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HEADLINE: LT. GOV. **CHERRY** CALLS ON LEGISLATURE TO MAKE COLLEGE ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL

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BODY:

Lt. Gov. John D. **Cherry**, D-Mich., issued the following press release:

Lt. Gov. John D. **Cherry**, Jr. was at the Woodland Mall in Grand Rapids today to help make one ten-year-old's dream of going to college come true. While presenting Erica Edwards with her grand prize full-benefit Michigan Education Trust (MET) contract, **Cherry** called on the **legislature** to act on Gov. Granholm's New Merit Scholarship to make college more accessible for all students.

"The days of going from high school directly to a good paying job are past," said **Cherry**. "If we are going to compete successfully for the jobs of tomorrow, we must equip our people with the education they need - that means giving every student the opportunity to go to college."

Last year, the Governor asked Lt. Governor **Cherry** to lead a Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth. The Commission's report outlined 19 strategies for increasing the number of adults in Michigan with a college degree and improving the state's economic competitiveness. The over-arching recommendation was that the state must expect all students to continue their education beyond high school. The report also stressed the need to both increase participation and degree completion in higher education. The new Merit Scholarship guarantees every student who successfully completes two years of college a minimum of \$4,000 in scholarship support from state and federal sources - an amount roughly equal to two years of community college tuition.

"Thanks to the commitment of Woodland Mall, Erica can concentrate on her education without concern over affording college," said **Cherry**. "Every child in Michigan deserves the same chance and they can have it if the **legislature** will pass the new Merit Scholarship."

Edwards won the MET contract during the mall's annual Bunny Hunt celebration. The 5th grader at Immaculate Heart of Mary School found one of the three specially marked bunnies, which earned her a chance at the grand prize drawing. Mall officials indicated the idea for the unique prize came after hearing Governor Granholm talk about the need to increase the number of college graduates in Michigan.

MET contracts, like the one Erica Edwards received, allow parents and other relatives to purchase tomorrow's college tuition at today's rates. The nation's first pre-paid tuition program, MET makes saving for college easy and affordable. To date, more than 75,000 MET contracts have been purchased. Deadline to purchase a MET contract this year is June 15, 2005. For more information, log on to www.met4kid.com or **call** 1-800-MET-4-KID.

Contact: Leslee Fritz, 517/335-6397.

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