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College Bound Opportunities

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**Access to College Threatened by Rising Costs**  
*College Bound Opportunities Appeals for Help for its Scholars*

**(Riverwoods, IL)** In just a few weeks, high school seniors from across the country will be graduating, and many will begin preparation for their next chapter in life: college. Unfortunately, the rising costs of college has been creating sticker shock for these families. According to The Project on Student Debt, the average debt for a college graduate reached over \$25,000 last year, and this continues to grow. This is particularly alarming for lower income families who already struggle to send their kids to college. College Bound Opportunities (CBO), a local nonprofit, continues to work on behalf of these families to provide access to post-secondary education, but rising costs threatens CBO's ability to reach more kids.

Historically, students in CBO's program are graduating with approximately \$15,000 in debt, 40% below the national average. This is largely due to CBO's ability to give its Scholars \$16,000 in scholarships towards completion of their degree. Twenty-four students from CBO's Class of 2016 are facing a more challenging scenario as they see their college costs drastically higher than in previous years but their aid packages remaining stagnant. This means that the "last mile" scholarships through CBO are becoming less effective in reducing the student's costs. "Our Scholars might be able to get through the first year of college by borrowing more," said Susan Bell, Executive Director of CBO, "but my fear is that after the first year some students will drop out due to stress on the family from a lack of funds."

CBO estimates that its Scholars' average debt could double to more than \$30,000 if current trends persist, which will severely affect the organization's ability to take on more students. The organization recently took on a class of thirty high school students but identifies more than 350 low income students in the communities it serves. "We cannot ask these already struggling families to take on additional debt to put their kids through college," said Bell. "But at the same time, every child who wants to earn a college degree should get that chance. Without private contributions from our communities, this may not be possible." To help support a CBO Scholar, call 847-943-9226 or go to [www.cbo4success.org](http://www.cbo4success.org).

**About College Bound Opportunities:**

College Bound Opportunities (CBO) is a not-for-profit organization centered in the ten communities within Deerfield and Highland Park High School District 113 and Lake Forest Community High School District 115. CBO identifies economically disadvantaged, high-achieving young people who, without support, would likely forgo post-secondary education and assists them in applying to and completing college. CBO goals are achieved through a program of one-on-one mentoring between volunteers and scholars. Additional aid provided by CBO includes tutoring, training services, laptop computers, and up to \$4,000 per year in scholarships. Learn more at <http://cbo4success.org>.

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