

SPRINGFIELD

STCC 'invests' for students in need

Springfield Technical Community College is staying true to its mission to support students as they transform their lives by offering "Student Investment Scholarships."

The Student Investment Scholarships, which come in the form of grants, provide assistance for tuition, fees, books and additional program costs. Students receive an average of \$500 per semester based on their individual needs.

Students receiving a Pathway Grant are required to make an "investment" of their time with THRIVE, the college's one-stop financial success center. THRIVE services are designed to educate students about financial issues related to obtaining a college education.

The college started offering the grants last fall to help students who need that little bit of extra help to meet their college costs. As of April 30, close to \$60,000 Pathway Grants were

awarded to more than 150 students.

Student Crystal Gonzalez owed \$597 when she received a letter informing her about the grant. She met with a THRIVE representative and was able to pay off her debt after receiving the scholarship.

"It was going to be a real struggle because I just lost employment," said Gonzalez, of Springfield, a single mother with two young children.

"I was so stressed out," she said. "I wondered, how am I going to get \$600 to pay this off? I have rent to pay. I have other bills, car insurance, kids, food. But then this happened, and it was very helpful."

Gonzalez now works at a nursing home and is studying radiography. She hopes to graduate in 2020.

Amber Bigelow, of Springfield, received a \$362 grant through the Student Financial Services office in the fall. "I'm not currently working, so it

was a big help," said Bigelow, of Springfield, a single mother with two small children. "I was really grateful for the grant. It kept my money at home where it needed to be."

Bigelow, who studied business management, graduated on May 31. She plans to continue her education and hopes to earn a master's degree.

"I am so happy for Crystal, Amber and their families, and with support from our foundation, STCC will continue to do all we can to help our students stay with us and complete their programs," said college president John B. Cook.

According to the Office of Student Financial Services, the vast majority of students struggle to pay their college and life expenses while working part time, full time and raising families. Students cite financial challenges as a major reason for not continuing their STCC education.

The grants are paid for by the



Springfield Technical Community College president John B. Cook stands with some of the college's Student Investment Scholarship recipients Crystal Gonzalez, left, and Amber Bigelow and their children. (SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE PHOTO)

STCC Foundation and funding from Guardian Life Insurance, which was secured by the School of Business & Information Technologies. The Office of Student Financial Services awards the funds.

The STCC Foundation will provide up to \$200,000 a year in addition to the funding from Guardian Life.

All of the grants require an "investment" of the students' time to help foster success.

Guardian Life will pay for students to enroll in an Intro to Personal Finance course, including books.

Students can make a formal request for a grant by contacting the Office of Student Financial Services.

Interested in applying for a student investment scholarship? Contact the Office of Student Financial Services by calling 413-755-4214 or sending email to sfs@stcc.edu.