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Offering unique academic, tax & financial strategies to lower your college costs.

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Private Scholarships - Increasing Your Odds

It's never too early to turn your attention to private scholarships. If you delay the process due to procrastination or because you are preoccupied with other activities, you could lose a major opportunity to get money for college.

To win scholarships you need to be selective in the application process. This means that for every ten or so scholarships you find, you may only end up applying to one of them. But how do you find the scholarships that are right for you? And how do you make sure you won't miss important deadlines? The following tips will help your search for private scholarships:

- 1) Begin your scholarship search as early as possible** - the number one reason most seniors miss the fall scholarship deadlines is because they do not start their search until the spring. Either on paper or computer, create a master file of the awards you want to apply for along with their deadlines.
- 2) Start preparing in advance** - make scholarships a part of your normal homework routine. Work on them a little every day. This will prevent you from being overwhelmed and ensure that you don't turn in a hastily completed, last-minute application.
- 3) Reuse your college application essays for scholarships** - you can save yourself some time by pulling out pieces from your college admission essays and reusing them in your scholarship essays.
- 4) Ask for help from your high school counselor** - guidance counselors normally receive an abundance of information on various private scholarships. Take advantage of their knowledge.

Upcoming Workshops:

Funding College without Going Broke
Scholarships for Student Athletes
Navigating the College Financial Aid System
Grandparents Guide to College Funding

Watch this space for dates and locations

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4) Start by throwing your scholarship net far and wide - to find the right scholarships, you need lots to choose from. Search the Internet, scour scholarship books, talk to your counselor and look in your community. Your job is to find as many scholarships as possible that you can apply for.

6) Look for scholarships within your interests - instead of finding scholarships that match your interests, why not look at your interests to find scholarships. If you're interested in computer graphics, check out all of the makers of the software and hardware that you use for awards.

7) Focus on your community - one of the best places to start looking for scholarships is right in your own back yard. Not only are there lots of awards, but many of them are specifically designed to help students within the community. So as a resident you're already pre-qualified.

8) Read your local newspaper - community newspapers often announce scholarship winners. Use this information to learn about local scholarship opportunities and also to do research on who wins the scholarships.

9) Start eliminating scholarships that don't match you - look at your list of scholarships with the idea of eliminating those that simply don't match your background and talents. Don't feel bad since each scholarship that you remove means less time wasted and more time you can spend on scholarships that you can win.

10) Prioritize your scholarships - after you have eliminated the obvious awards that don't match you, the next step is to prioritize the awards that do. You will need to be familiar with each scholarship and understand the goals behind the reason for giving the award.

11) Consider timing - there's more to your life than applying for scholarships, and that means you need to consider deadlines when deciding which scholarships to apply to. You simply can't apply to every scholarship and you'll use this as another way to prioritize.

12) Don't despair even if you miss a deadline - the secret to winning scholarships is that you apply while you are in high school and throughout college as well. Apply for the awards that you haven't missed and get ready for next year when new scholarship opportunities are available.

When it comes to winning private scholarships, the early bird really does get the worm. And don't overlook other ways to lower your college costs. Why not give me a call? As a Certified College Planner, I can help you lower your out-of-pocket college expenses, maximize your eligibility for Financial Aid and increase the opportunity of admission to your colleges of choice.

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