

# Chance for free tuition draws hundreds

By **ERIK ROBINSON**  
*Columbian staff writer*

The chance for free college tuition lured hundreds of students from low-income families to Clark College on Saturday morning.

Parents saw the College Bound scholarship as the key to a better life for their children.

Covington Middle School eighth-grader Dylan Smith, for

example, anticipates attending Washington State University Vancouver to study forensic science. His father works as a truck driver and his mother works part-time in retail sales.

The nation's economic turmoil convinces him he'll need the col-

## Inside

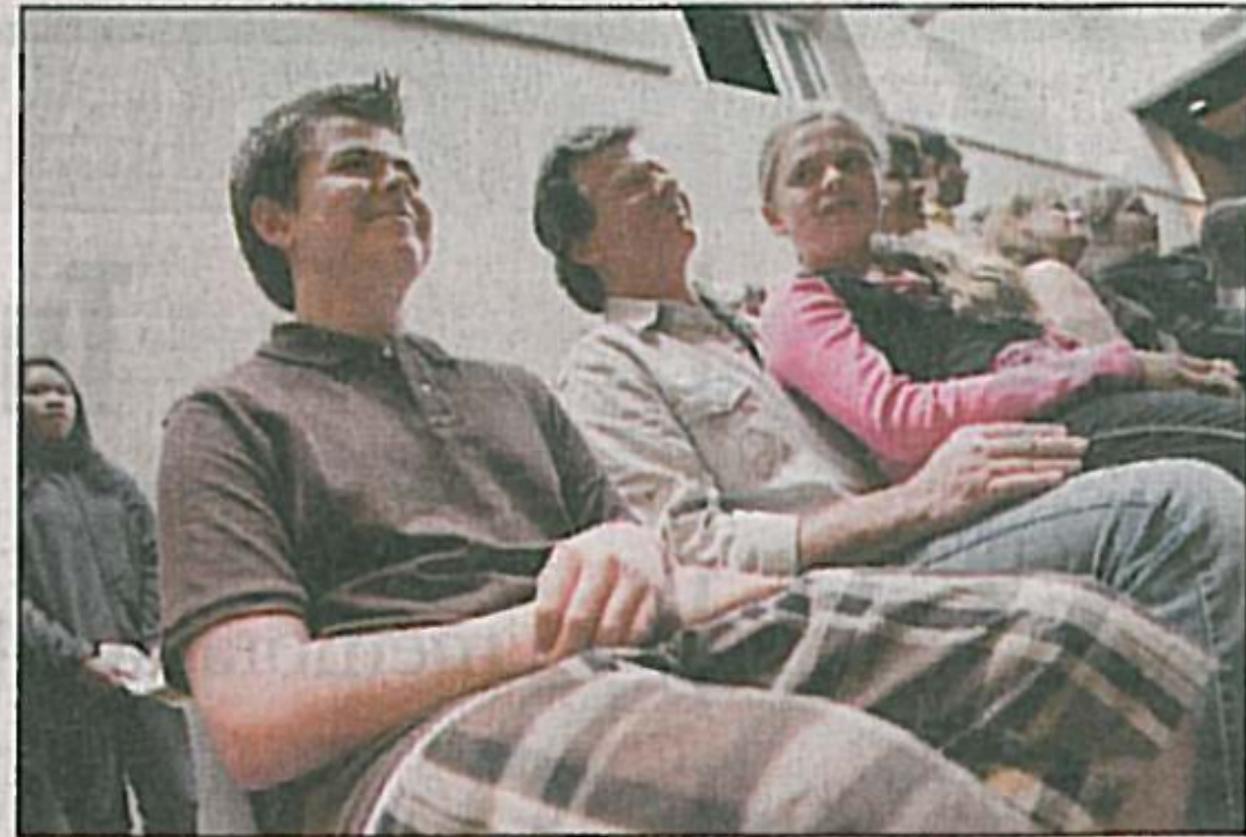
■ Who qualifies for the College Bound scholarship program? [Page A7](#)

lege boost.

"I worry about my future because it doesn't look like it's getting any better," he said. "I don't know how I would be able to make it."

Even if the family's economic circumstances improve to the point that Dylan no longer quali-

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**STEVEN LANE**/The Columbian

**Eighth-grader Dylan Smith and his parents, Jim and Teresa, are determined that he will graduate from college. Well-paying blue-collar jobs are increasingly scarce, the Smiths say.**

# College Bound:

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fies for the low-income scholarship, parents Jim and Teresa Smith said they are committed to sending him to college.

"A blue-collar job used to put food on the table and a roof over your head," Jim Smith said.

Times have changed. Even with two incomes, he said, the family struggles to make ends meet. The couple said they want to make sure Dylan has the tools to enjoy a satisfying career that also pays enough to provide for his own family.

"He's not going to drive a truck, I know that," Jim Smith said.

Washington lawmakers established the College Bound scholarship program in 2007.

The program, one of three nationwide, is designed for low-income families who would otherwise have a harder time sending their children to college. Students sign up for the program in seventh or eighth grade. As long as they keep their grades up and stay out of trouble, these students know they will extend their education beyond high school.

Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard led a pledge for the students to follow through.

Pollard, who was raised by a single mother with the help of relatives in Vermont, recalled a piece of advice his grandfather gave him.



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

## Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard asks students and parents to make a pledge to get good grades and go to college at Saturday's event.

"He said, 'Royce, you have to have a college degree, but a college degree is not a sign of intelligence. It is a signal to employers that you're capable of learning and being trained,'" he said. "This program is an effort to reach into that strata and pull people up."

Like Pollard, Hudson's Bay High School freshman Angelina Espey will be the first member of her family to attend college.

The scholarship has already changed her life, said Julie Espey-Juarez, Angelina's mother.

Encouraged by school counselor Elizabeth Mikaele, Angelina signed up for the scholarship last year as a student at Discovery Middle School. The 15-year-old has taken care to put

school work before everything else, maintaining a 4.0 grade point average. She's interested in studying forensic science or medicine at Washington State University Vancouver.

As one of six children, Angelina also has taken care to set an example for her siblings in keeping the household organized while her mom and stepfather work night shifts.

"Now that I know I'm going to college, it's pushed higher standards for myself," she said.

The Legislature endowed \$7.4 million over two years for the scholarship, which last year enlisted 17,000 low-income seventh- and eighth-graders. Because so few students applied, the Legislature extended the offer to ninth-graders this year.

## SCHOLARSHIP REQUIREMENTS

■ **What:** College Bound scholarship program offers free college tuition and an annual \$500 book allowance.

■ **Participants:** Washington seventh-, eighth- and ninth-grade students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

■ **Requirements:** Maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale; pledge to be a good citizen and not commit a felony; and certify that family income meets low-income standards by the senior year of high school. (For a family of four, that currently equates to an annual income below \$39,300.)

■ **Deadline:** June 30.

■ **On the Web:** For more information about College Bound or other financial aid programs in Washington, check [www.hecb.wa.gov](http://www.hecb.wa.gov).