

**Step Up For Students
January 2007 Student Spotlight:**



**Stella & Aurora Gibson
School of the Suncoast
Palm Harbor, FL**

Shauri Gibson is the mother of two children, Stella (8) and Aurora (5), who attend School of the Suncoast on Step Up For Students Scholarships. As a full-time college student, Shauri recognizes the importance of education and is thankful the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program has given her children the opportunity to develop into well-rounded individuals at their parent-selected school.

When Shauri's oldest daughter, Stella, reached school-age, she knew she wanted to send her to a school where she could develop her intellectual, creative and social skills and help her grow into a well-balanced individual. Shauri found this type of environment at School of the Suncoast. While enrolling Stella in the school's Kindergarten program, Shauri learned about the Step Up For Students Scholarships being offered by Florida PRIDE that would enable her to pay for the school's tuition. She was thrilled to learn that she was eligible and, shortly after applying, Shauri received a scholarship for Stella to attend the school.

Now in her fourth year at School of the Suncoast on the scholarship program, Stella is excelling and has developed into a well-rounded individual. Shauri is impressed with Stella's love of school and eagerness to learn. Stella loves to read and, as a result, Shauri makes at least two visits to the library each week to keep up with her daughter's passion for reading! Stella especially loves reading about animals – an interest that has lead her to consider being a veterinarian when she grows up. When she is not reading numerous books from the local library, Stella passes the time on the long car-ride to school by doing math equations that, surprisingly, are not for homework but purely for her own personal interest!

In the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, Stella's younger sister, Aurora, began attending School of the Suncoast as a Kindergartener on the scholarship program. Both girls love going to school and their teachers are equally pleased with their eagerness to learn. In their free time, Stella and Aurora enjoy taking dance classes in their community.

Shauri is also pursuing her own goals as a full-time student at Eckerd College, majoring in non-profit management with a minor in human development. She is also employed at her daughters' school as an administrative assistant – a job that enables her to connect with other parents and tell them about the scholarship program that her family has benefited from. An added benefit of Shauri's job is that she receives partial tuition reduction for her daughters, which enables her to afford the additional cost of tuition not covered by the scholarship program.

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Shauri admits that the long drive to the School of the Suncoast may be considered a sacrifice, but she acknowledges that nothing outweighs the value of the education her children are receiving at the school. She is very pleased with the school and very appreciative of the scholarship program for giving her children the opportunity to learn in an environment that has allowed them to excel in all areas. The scholarship program has allowed her to decide how and where her children are educated. As a result, both of her daughters are exceptional students and well-rounded children.

About School of the Suncoast

Located in Palm Harbor in Northern Pinellas County, School of the Suncoast currently serves the Tampa Bay area children in grades Pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade. The school's Waldorf-style curriculum promotes creativity, critical thinking, social responsibility, and a lifelong love of learning. The Waldorf curriculum is based on the philosophy and principles of Rudolf Steiner that address the needs of children at each stage of development. Students study the classics, foreign languages, history, geography, mathematics, science and learn to knit, paint, sew, sculpt, play musical instruments, build, and develop other skills that will help them become well-rounded individuals. School of the Suncoast is affiliated with the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America and one of the nearly 1,000 Waldorf and Steiner schools worldwide.

School of the Suncoast currently serves more than 78 students, 15 of which are Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. Step Up For Students scholarship students will annually take the BASI (Basic Achievement Skills Inventory) test, which is a versatile, multi-level, norm-referenced achievement test that helps measure math, reading, and language skills. The annual tuition ranges from \$2,200-\$5,000 for Kindergarten (tuition depends on how many days the child attends); \$6,900 for grades 1-4; and \$7,150 for grades 5-6. The school is developing a middle school and will have a seventh grade in 2007-2008, with an eighth grade in 2009. For more information about School of the Suncoast, visit www.suncoastwaldorf.org.

About the Step Up For Students Scholarship Recipients

The typical Step Up For Students scholarship family has an average income of \$23,000 for a family of four, and more than half of the scholarship families are single-parent homes. The typical scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. They are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and care about their future, look for viable options. Parents apply for Step Up For Students Scholarships so their children can attend the school best suited for their special needs, beliefs, and abilities, and to address negative trends in their child's learning skills and/or environment. Qualified students receive up to \$3,750 to attend a parent-selected school.

Step Up For Students Scholarships are funded by corporations that redirect up to 75 percent of their corporate state income tax liability to a qualified Scholarship Funding Organization in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. For more information or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit www.StepUpForStudents.com, or call 1-800-782-9140 for more information.

