



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER
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College savers earn more with new Bright Directions rewards program
Loyalty credit card offers accountholders new way to save

Illinois' Bright Directions College Savings program now offers families a new way to save for college with a credit card that earns cash rebates whenever they go shopping, State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias announced today.

Unlike many credit cards affiliated with 529 accounts that only offer a 1 percent rebate, the new Bright Directions 529 College Savings Visa® Card will contribute a 1.529 percent reward, allowing families to save additional money for college on everyday purchases.

Rewards of \$50 or more are automatically deposited on a quarterly basis into the designated Bright Directions account. Accountholders can also split the money equally among up to three accounts, ensuring maximum flexibility.

"The Bright Directions 529 College Savings Visa Card is a rewards program that families can use to help finance those hefty tuition bills down the road without changing their spending habits," Giannoulias said. "Using this card makes sense when purchasing products you would normally buy with a credit card, including groceries, travel, clothing, dining, school supplies and other items that can potentially accumulate to hundreds of dollars each year for your Bright Directions account, which grows tax free."

As with any credit card, Giannoulias cautioned that consumers should use the Bright Directions 529 College Savings Visa Card responsibly and families should not get the card to achieve a higher level of spending. He added that the rewards program is not a substitute for saving for a child's college education and recommends that balances should be paid off every month to get the most from the card.

Bright Directions is Illinois' advisor sold tax deductible saving plan for higher education, administered by the Illinois State Treasurer's Office and managed by Union Bank. It was recently rated the No. 2 plan in the nation based on one- year performance ending June 30, 2009 by Savingforcollege.com. Bright Directions is a multi-managed 529 college savings plan— available through a financial advisor— and includes quality fund families such as T. Rowe Price, PIMCO, American Century and Northern Funds. The \$450 million plan offers 45 different investment options and earnings grow tax free.

To learn more about the card, the \$20,000 Illinois State income tax deduction for families, and saving for college with Bright Directions, contact your investment professional. Additional information is also available at www.brightdirections.com.