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## **Students urged to fill out student assistance application, take advantage of College and Career Center at library**

**By VALERIE WELLS - H&R Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, January 20, 2011 12:01 am**

MAROA - Kayla Heise wants to attend the University of Wisconsin, though the economy has her parents talking about sending her to Richland Community College for her first two years.

The Maroa-Forsyth High School senior has not yet filled out her Free Application for Federal Student Assistance, which all students must submit to be considered for financial aid. She's not the only one, which is why the Decatur Area Education Coalition's Irma Brooks has been visiting area high schools to offer the coalition's help with that task.

Brooks talked to Maroa-Forsyth students Wednesday.

"We are conducting a senior survey to find out what their goals and aspirations are once they graduate from high school," Brooks said. "This is a way to contact them a year later to find out what really happened to them. Today, we're talking to them one-on-one about college and career. We're encouraging them to ask for help if they need it."

The free application can be confusing, and Brooks urged students to visit the College and Career Center in the Decatur Public Library, where someone can help them complete the application.

Students should submit the application online rather than send it by mail, she said, because a delay of even a few days can make a big difference in how much financial aid is available.

Samuel London, who recently graduated from Millikin University and works for the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, was also at the school to answer students' questions about college life. He said the most common questions are "Is college fun?" and "What should I major in?"

"College is what you make it," he said. "It can be fun, but the main purpose of college is to get your education."

As for what to major in, career help is available at the College and Career Center via interest surveys and online aptitude tests to help students narrow the options to the careers matching their talents and interests.

Senior Olivia Bertram said she hasn't filled out her free application yet because her mother thought they had to wait until they finished their federal tax return. She learned Wednesday that families can use the figures from last year's return to fill out the form and correct the amount later, after they finish this year's return.

Call the center at 233-5056 or visit it on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/pages/C3-College-Career-Center-Decatur-IL](http://www.facebook.com/pages/C3-College-Career-Center-Decatur-IL).

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