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PRESS RELEASE

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More Hamilton County Graduates Enrolling in College

73% of last May's Graduates Enrolled in College for Fall 2007

Chattanooga, TN --- The number of Hamilton County students enrolling in higher education continued to climb in 2007, when 72.9 percent of May graduates enrolled in college. The percentage is up from 70.0 percent in 2006 and 68.7 percent the year before. The actual number of May graduates enrolling in college rose from 1324 in 2005 to 1534 in 2007.

According to Hamilton County School Superintendent Dr. Jim Scales, the numbers reflect hard work on the part of principals and teachers, along with a growing community expectation that all students should have the opportunity and skills to attend college if they choose. "A college degree presents a young person with options and opportunities that they cannot get otherwise, and we want to open those doors to as many of our students as possible. That is why we made it part of our strategic plan," said Dr. Scales.

"The business community has been telling us in no uncertain terms that they want a better-educated workforce, and the fact of the matter is, many of today's jobs require a college degree," Dr. Scales added.

Hamilton County graduates headed off to colleges and universities in 31 states, plus the District of Columbia; Ottawa, Canada; St. Kitts, West Indies, and even Tokyo, Japan. Geographically, they can be found from Washington State to Massachusetts and from Southern California to the tip of Florida at schools like Emory, Vanderbilt, Rutgers, Wake Forest, Tulane, UMass and NYU.

The effect of the Tennessee HOPE scholarship is evident in Hamilton County's college going rate. Roughly 90 percent of local graduates enrolled in Tennessee institutions, taking advantage of tuition assistance. Of those, 120 students are headed to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, 370 are enrolled at UTC, and 509 are attending Chattanooga State.

Of the May graduates who enrolled in college, 62% enrolled in 4 year colleges, up from 57% last year.

Attending these schools will give Hamilton County graduates a leg up in their future endeavors. The Education Resources Information Center, a federally-funded information clearinghouse, has estimated that a person entering the work force with a college degree will earn \$1.2 million more over the course of a lifetime than a person entering the work force with only a high school diploma. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that today's school children will have 10 to 14 different jobs by the time they reach their 38th birthday, and they'll have a lot of global competition. In 2006, India and China graduated 3.1 million and 3.3 million students from college compared to the United States' 1.3 million.

"The fast-changing world means that students of today will need to be lifelong learners," says Dan Challenger, President of the Public Education Foundation. "Five years ago, the district began a dramatic reform initiative with support from the Carnegie Corporation, PEF and others, to make sure that Hamilton County students have as many options as possible and achieve as much success as possible. We're proud that this work has helped so many students."

One of the goals of high school reform was to help more students have access to college, and as partners with the Partnership for College Access and Success, the College Access Center, UTC, Chattanooga State, the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, PEF and many others, the district has been able to place half-time college advisors in each high school. These advisors provide information and encouragement to students who are interested in college.

"These college advisors are a big help to our students. They help them navigate through the puzzling maze of the application and financial aid processes," says Dr. Scales. "It's just one more indication of the great things happening in Hamilton County Schools."

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