



A Real Gift for the Future

JEFFERSON CITY — This time of year, many of us are rushing around to try to find the perfect Christmas gift for that friend or family loved one. Especially for the kids, it seems to get harder and harder to find a gift that truly expresses how much we care for that person. Sure, there's the latest video game that will either be obsolete five minutes off the shelf or will prompt the kid to move into a zombie-like state of being glued to their game screen for days on end without any contact with any other humans. Or, there's the remote-controlled car that requires more batteries than a bunny could carry. Or, perhaps, you're contemplating the bicycle that MacGyver couldn't put together no matter how much gum and sock elastic he has. But there is a gift that can keep giving to that child long after the ribbons and wrapping paper have been hauled out to the trash... the gift of education.

The State of Missouri wants to help parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family friends give the gift of a better education while those same folks do their own Christmas shopping. It's called the UPromise Rewards Program, and those who join this program that puts money in a college savings account and use it for online shopping through UPromise.com before December 31st will get \$25 toward a college savings account. That's the same amount it takes to start a MOST 529 college savings plan. In fact, UPromise Investments administers the MOST college savings plan. Just one online purchase starts a loved one's future college education... at no extra cost to you.

Not only will you be helping that person save for their college education, you'll be able to deduct up to \$8,000 from your state taxes (\$16,000 for married filers) for the contribution. Plus, the UPromise program is available at more than 550 retailers, many of the stores and online shopping sites you already visit. That makes it convenient and practical.

So this Christmas, if you're looking at a way to give a great gift that will be appreciated well into the future, consider signing up one of the children in your life for contributions to their MOST 529 college savings plan through UPromise. They'll appreciate your thoughtful gift, and you won't even have to find a parking spot at the mall.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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