

## KDHE Encourages Early College Savings

The Kansas State Treasurer's Office and the Kansas Department of Health Environment (KDHE) have partnered to encourage early college savings among new parents.

Beginning this fall parents now receive Learning Quest 529 Savings Program leaflets when they request newborn birth certificates from KDHE. This material introduces new parents to the Learning Quest website where they can explore 529 college saving options for their newborn baby and enter in the New Parent Contest.

"Stressing the importance of saving earlier rather than later is really what we want to achieve," said Ron Estes, Kansas State Treasurer.

Educating parents about the advantages of saving early, even in small amounts, can make a significant difference in total return, explained Estes.

To reach Kansans in their earlier stages of parenthood, the State Treasurer's Office worked to identify outreach initiatives that would best accomplish this, which lead the team to KDHE.

"When looking for ways to reach new parents, it just made sense to partner with KDHE, who already maintains such a strong link with new parents through their distribution of birth certificates," said Scott Gates, Kansas State Treasurer's Office Director of Learning Quest Savings Program.

With no increased costs and a minimal impact on current procedures, the birth certificate initiative was supported by both agencies.

"We understand that parents receive an overwhelming amount of information when their child is born," said Dr. Robert Moser, Kansas Health and Environment Secretary and State Health Officer. "We like the idea of sending college savings material along with birth certificates at a time when parents may already be taking other steps to improve their child's future."

As with most types of investment, time is a valuable commodity.

According to the College Savings Plans Network, half of a parent's time horizon for saving for college is over by the time their child reaches third grade.

To further encourage parents to take that first step in preparing for their child's educational future now while time is still on their side, the New Parent Contest was kick-started. The contest offers Kansans (who have had a baby born to them in 2013 or 2014 and are at least 18 years old) the opportunity to enter a drawing for the chance to win a \$500 Babies "R" Us gift card.

Through this partnership with KDHE and the corresponding New Parent Contest, both agencies aim to better inform and support new parents.

"Having two agencies come together to better serve the state of Kansas is a perfect example of government working well," said Estes. "Through this partnership, we were able to identify opportunities for increased efficiency, and in doing so, expanded our overall support for Kansas families."

The Learning Quest 529 Education Savings Program was created to help families invest for their

child's continued education after high school, whether at a traditional four-year college, community college, or technical/vocational school. Learning Quest investors benefit from tax-deferred growth and tax-free withdrawals when used for qualified education expenses (tax benefits may be conditioned on meeting certain requirements). Kansas taxpayers can receive a Kansas tax deduction up to \$3,000 per child (\$6,000 if married, filing jointly) on contributions to Learning Quest or any other state-sponsored 529 plan.