

20 Years of Winning for Education—and So Much More

The Tennessee Education Lottery Corporation Reaches a Major Milestone in Marking its 20th Anniversary



The Tennessee Education Lottery's (TEL) impact on education in the Volunteer State has been nothing short of phenomenal. Just consider: The number of Lottery-funded scholarships and grants could fill the University of Tennessee's 101,915-seat Neyland Stadium in Knoxville to capacity for each year since the TEL's launch 20 years ago—in other words, more than two million such awards. Even from Day One of ticket sales on January 20, 2004, the Lottery exceeded expectations, having started three weeks earlier than anticipated and netting an additional \$30 million for education programs such as scholarships and grants to higher education institutions and enriching after-school programs for those attending K-12 schools.

“The primary vision behind the Lottery was that it would help keep the best and brightest minds in the state and assist those who otherwise might not be able to

afford a higher education,” says industry veteran Rebecca Paul, President and CEO, who led the launch of the TEL as well as that of the Florida and Georgia lotteries.

“College graduates tend to reside in the area in which they graduated, and the goal was to keep that talented workforce in the state. At the same time, we provide a source of entertainment, prizes for lucky winners, commissions for our retailers and so much more.”

The numbers are impressive—more than \$7.2 billion raised for education in 20 years—but that's just the tip of the iceberg in describing what the TEL has meant for Tennesseans.

Success for Students

What started with five Lottery-funded programs in the fall of 2004 has blossomed into the 15 programs of today.



College sporting events are a prime opportunity for raising awareness about the funding raised by the Lottery. Here, Rebecca and a Board member present a ceremonial check at the University of Tennessee to symbolize the Lottery's milestone of crossing \$1 Billion raised for education in 2007.

This expansion is solely based on the heady success of the TEL, which has grown gross revenues an average of 5.2% annually since its first full fiscal year. Ongoing surpluses have given the state's legislature the ability to analyze and expand the programs, which now fund educational

awards from HOPE Scholarships to Tennessee Promise, which can provide a tuition-free two-year program at a community college. There are also awards for those with intellectual disabilities, veterans, and non-traditional students aged 25 or older. There's even an energy-efficient schools initiative that has disbursed more than \$102.5 million in energy efficient grants and loans to public K-12 schools.

“Everyone who is part of the TEL's 175-plus dynamic team is proud of the work we do and



TEL employees join in marking milestones, such as when the Lottery crossed over \$2 billion raised for education.



the difference we've made," says Ms. Paul. "Some TEL staff members volunteer to be mentors to students who are pursuing a Tennessee Promise scholarship, and we also created the TEL Career Closet to allow employees to donate gently used business attire to college students to help them prepare for a professional career. We are truly committed to our mission of supporting education in a variety of ways." The Lottery frequently hears from beneficiaries and shares some of these stories ("TEL Your Story") on its website to spread the message that dreams can become reality. "The HOPE Scholarship has given me the opportunity to pursue my dreams, plus I have the chance to inspire others to attend college," shared a political science major at Fisk University in Nashville. There's an eagerness to tell such stories: The TEL heard from a large group of award recipients during a recent outreach campaign. These beneficiaries represented both students and graduates, the latter having secured positions in areas such as healthcare, diesel mechanics, human resources, education, advertising, administration, insurance, sales and marketing. Others shared that they were

continuing their education by pursuing an advanced degree.

"We also run beneficiary advertisements to raise awareness about the opportunities the TEL allows for, offer gratitude for those who support the Lottery, and congratulate those who have earned an award," says Ms. Paul. Such was the case with the 20th anniversary, which was a fitting springboard to mark the more than two million Lottery-funded scholarships and grants awarded to Tennessee students during that time.

Another creative and unique educational initiative is the TEL's own Wanda Young Wilson Internship Program, which provides professional training and entry-level work experience to students attending the state's Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The summer program has been operating since the first year of the TEL's launch and was named after the Lottery's former general counsel and chief of staff, who has since retired.

Others Win, Too

Educational beneficiaries and their families aren't the only folks who win with the TEL. Players have won nearly \$20 billion in prizes from a wide variety of instant and draw-style games, and retailers have earned nearly \$2 billion in commis-

sions. Stories from prize winners run the gamut. From a lucky morning stop for a biscuit or gasoline to elated co-workers who play together and can't wait to share their prize, excitement fills the Lottery's four claim centers daily. And that's in addition to the fun atmosphere games and winners bring to the network of more than 5,000 retailer locations statewide. "Winners tell us they will pay off mortgages, donate to charitable organizations, make home improvements, save for the future, help family and make other purchases. Not only are they benefitting, but so too is Tennessee's economy," Ms. Paul notes. The Lottery also assists several State agencies by withholding any state-owed debts such as child support from Lottery winners of \$600 or more and remitting those funds to these agencies. By the end of Fiscal Year 2023, more than \$6.2 million had been returned to the State.

Dedicated to Corporate Social Responsibility

There's even more to know about the value the TEL brings, as the organization is committed to a variety of Corporate Social Responsibility programs (CSR). Impact areas include responsible gaming (RG), community engagement, diversity and

Continued on page 56



Winners, winners and more winners!



The TEL's Wanda Wilson Internship Program has been a fixture at the TEL since its first year of operations.



The Board of Directors help lead the way to success

inclusion, sustainability and, as previously noted, the economy. The Lottery publishes a CSR Report on its website to share details about such initiatives.

“Not only are we raising funds for education, but we are doing so in a socially responsible manner,” says Ms. Paul. For example, the Lottery has achieved the highest level of Responsible Gaming Certification from the World Lottery Association (WLA), as well the highest level of RG Verification from the North

American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries (NASPL) and the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). “We’re proud of these achievements, and we are consistently analyzing our RG program to continuously improve,” says Ms. Paul. “By sharing RG best practices with other lotteries across the globe, we learn from each other and strengthen our industry as a whole.”

Ms. Paul, current President of WLA, was a former Chair of its CSR Committee, and her Executive Vice President of Advertising and Marketing is currently the North American representative serving on the WLA’s CSR Committee’s Expert Working Group. The TEL also maintains an RG Committee, made up of additional TEL senior professionals who represent a broad spectrum of expertise to implement and maintain the Lottery’s wide-reaching RG program.

Teamwork a Hallmark of Success

And this group effort doesn’t stop there. “Everyone plays a vital role in the success we’ve achieved,” Ms. Paul likes to point out. This is clear from a recent visit to the Lottery on its 20th anniversary, where all hands were on deck in various capacities to mark the occasion. “The 20-year milestone is a terrific time to recognize the benefits we have brought to the state and to spotlight our incredible team, including our dedicated Board of Directors.” The staff is impressive for its talent and hard work, but also for its makeup, which represents 53% women and 45% minority. Another key to the TEL’s success, says Ms. Paul, is that it is designed by statute to operate as a Corporation and is not a state agency. “This allows for a nimbleness that has made a meaningful difference in the way we are able to perform.”

The stellar performance from the past 20 years was an obvious theme during the variety of anniversary activities, which included annual compliance training, sales team training, refreshments, retrospective presentations, and an off-site reception. The TEL also launched a group of specially themed instant games based on the ever-popular Jumbo Bucks. “As we enter the next decade, we’re dedicated to making sure the years ahead prove just as fun for our players, as productive for the good causes we serve and as enriching for our team,” says Ms. Paul. “I’m proud to be part of this journey.” ■



The TEL team joined in the fun of the launch of Lotto America in 2017



The Lottery’s Executive Team help lead the way to success