

For Immediate Release

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Clerk del Valle's Office Extends Free Assistance in Completing FAFSA, Federal Financial Aid Form *Students May Be Eligible for Up to \$10,000 in Aid*

Chicago, IL (March 29, 2010) – To help students receive the maximum amount of financial aid for which they are eligible, Chicago City Clerk Miguel del Valle and the nonprofit organization Ladder Up are extending their popular free FAFSA completion assistance. Students and their parents are encouraged to attend the free one-on-one assistance on Tuesdays through April 20 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in Room 107 of City Hall, 121 N. LaSalle.

The FAFSA form is required for all students seeking grants, work-study opportunities, or student loans. Students interested in attending a university, community college or technical program may be eligible to receive more than \$10,000 in grants and other aid for their higher education. Prospective college students and parents are strongly encouraged to visit the City Clerk's office on Tuesday nights to receive free one-on-one assistance in completing the FAFSA. No appointment is necessary.

"Every year thousands of dollars of financial aid marked for students is unclaimed because students do not complete and submit these forms," said Clerk del Valle. "The Illinois Student Assistance Commission is reporting a 37% increase in applications for state funding. That is why it is vital that students and their parents complete the FAFSA form as soon as possible and to receive free, expert help, whether that is from my office or one of the other dozens of assistance locations throughout the city."

The FAFSA assistance program at City Clerk del Valle's office is a free service provided to anyone, regardless of income. Students should bring their identification number (i.e. Social Security Number), the most recent copy of their tax return, (preferably from 2009, though a 2008 return is acceptable), and any asset information they may have. If a student is supported by his or her parents, the student should also bring his or her parents' tax return, Social Security Numbers (if applicable) and birthdates. The student should also bring the names of any colleges or technical schools they are interested in attending. It is recommended that parents accompany their student to the financial aid assistance session.

"I was confused trying to fill [the FAFSA] out...Ladder Up took me through step-by-step...and answered all my questions", said Christina Estrada, a Chicago student.

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“We are pleased to work with Clerk del Valle to offer this valuable service to Chicago students and their parents,” said Robert Burke, founder of Ladder Up. “We often hear that students are intimidated by the financial aid application process or feel they won’t be eligible for financial aid. The reality is that many students are eligible for some financial aid and our volunteers and staff will provide one-on-one assistance to help them receive it.”

Submitting the FAFSA is the first step in applying for financial aid for higher education. Students completing the FAFSA could be eligible for the Pell grant, Stafford loans, and campus-based programs, among other things. Information for the College Illinois! 529 Tuition Program is also available at the Tuesday evening sessions.

Parents or students needing more information about the free assistance or FAFSA should contact Ladder Up at (312) 458-9105 or visit the Ladder Up website at www.goladderup.org.

About City Clerk del Valle

Miguel del Valle was elected as Clerk of the City of Chicago in 2007. City Clerk del Valle's office is responsible for maintaining official city government records, distributing approximately 1.3 million vehicle stickers and residential parking permits, and issuing city business licenses. City Clerk del Valle is bringing more efficiency and visibility to City Clerk services by providing greater access to public records, including web casting of City Council meetings, expanding community outreach programs, modernizing operations to expedite the sale of dog registrations, city stickers and residential parking. For more information, please visit www.ChiCityClerk.com.

About Ladder Up

Ladder Up is a Chicago-based nonprofit committed to helping hardworking families secure the financial resources they need to climb up the economic ladder. By recruiting 1,800 of the area's top business, law, and finance professionals to serve as volunteers, Ladder Up offers free tax help through its Tax Assistance Program (TAP) and free financial aid form and banking assistance through its Life-Improving Financial Tools (LIFT) program. For more information about Ladder Up's free services, please visit www.goladderup.org or call (312) 409-1555.

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