



Contact: Lynthia Romney, romneycom@gmail.com 914-238-2145/914-589-2140

PARENTS GO FOR 529 GIFT CARDS AND ONLINE TOOLS FOR EASIER COLLEGE GIVING

Washington, DC – This holiday season, American families are embracing the gift of college savings using technology, gift cards and social media platforms. 92% of parents surveyed by the College Savings Foundation* said that these approaches – including 529 gift cards, gift certificates, gift registries and online giving – would help make a college savings gift easier; and increasingly CSF members who are 529 plan sponsors, managers and innovators are delivering those options to them.

“Gift certificates and online tools are making college savings a fun and purposeful experience for friends and family,” said Mary Morris, Chair of CSF, a leading nonprofit helping American families save for college education. “These tools eliminate the stigma when asking for help with one of the biggest child-raising costs a family will face – but one with the biggest long term benefits.”

49% of parents across the country said that 529 Gift Cards or Gift Certificates – both general or for a specific plan – would make college savings easier; 28% said they would opt for online gifting tools, and 15% for a 529 Gift Registry.

In addition to holidays, CSF members are seeing interest in college savings gifts for birthdays, baby showers or graduations. Increasingly, they are offering customized pages with information about the family or child, including quotes, photos or even avatars. In addition, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter help parents get the word out about the 529 college savings plans they own for their children. These provide a link to a website where friends and family can contribute directly to a 529 college savings plan.

Other programs offer gift certificates or coupons that can be downloaded, printed and used in a gift card or box. All are geared to encourage family and friends to contribute to a child’s higher education by providing 529 account information and eliminating administrative steps.

“In addition to holiday gifts, year-end is also a time when grandparents, friends and other family may want to take advantage of Federal gift tax rules,” Morris added. Federal gift tax rules allow up to \$14,000 for an individual and \$28,000 for a joint gift by spouses – and up to five years’ worth of up front gifting totaling as much as \$140,000 for a couple under the gift tax exemption. In addition, 34 states provide a state income tax deduction or credit for contributions to a 529 account. Most plans allow the deduction/credit to the account owner and six states allow the deduction regardless of which 529 plan receives the contribution.

The following overview shows a range of programs enabling college savings gifting. Except where indicated, there are no fees for the gift giver or account holder:

College Savings Bank, program manager for the Indiana CollegeChoice CD 529 Savings Plan and the Bank Plan of Arizona Family College Savings Program, offers an online 'social gifting' feature for its FDIC-insured 529 CD products and savings account. Now in its second year of offerings, it has seen a doubling of gift amounts from 2014 to October 2015, with an average over that time of \$825 per gift. Account holders create a banner on their Facebook timeline that connects friends and families directly to a customized page where they can make a gift. No account information is seen on the page. Contributions via e-check are made online and account owners can track the gifts on a private dashboard. Among the choice of 15 occasions and the delivery of a formal email -- with the Gift of Education, Holiday and Birthday the front runners. The contributor can print a customized gift certificate immediately or at a later time. www.collegesavings.com/Gifting

CollegeAdvantage Direct 529 College Savings Plan (Ohio) and Nebraska's plans - the **NEST Direct College Savings Plan**, **NEST Advisor College Savings Plans**, and **Learning Quest 529 Education Savings Program** – allow account holders to invite friends and family to make gift contributions via Ugift®. Through Ugift, account owners can provide family and friends with a unique Ugift code that can be used by the gift giver at any time to make online gift contributions as well as contributions by mail to a specific account beneficiary. Learning Quest and its manager American Century Investments, will be hosting a December Days of Giveaways with a grand prize of a \$1,000 Learning Quest 529 Education Savings Program account as part of the holiday giving season. <https://www.learningquest.com/> CollegeAdvantage has teamed up with the Cincinnati Bengals to offer a \$10,000 College Savings Award to one lucky winner through December 21 www.Facebook.com/CollegeAdvantage.

For the Ohio plan learn more at www.collegeadvantage.com/give-a-gift. For the Nebraska plans, go to <https://www.nest529direct.com/home/grow/friends--family-gifting.html>, www.NEST529advisor.com.

