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NEWS RELEASE

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WELD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS LAUNCH GRANT PROGRAM FOR RESIDENTS

WELD COUNTY, CO – In front of a crowd of approximately 300 people, the Weld County Commissioners officially launched a workforce development program designed to benefit county residents, local businesses and the county workforce.

The Weld County Bright Futures Grant Program is a “first-in” educational financial assistance program for high school graduates, GED recipients and honorably discharged veterans. The program is funded by donations from taxpayers receiving a 50% tax incentive payment or credit when contributing to the county workforce development fund.

“This is a bright day for Weld County,” said Commissioner Chair Barbara Kirkmeyer. “We think this program will lead to higher graduation rates, increased earning potential for workers and be a great draw for businesses looking to locate or expand in Weld County.”

The event, held at Aims Community College in Greeley, was attended by residents, educators, business leaders and elected officials from across the county. Also in attendance were State Senators Vicki Marble and Mary Hodge and State Representatives Dominick Moreno and Polly Lawrence who carried Senate Bill 82 through the 2015 legislative session. Lobbyist James Cole, who helped the Commissioners initiate the legislative change, was also in attendance. Senate Bill 15-82 put in place the necessary authority to allow the use of county property tax incentive payments of credits for a county workforce development fund.

Five for Five: Each of the Weld County Commissioners donated \$500 to the new Weld County Bright Futures Grant Program during the kick-off event held Tuesday morning.

“We knew it would take a change in the law to be able to make this program a reality,” said Commissioner Sean Conway. “Look at this group, we have a Republican and Democrat Senator and a Republican and Democrat Representative who helped make this program a reality. We appreciate all of your help.”

Unique to the Weld County program, the donation to the fund is voluntary – it isn’t a tax and the program is not taking away funding from existing county programs. “The amount of property tax revenue coming to the county remains the same. The difference with this program is that you, the tax payer, get to specifically direct your tax payment to this specific county program. And you, the taxpayer, get the benefit of the property tax

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credit as well as Federal and State tax deduction," said Commissioner Julie Cozad. For example, a donation to the program of \$100 leads to a \$50 property tax credit, a \$4.63 Colorado Income Tax Deduction and a \$28.00 Federal Income Tax Deduction; the \$100 donation ends up actually only costing the donor \$17.37.



From left: Weld County Commissioner Steve Moreno, Commissioner Barbara Kirkmeyer, State Representative Polly Lawrence, State Senator Vicki Marble, Bright Futures Advisory Board Chairman Dale Hall, State Senator Mary Hodge, Lobbyist James Cole, State Representative Dominick Moreno, Commissioner Sean Conway, Commissioner Julie Cozad and Commissioner Mike Freeman.

Commissioner Mike Freeman added, "Weld County has been fortunate financially with agriculture and energy production. Our conservative fiscal management has allowed us to remain debt free, to continue to offer a mill levy reduction and now offer a property tax credit in return for a donation in the workforce development fund." Similar to how the county has set funding aside for expansion of the jail when needed or the construction of Weld County Road 49, the Board agreed to dedicate \$15 million to the fund in 2016 to initiate the program.

"This is a great way to invest back into our community," said Commissioner Steve Moreno. "High school graduates, GED recipients and honorably discharged veterans who live in Weld County can pursue their post-secondary education with the help of this program – some of whom may have not thought further education was possible for them before."

The Weld County Bright Futures Grant Program will provide \$3,000 a year for up to four years for any post-secondary education from an accredited school or training program. In short, whether a student wants to train to be a chef, a mechanic, an electrician or wants to pursue an Associate's or Bachelor's degree they can utilize this grant program to pursue their dream. The program will start with the graduating class of 2016.

To learn more about this program, including how to donate, please visit the new web site:
www.weldcountybrightfutures.com

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