

Creative college savings: Unique scholarships to help offset rising costs

(BPT) - Does the cost of higher education scare you? If so, you're not alone. College tuition prices have skyrocketed. Over the past 30 years average tuition and fees at public four-year institutions rose by 225 percent, according to The College Board. Factor in room and board, books and living expenses, and it's becoming increasingly difficult to afford the hefty price tag of higher education.

For many, applying for scholarships is essential. Valuable scholarship dollars are available to any and all kinds of students - artists, athletes, writers, mathletes and more. With a little digging you can find the perfect opportunities for you and your talents. Here are five unique scholarship examples:

Stuck at Prom Scholarship Contest

Students who enjoy art and fashion design, or just happen to be duct tape enthusiasts, should enter the annual Duck brand Stuck at Prom Scholarship Contest. With more than \$50,000 in scholarship prizes up for grabs, this one-of-a-kind opportunity emphasizes originality and imagination by challenging students to create their own unique Duck Tape prom wear. Duck brand has a history of "sticking" by students, awarding more than \$300,000 in scholarships over the last 15 years.

The contest is open to high school students in the U.S. and Canada attending prom in 2015. For more details and full contest rules visit StuckatProm.com.

Common Knowledge Scholarship Foundation, Inc. scholarship

Trivia talent and knowledge of random facts have probably always impressed friends, but now those skills may finally "pay" off - college costs that is. Students (and parents too) can simply register for one of the Common Knowledge Scholarship Foundation, Inc. online scholarship quizzes. Throughout the year, the foundation offers quizzes that test general knowledge across a variety of subjects - music, books, movies, etc. - with prize amounts ranging from \$250-\$2,500.

These scholarships are available to high school, undergraduate and graduate students in the United States. Visit cksf.org for full details and how to register.

Tall Clubs International scholarship

It's a "tall task" to enter this scholarship. In fact, that's it - you just have to be tall. The Tall Clubs International Scholarship is available to students of above-average height, who plan to start college in the fall. Tall Clubs International (TCI) identifies "above-average height" as at least 5 feet 10 inches tall for women and at least 6 feet 2 inches tall for men. Those of elevated stature could win a \$1,000 prize.

To apply, contact the local TCI Member Club to request sponsorship or visit www.tall.org.

Create-a-Greeting-Card Scholarship

Have you ever searched for the perfect holiday or birthday card only to be left unsatisfied in the greeting card aisle? Now students with a knack for finding the perfect words or design can capture the moment,

while also creating the opportunity to win a \$10,000 prize. The annual Create-A-Greeting-Card Scholarship from The Gallery Collection not only offers funds to the winner, but the art photo or graphic design piece will also be produced and sold as a real greeting card.

Greeting card designs must be appropriate for business and consumer use. Visit www.gallerycollection.com for more information.

Vegetarian Resource Group scholarships

If you're passionate about the food you eat, you're already winning with a healthy body ... and now you could win scholarship dollars, as well. Every year, the Vegetarian Resource Group (VRG) awards \$20,000 in scholarships to students who are active in promoting vegetarianism in school or the community. If you can demonstrate a strong commitment to being a vegetarian and to making the world a better place through diet and lifestyle - this scholarship is for you. The application requires an essay that addresses various challenges and successes experienced as a vegetarian.

The group offers a \$10,000 scholarship as the top prize, and two additional \$5,000 scholarships. Application details can be found at www.vrg.org.

Ready to get creative with your college costs? All these original scholarships - and more - can be found on resource sites, such as Fastweb.com. If you meet the requirements, it can't hurt to apply. Just remember, any scholarship helps reduce college costs in the long run and every little bit helps.