Fidelity Investments and its state 529 partners* made it easy to gift to a 529 college savings account. Investors who maintain a Fidelity-managed 529 college saving plan account can invite friends and family to make online gifts through a [personalized college gifting page](#). Account holders can invite friends and family to that page via Facebook, Twitter, or by sharing the link to the gift page. There, visitors can see a child's photo – including a quote on the child's dream for the future – and can make a contribution via an electronic check that goes directly from their bank account to the 529 account. Account owners can monitor gifting on their private dashboard where they can edit the gift page, track the gifts received, and invite family and friends. Parents with a Fidelity-managed retail 529 college savings account, which includes the UNIQUE College Investing Plan, the MEFA U.Fund® College Investing Plan, the Delaware College Investment Plan and the Fidelity Arizona College Savings Plan, can sign up for the 529 Online Gifting Service at www.Fidelity.com/collegegift and create the online gifting page <https://www.fidelity.com/529-plans/college-gifting>

**New Hampshire, MEFA/Massachusetts, Arizona and Delaware.*

Franklin Templeton offers online gifting certificate notices for family or friends who wish to contribute to either its advisor or direct-sold plan. Gift givers can download, fill in and mail the form. Then they can share the customized gift certificate with the account holder of its advisor or direct-sold plan. They can also make a contribution to the NJBEST account via mail or through their bank's bill pay services, using a printed Gifting Notice matched to the occasion, such as Holiday, Graduation, Birthday or general. www.franklintempleton.com/529gifting or www.njbest.com/gifting

GiftofCollege.com is a college savings gift registry that enables contributions into a variety of savings vehicles including 529s. Parents can share their GiftofCollege profile via Facebook, Twitter, and email and contributors can search the site for the parent's name and make gifts using a check or major credit card. GiftofCollege Gift Cards, redeemable into an existing or newly started 529, are available online at GiftofCollege.com, Gyft.com, and Target.com this holiday season.

GiftedPath is a social gifting service that allows friends and family to contribute to a 529 college savings account. Parents create a page with family photos where friends and family make contributions by Visa/Mastercard. Gift contributions are sent directly to the family's 529 account and never handled by GiftedPath. www.giftedpath.com

OppenheimerFunds just launched an electronic gifting option for both Scholar's Edge, New Mexico's tax-advantaged 529 college savings plan, and the Bright Start Advisor program administered by the State of Illinois. Account holders can continue to invite family and friends to make a contribution through its secure websites including printable coupons, customized gift cards and certificates. Gift givers also have the option to mail in a contribution or call directly. OppenheimerFunds' The Education Plan, a 529 college savings plan sponsored by the State of New Mexico and Bright Start Savings sponsored by the state of Illinois and managed by OppenheimerFunds, Inc. also provide an electronic gifting option as well as provide gift givers with a coupon and contribution greeting card that they can download, fill in and mail in. The greeting card can be customized for the account holder or the beneficiary. These options also exist for advisor sold plans.

www.theeducationplan.com, www.scholaredge529.com, www.brightstartsavings.com, www.brightstartadvisor.com

State Farm[®] account owners can invite family and friends to make contributions to a loved one's State Farm College Savings Plan account through an on-line printable gifting [coupon](#) (AP2015/11/1963).

The Utah Educational Savings Plan (UESP) allows account owners to invite family and friends to contribute funds towards a child's future qualified higher education expenses. When the account owner enrolls in UESP's gift program, he or she will receive a unique gift code and a link to a personal gift page, which can include photos, art or even an avatar. When shared on social media sites or via email with family and friends, the gift code and link ensure the proper deposit of any gift contributions. Gifts into a UESP account may be made online, or by mail with a paper check. The process is simple, secure, and requires no registration. There are no fees for the service. gift.uesp.org

Virginia529 offers online gift certificates for those who wish to contribute to either its Virginia529 inVEST or Virginia529 prePAID programs. Gift Givers can complete and mail the top portion of the gift certificate – for Holidays Birthdays or Special Occasions – to the address listed on the certificate, or give it directly to the recipient. Contributors need to provide only beneficiary's name and date of birth; information on the account owner is optional. www.virginia529.com/gift

CSF 2015-2016 *State of College Savings* Survey of over 800 parents across the country.

For more information on CSF, see www.collegesavingsfoundation.org