



## SPREADING THE NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Wednesday, August 26, 2009

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# Tax-credit scholarship group puts a decorated Marine in charge of helping children apply

A decorated career Marine who led strategic planning, briefed the White House and literally wrote the book on military leadership is taking on a new command in Florida – tax-credit scholarships.

John LeHockey, a retired U.S. Marine Corps Colonel and sought-after corporate executive, started work today (August 26) as the new scholarship director for Step Up For Students. Step Up is the nonprofit organization that oversees Florida Tax Credit Scholarships for low-income students, and LeHockey is tasked with screening and qualifying families for the program and distributing scholarship checks. Last year, the scholarship served 23,400 low-income students in roughly 1,000 private schools across the state.

“Given the strong growth we’re experiencing, we need John’s leadership and management experience,” says Doug Tuthill, president of Step Up. “John’s history of public service is inspiring, as is his passion for making equal educational opportunities available to low-income children.”

LeHockey most recently served as division vice president for Affiliated Computer Services, operations vice president of Convergys and chief operating officer for the School Employees Retirement System in Ohio. He spent a quarter-century in the Marines, retiring from U.S. Central Command based in Tampa in 2001. Among his various duties, LeHockey was once appointed as chief of staff for a group looking at strategic direction and organizational structure. He also directed officer candidate training and co-wrote the book *Leading Marines*.

In his new role, LeHockey will be looking to help low-income families connect their children with a K-12 learning option that is beginning its eighth academic year in Florida. The Tax Credit Scholarship is limited to children whose household income qualifies them for free or reduced lunch in public schools, and provides a scholarship worth up to \$3,950 to attend a private school or \$500 for transportation to an out-of-district public school. Last year, two-thirds of the students were black or Hispanic and three-fifths of them came from single-parent homes. The average household of four income was \$25,400. A recent state report found that these students were keeping pace on norm-referenced test scores with a national comparison group that includes students of all income levels.

“It’s so satisfying,” LeHockey said, “to think that I might help to make a difference in the educational lives of the children we serve.”

LeHockey will lead a merged organization that serves the entire state. Florida P.R.I.D.E. and Children First Florida, two scholarship funding organizations that previously served different parts of the state, joined forces this summer in an attempt to create administrative efficiencies and improve services for families.

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