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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Shoals Area Banks and Credit Unions Pay it Forward with Shoals Scholar Dollars Initiative**

Let’s make a difference. Shoals citizens can make a difference by participating in the “Pay It Forward – Donate to Educate” campaign starting Friday, September 9th in an effort to help students under the Shoals Scholar Dollars program attend college. Occurring the second Friday of each month, customers at every bank and credit union location will have an opportunity to donate to go toward educating our students for a more sustainable, brighter future in the Shoals. Small dollars from a lot of people equal a big difference in the lives of lots of students.

“At a time when college tuition is at an all-time high, this program will raise money for the Shoals Scholar Dollars to help sustain students eligible to participate,” says Shoals Scholar Dollars Board Chair Judge Deborah Bell Paseur.

Shoals Scholar Dollars is an education foundation that provides scholarships to Lauderdale and Colbert County students who have not received college funds through scholarships. Each student must fall under four criteria to become eligible, including U.S. citizenship, a drug-free record, a 98 percent school attendance record, and a 2.5 GPA or higher. If a student qualifies, Shoals Scholar Dollars will pay for two years of tuition at Northwest-Shoals Community College. Meeting additional eligibility requirements will allow students to receive a partial transfer scholarship to the University of North Alabama for an additional two years, establishing a four-year degree for students who may not have otherwise attended college.

“We hope the entire community will participate and donate to this program by driving through any branch of any bank or credit union,” said Shoals Scholar Dollars Treasurer Lisa Patterson. “We are excited about this united front to raise funds to educate the students in our community and help them start their careers without student loans.”

“We don’t want students hindered from attending college because of a lack of funds,” added Director of Shoals Scholar Dollars Dr. Randy Pettus. “We are committed to making sure all Shoals students have the opportunity to attend at least two years of college beyond high school and then continue for two more years to help them choose a career – not just a job. We need the Shoals to help us pay it forward to keep this dream alive. See you at the drive-thru.”