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Utah's special needs voucher program grows beyond expectations
More schools participate each year

Salt Lake City — June 4, 2008 — The successful Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program continues to grow beyond expectations. Seven more private schools have become eligible to accept students using the scholarship in the 2008-09 school year, bringing the total number of participating schools to 47.

Travis Rawlings, the Utah State Office of Education Specialist over the program, remarked, "The Utah State Office of Education was pleasantly surprised by the number of new schools that applied, and we are greatly appreciative of Parents for Choice in Education's effort in informing schools about the program and helping them through the application process."

The Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship, which was signed into law by Governor Huntsman in 2005, provides a state-funded voucher to K-12 students with disabilities. In the 2007-08 school year, 514 students received a Carson Smith Scholarship. This number continues to increase every year as more parents of children with disabilities learn that education options exist that may better meet their children's unique needs.

"The Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship is truly a blessing to our family," said April Anthony, whose daughter has been attending Success Pointe with a Carson Smith Scholarship. "Without it, it would be impossible to have our daughter in a school that caters to her needs."

A regularly scheduled government audit released in January by the Legislative Auditor General found that the Carson Smith Scholarship was successfully meeting its intended goals and producing very high satisfaction rates among participating parents. 100% of parents felt that the program should continue. 89% said their child's academic performance increased while at the private school of their choice serving Carson Smith students.

Kristi Saunders, PCE's Carson Smith Outreach Coordinator, helps parents and schools navigate the application process. "As a mother of a special needs child, it's rewarding to see parents ecstatic because their children's needs are being met thanks to the Carson Smith scholarship," said Saunders.

Parents can apply for the Carson Smith Scholarship throughout the school year, but to receive the full scholarship amount for the 2008-09 school year, applications must be submitted by July 1st. For information about how to apply for the program and participating schools, parents should visit www.CarsonSmithScholarship.org or contact PCE at 801-532-1448.

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Parents for Choice in Education is dedicated to ensuring every child has equal access to a quality education by promoting innovative solutions to Utah's educational challenges.

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