

Michigan

Muskegon Area Promise ready to go countywide to 16 high schools



Muskegon Area Promise will be offered to all Muskegon County class of 2017 high school graduates. (MLive file)

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MUSKEGON COUNTY, MI -- Every Muskegon County senior in the class of 2017 will have the opportunity to attend Muskegon Community College or Baker College of Muskegon for free for two years.

The Muskegon Area Promise will expand from serving Holton, Muskegon and Muskegon Heights to serving all 16 Muskegon County high schools. It is expected to grow from 25 students to 176.

"The countywide expansion of the Muskegon Area Promise is a game-changer. In 2017, we expect the addition of 167 new Promise Scholars and about \$200,000 in new revenue from the state," said John Severson, Muskegon Area Intermediate School District superintendent.

The Promise is entering its third year.

The four founding funders were Hines Corporation, Nichols, Adac Automotive and the Alcoa Foundation, which each committed \$100,000.

"Their vision and generosity prompted other organizations and individuals to invest a total of over \$1 million needed to launch the Promise," Severson said.



Another big donation pushes Muskegon Promise Scholarship fund over \$1 million

To be a Promise Scholar, graduates must live and attend high school within the MAISD boundaries, earn at least a 3.5 GPA, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and enroll at either Muskegon Community College (MCC) or Baker College of Muskegon. Tuition is covered at the current MCC rate. This year's rate, including a book allowance, is \$4,724.

Eligible schools are: Calvary Christian Schools, Fruitport Community Schools, Holton Public Schools, Mona Shores Public Schools, Montague Area Public Schools, Muskegon Catholic Schools, Muskegon Covenant Academy, Muskegon Public Schools, Muskegon Heights Public School Academy, North Muskegon Public Schools, Oakridge Public Schools, Orchard View Schools, Ravenna Public Schools, Reeths-Puffer Schools, Western Michigan Christian and Whitehall District Schools.

The Community Foundation of Muskegon County, Kuznars, Quality Tool & Stamping, and Verplank Trucking Company have also committed \$100,000. Additional funding continues to be generated through grass roots efforts that include a [GoFundMe page](#).

By law, the program must be privately funded for the first two years. After that, a tax capture can be implemented -- half of the growth in the state education tax.

Public funding is the key to the program's success and longevity, Severson said. He expects to be fully funded through the tax capture in six years, provided that property values continue to climb.

"From the first day of preschool, we will work with our children and their families to make going to college a reality," Severson said.

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