FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 21, 2009

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500 High school students “gear up” for their future.

Murray, KY, September 21, 2009 – GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) for Your Future is a one-day event bringing together students from participating high schools to learn more about going to college and achieving marketable skills to secure a bright future in any career. The event will be held at the Murray State University Curris Center on October 2, 2009, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

GEAR UP, a federal grant program of the U.S. Department of Education, is designed to increase the number of students, particularly those from low-income families, enrolling and succeeding in postsecondary education. To be eligible to participate in the GEAR UP program, schools must have at least 50% of middle school students eligible for free/reduced lunch. Both GEAR UP KY, with the Council on Postsecondary Education, and GEAR UP & SOAR, with the West Kentucky Educational Cooperative, have administered these programs since 2005. These partnership programs include several area school districts, higher education institutions, businesses, community groups, and others with vested interest in postsecondary opportunities for low income students.

“The commitment from partners like Murray State and others is vital to the operation of our programs,” says Jennifer Van Waes, GEAR UP & SOAR Program Director. “GEAR UP for Your Future is just one small example of the work that our partners do on behalf of students. Being able to bring programming of this quality to high school students is critical to building the aspirations of students in our region.”

GEAR UP for Your Future will offer students choices of sessions on how to apply for financial aid, steps to take to prepare for college enrollment, tips on ACT preparation, advice from college students on maximizing the college experience, panel discussions lead by area business leaders, and opportunities to explore various degree programs from college and university representatives. The highlight of the event is the premiere of “16 Summers,” featuring Nick Cannon, who is currently the emcee of the popular show “America’s Got Talent.” Produced for GEAR UP programs across the country, the film is a 40 minute video that follows the fictitious Taylor family as they navigate life decisions about finances, careers, and going to college. Each GEAR UP school that attends will receive a copy of the film and corresponding CD which includes a complete college access curriculum with student and parent handbooks, facilitators guide, and other accompanying materials.

Also sponsoring this initiative is Murray State University’s Office of Regional Stewardship and Outreach, a state legislative initiative that seeks to promote regional and statewide economic development, livable communities, social inclusion, creative governance and civic participation through public engagement activities. Executive Director Gina Winchester was very happy to get Regional Stewardship involved in such a great program. “Murray State University strives to make college accessible and affordable to all students of west KY,” she said. “These programs will help aid in preparing students for life and give them the tools necessary to successfully earn their degree and change our culture to succeed in the new century.”

Eligible KY high schools are: Ballard County, Fulton County, Fulton Independent, Hickman County, Carlisle County, Paducah Tilghman, Livingston County, Dawson Springs Independent, Crittenden County, Logan Co, Hopkinsville, Russellville, Webster Co and Mayfield High School.

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MEDIA ADVISORY

WHO: West Kentucky Educational Cooperative’s GEAR UP & SOAR Project, the Council on Postsecondary Education’s GEAR UP Kentucky, and the MSU Office of Regional Stewardship

WHAT: Presents GEAR UP for Your Future! hosted by Murray State University

WHEN: October 2, 2009
10:00 am Concurrent Sessions (Repeated every 30 minutes)

Financial Aid – Participants will learn tips from experts to help meet college costs
College Timeline – Participants will learn information on what it takes to stay on track for college admissions
ACT/ACT Prep – Participants will learn the importance of ACT scores for college admissions and enrollment and tips for increasing their scores.
Business Panel - Participants will join a panel of area business leaders to discuss tips on interview, resume building and dressing for success
College Experience – Participants will hear about what its like to be a college student from current college students

12:00 pm Lunch and Premier of “16 Summers”

WHERE: Murray State University, 314 Curris Center, Murray, KY

MORE: Media is welcome at the event.

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