treasurer's Office by TIAA-CREF, Tuition Financing, Inc., a leading provider of college savings plans. The public education effort, developed by TIAA-CREF in consultation with the

Treasurer's Office, features students from Fairfield County in television commercials that are being telecast on cable and broadcast stations throughout Connecticut, as well as print advertisements, direct mail, and Internet components.

The costs of the public awareness campaign, coordinated by TIAA-CREF and the State Treasurer's Office, will be borne solely by TIAA-CREF. Connecticut taxpayers and CHET account holders will not have to incur any cost.

Bridgeport, Fairfield County Children Featured

The visual elements of the campaign, notably television and print ads, took place at the Longfellow Elementary School in Bridgeport and included students, aged 5 to 15. The campaign's tagline "Check CHET Out" builds on the previous "Gotta Get CHET" slogan and is the first advertising for the CHET program since the spring of 2003.

"I was very impressed with the children and their willingness to participate. They demonstrated tremendous enthusiasm and commitment – not to mention talent! I am very grateful to the students and parents who helped create this important public awareness campaign," said Nappier. "I also appreciate the efforts of Principal James Adams of Longfellow Elementary, Tammy Papa and

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Graham Spratley of the school district's Lighthouse Program, Mayor John Fabrizi, Senator Ernest Newtown, their offices and staff for the invaluable assistance they provided on this project."

Increase in New Accounts

CHET has seen a significant increase in new accounts since the program was re-launched by Treasurer Nappier in March, 2000 after changes to make CHET more affordable and accessible to Connecticut families. At the time, the program had \$18 million in assets and 4,000 accounts. August 2004 ended with \$477.4 million in assets, compared with \$405.5 million at the end of last year. As of September 1, there were 42,126 accounts, an increase of 371 during August and more than 3,000 since the year began. The average account size is \$11,334, compared with \$10,461 at the end of 2003 and \$8,238 at the end of 2002.

"An exciting component of CHET is that parents, relatives and friends can all open accounts and there is no limit on the number of accounts that can be opened for a child," said Nappier. "We will continue to do everything we can to keep CHET as one of the top programs in the country, offering a choice of investment strategies and new ways to obtain information and opportunities to enroll, because the ultimate beneficiaries are Connecticut's children."

September is College Savings Month

The public awareness campaign is part of the Connecticut Treasury's recognition of September 2004 as "College Savings Month" across the country. State college savings programs (Section 529 plans) make it easy and affordable for the average family to plan ahead for the cost of college attendance and are available in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In Connecticut, CHET has no sales charges, and no charges to open an account – a key difference with many other state 529 funds. In addition, management fees are among the lowest in the nation.

"With tuition and fees growing annually at double-digit rates at many colleges in Connecticut and throughout the country, it is critically important that families start early to save for their children's higher education," Nappier said. "Our goal in the CHET program is to offer Connecticut families a premier investment program for higher education."

The CHET program web site www.aboutchet.com, offers on-line enrollment and a range of recently enhanced services for existing and prospective account owners. More than one-half of CHET accounts established during the past year have been opened on-line, and account owners can securely access account information on the program's website.

CHET offers significant tax advantages to encourage individuals to save money for higher education expenses with a wide range of investment options. Funds maybe used to pay for qualified higher education expenses (tuition, books, room and board, and equipment required for college enrollment) at any eligible institution in the United States and even some overseas. When used for qualified higher education expenses, earnings are exempt from both Connecticut income taxes and federal income taxes.

More information on the Connecticut Higher Education Trust program is available by calling 1-800-799-CHET (2438) or accessing the CHET website at www.aboutchet.com.