

The Miami Times

Governor Charlie Crist Thanked Corporate Sponsors For Scholarships That Benefit Low-Income Children

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Governor Charlie Crist was joined by Rep. Ronald Brisé, Former Congresswoman Carrie Meek as well as other dignitaries on Dec. 10 to thank corporate sponsors for their donations to fund K-12 scholarships for low-income families at the “Building Futures, Bridging Gaps” rally at Miami Union Academy.

The fourth annual Step Up For Students Donor Appreciation Rally was held in South Florida, where more than 4,500 children are attending a school of their parents’ choice on Step Up For Students Scholarships.

More than 500 attendees celebrated the past six years of scholarship success by thanking donors like Wachovia, CVS Caremark and Waste Management. The generosity of national corporations allows over 20,000 children to be served statewide, with 45 percent of those students being African American.

Gov. Crist commended the corporations who have made this program a success and whose donations have empowered thousands of disadvantaged parents to find the school that best suits their child’s educational needs.

“These scholarships are an example of how we can adapt public education to a new century,” Governor Crist said. “Step Up for Students is one way that we are diversifying our approach to public education and school choice initiatives. By giving parents the ability to choose the education that best meets their child’s learning needs means that all students are given access to the world-class education Florida has to offer.”

Former Congresswoman Carrie Meek was presented with an appreciation banner from students as a thank you for supporting educational options and congratulating The Carrie Meek Foundation for partnering with Step Up For Students in distributing K-12 scholarships to economically disadvantaged students in North Miami-Dade.



“It is such an honor to be here today in the presence of all of these young, talented students who aspire to do great things with their lives,” Meek said. “The Carrie Meek Foundation believes in providing a quality education for all of Florida’s children, regardless of their socioeconomic status.”

Festivities included a personal story from Melody Cherfils, a graduate from Miami Union Academy and former Step Up For Students Scholarship recipient. Before receiving the scholarship, Melody had a GPA of less than 1.0 and was considering dropping out of her assigned public school.

Miami Union Academy successfully graduates 98 percent of its students and 90 percent continue on to higher education. Cherfils was among the success of her classmates and graduated in 2006. She currently attends Oakwood College in Huntsville, Ala.

“The generous donors have given me a second chance at an excellent education and more importantly, a future,” Cherfils said. “Due to my academic struggles, I never imagined graduating high school let alone pursuing college. The scholarship allowed me to find a school that met my educational needs and helped me realize my full potential.”