

MEDIA CONTACT:

Name

Title, School Name

Number

Email

[X School Name] Named an Invest in ME Kindergarten County Champion School

*School to Receive \$500 to Host an Event and Resources to Share with
Local Families About Planning and Preparing for Higher Education*

[CITY], Maine — Month XX, 2018 — The Alford Scholarship Foundation (ASF) and the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) are again partnering on the Invest in ME Kindergarten initiative. Invest in ME Kindergarten is designed to inspire Maine families with children in the 2019-2020 kindergarten class to prepare early for future higher education, including potential associated costs. Twelve schools were selected to serve as County Champion Schools in order to help educate and engage families in the discussion. **[School Name]** was one of the 12 schools selected.

ASF has invested a \$500 Alford Grant for every baby born a Maine resident since January 1, 2013¹. As of August 31, 2019, ASF has invested over \$50 million for the future education of more than 100,000 Maine children! The Alford Grant is a legacy gift from late philanthropist Harold Alford to benefit future generations of Maine children. Mr. Alford hoped the \$500 Alford Grant would inspire families to also save for their children's higher education.

Many Maine children entering kindergarten this fall have been awarded the Alford Grant. Kindergarten is a wonderful time to start thinking about the future and the things that parents can do, such as save, to help prepare their kids for higher education success.

(SAMPLE QUOTE)

"We are thrilled to be selected as one of the Invest in ME Kindergarten County Champion Schools," said **[Principal Name, School Name]**. "Our school is filled with wonderful children and as educators we know that early inspiration is the key to student success and motivation. Becoming a part of this program is another positive way we can increase aspirations to pursue education after high school. Starting this young, will

¹ Children born as Maine residents since January 1, 2013, or who are Maine residents at account opening and under the age of one, are eligible for the Alford Gant. See Guidelines at NextGenforME.com/AlfondGuidelines.

allow them to ponder the possibilities their future may hold, realize they can achieve them and start a path forward by planning with their families.”

As a County Champion School, [X School Name] will be listed on the BrightFutureForME.com website, will receive tools and resources to help promote its participation in the community, an in-school toolkit with printed resources delivered to the school 3 times a year to help keep the topic of higher education top of mind. Plus, [X School Name] will receive a Bright Future Fun Pack filled with fun materials for every kindergarten student, an Invest in ME Kindergarten banner to hang at its school, and a \$500 grant to support Invest in ME Kindergarten initiatives hosted by the school.

Kindergarten Year – A Good Time to Start Saving

Kindergarten is a good time for families to think about saving for higher education because some may have space in their budget for saving thanks to reduced child care expenses as their kindergartener enters school. According to the [Center for Social Development](#), low and moderate-income children with college savings between \$1 and \$499 are 3 times more likely to attend to college and 4 times more likely to graduate.

“We want to encourage families to consider converting those child care dollars or at least a portion of them into saving for higher education, especially since they’re already used to living without that income,” said Martha Johnston, Education Director at FAME. “Families can learn more about saving with Maine’s section 529 plan, NextGen 529, at [NextGenforME.com](#)

[Add School Boilerplate]

About the Finance Authority of Maine

FAME is a quasi-independent state agency that expands business and educational opportunities to help Maine people and businesses succeed. To learn more about FAME, please visit [FAMEmaine.com](#).

About the Alfond Scholarship Foundation & The Alfond Grant

Harold Alfond was a Maine businessman and philanthropist who wanted every Maine baby to have the opportunity that higher education brings. The Alfond Scholarship Foundation is a non-profit organization he created to invest the \$500 Alfond Grant at birth for every Maine resident baby for their future education. The Alfond Grant is the grant awarded to all babies born Maine residents on or after January 1, 2013. For Maine children born 2008-2012 the grant was available on a more limited basis. To learn more about the grant and eligibility, see guidelines at [NextGenforME.com/Alfond Guidelines](#).

About NextGen 529

NextGen 529 is a Section 529 plan administered by the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). Before you invest in NextGen 529, request a NextGen 529 Program Description from your Merrill Financial Advisor or Maine Distribution Agent or call Merrill

at 1-877-463-9843 and read it carefully. The Program Description contains more complete information, including investment objectives, charges, expenses and risks of investing in NextGen 529, which you should carefully consider before investing. You also should consider whether you or your designated beneficiary's home state offers any state tax or other state benefits such as financial aid, scholarship funds, and protection from creditors that are only available for investments in such state's 529 plan. Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated, a registered broker-dealer, member SIPC, is the program manager and underwriter.