

GEICO tax credit provides private school scholarships

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Dominique Velde's mother has always wanted the best for her daughter, especially when it comes to education.

So when it came time for the now 17-year-old to attend high school, Dominique found that her area public school was not a good fit for her.

"I wanted a smaller size school with a supportive and safe community that would challenge me academically," Dominique said.

When she set her sights on Salpointe Catholic High School, her mother — a single parent — knew she couldn't afford it, but vowed to do whatever it took, even if it meant getting a second job.

Fortunately for Dominique, Arizona's corporate tax credit program provided tuition assistance, allowing her to attend Salpointe and excel, she said.

On Monday, GEICO announced an \$8 million contribution to the Arizona Leadership Foundation to be used to provide scholarship assistance to private schools for low-income children. Half of the tax credit gift will support Pima County students.

For **Aaron Muth**, President of the foundation, GEICO's contribution is more than a tax credit opportunity.

"It's an opportunity to play an educational role to Tucson students and provide endless opportunities for the Old Pueblo's growth and success," Muth said. "It's something they don't have to do, but they opt to do. It's a special choice."

The \$4 million is expected to impact more than 1,000 Pima County children at a time when grade school tuition is roughly \$4,500 annually, while private high schools cost about \$8,000 a year.

The scholarships are for "low-income" households — the income limit for a family of four this school year is \$80,600.40. There are additional qualifying factors that students must meet. For more information, go to ArizonaLeader.org

Scholarships are available immediately for the remainder of the current school year. Applications for next school year will be available in 2014.

"So many Pima County families are faced with significant financial challenges each school year," said **Martha Furnas**, GEICO regional vice president. "These scholarships give parents a voice and a choice when it comes to the education of their children."

Tucson Mayor **Jonathan Rothschild** called GEICO's contribution "remarkable," saying that all children need to be supported to achieve educational success.

"Everything we want in our society goes back to whether our children are well educated," Rothschild said.

Did you know?

In June, Geico contributed \$4 million for low-income students in Pima County to attend private schools. It also donated \$1 million at the beginning of the year in disabled/displaced scholarship funds to the Intermountain Academy in Tucson.