



## News Release

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### **Good Neighbors at State Farm Grant \$250,000 to Communities In Schools to Support Dropout Prevention and Improve Florida's Graduation Rate**

*Three-Year Partnership to Replicate Communities In Schools in Underserved Communities*

Tallahassee, FL - Communities In Schools (CIS), Florida's leading stay-in-school organization, is proud to announce the award of a \$250,000 grant from State Farm to support its work to reduce the state's dropout rate. "The high school dropout rate has become a national epidemic - as many as one out of three students nationally are not graduating each year. In Florida, without support, as many as 1 million currently-enrolled students are in jeopardy of not graduating with their peers. With the monumental task facing educators today, schools simply cannot meet all the needs of the students alone. The public, private, and nonprofit sectors must increase our collaborative efforts to ensure that Florida's graduation rate improves. Corporations like State Farm, who have an eye on the future, are making a real difference as we work together to meet the needs of our most vulnerable population - our children," said CIS State Director Lois Gracey.

"This generous grant of \$250,000 from State Farm is to replicate the Communities In Schools model. We are very excited about the possibility of serving many more students with both prevention and intervention services. This grant is a great kick-off to our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of being Florida's premiere dropout prevention program", said Frank Messersmith of FSM Associates, CIS of Florida's Chair.

John Burns, State Farm's Education Initiative Chairman, said: "This partnership with CIS is a natural fit because of our shared belief that students in today's education system are our future. Our partnership with CIS of Florida is crucial to help us reduce Florida's high school dropout rate in order to have a more qualified work force. As a leader in an industry that is dependent on well-educated, critical-thinking associates, State Farm knows the importance of having a qualified workforce. Education is critically important to us, and it should be to all businesses. We are concerned that currently, we can expect a shortfall of 7 million college-educated workers in America by 2012. It is paramount that every child has the chance to graduate from high school so that he or she will have the opportunity to succeed in the future, no matter what is happening in our world today. It's shocking when we realize that the statistics often quoted in the headlines are not so much about failure in the classroom, but that many of these children fail to get the basics before their school day even begins. What we've seen through our work with CIS is this: even though not every child has an idyllic life, they can be surrounded by people who love and encourage them to work hard in school and find great success in life.

We are delighted to present this \$250,000 check to Communities In Schools of Florida. As corporate citizens, we must choose to be active partners with our schools. The children we teach and parent will soon be the backbone of our workforce—defining our country and our economy. State Farm is fully behind Communities in Schools, because studies prove this program works. Our involvement with this program is good business, as they have the research-based outcomes to prove the effectiveness of the CIS model."

In 2008, the Communities In Schools national office released initial results from the midpoint of its five-year longitudinal study. The study, conducted by ICF International, a global consulting

and research firm, produced three major findings. One of the most notable findings is that the Communities In Schools Model of providing *integrated student services* has a stronger impact on school-level outcomes than providing services for students in an uncoordinated fashion.

For more than three decades, Communities In Schools has been working in partnership with public schools, integrating the services that students need to stay in school and achieve high academic outcomes. Services such as tutoring, mentoring, after-school programs, career development, health programs and life skills development are coordinated through a single point of contact at the school. This coordinated, integrated way of serving the whole child is the hallmark of the Communities In Schools Model, which is now proven to produce better outcomes. Among similar research-based dropout prevention organizations, the Communities In Schools Model is one of the few proven to actually keep students in school. It is also the only program among this small group of organizations that is proven to increase graduation rates.

**About Communities In Schools:** CIS is the nation's leading community-based organization helping kids stay in school and prepare for life. Today, more than 2 million young people every year have access to services through over 200 Communities In Schools programs in 28 states. In 2008-09, the Florida CIS network served more than 31,500 students in 14 counties. CIS' outcomes prove that its model of integrated student services is effective, with 97 percent of tracked students staying in school, and 86 percent graduating on time. To learn more, visit CIS on the web at: [www.cisfl.org](http://www.cisfl.org).

**About State Farm:** State Farm insures more cars and homes than any other insurer in the U.S., is the leading insurer of watercraft and is also a leading insurer in Canada. State Farm's 17,000 agents and 68,000 employees serve more than 78 million auto, fire, life and health policies in the United States and Canada, and more than 1.9 million bank accounts. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company is the parent of the State Farm family of companies. State Farm is ranked No. 32 on the Fortune 500 list of largest companies. For more information, please visit [statefarm.com](http://statefarm.com)® or in Canada [statefarm.ca](http://statefarm.ca)®.

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