

# Avenues to success

**E**ditorials on this page have noted the need for Omaha to tackle its poverty challenges in a comprehensive way. The Bright Futures Foundation has set an encouraging example of this with its Avenue Scholars program.

This partner effort of Building Bright Futures is designed to provide meaningful and consistent support to first-generation college students or teens from low-income families. In contrast to other national models that consist solely of scholarship assistance, the Avenue Scholars program commendably includes broader, more far-reaching objectives.

While college preparation for students who otherwise could slip through the cracks is a greatly important objective, organizers of Avenue Scholars have set their sights much higher.

Beginning with a fast-track version in January and the official launch of the program next fall, full-time talent advisers hope to become positive influences in students' lives. These advisers will provide guidance for these young people through college and the beginning of their professional careers.

Ken Bird, chief executive of the foundation, noted that this unique approach arose from looking at the Omaha area as a whole and determining how best to serve students and families in need of assistance.

"We've looked at very high-profile programs around the country. We

## **Program to take comprehensive approach to helping low-income students.**

can't find a program that's doing what we are hoping to do with them," he told The World-Herald on Monday. "We want to be really intrusive in their lives. You just don't see a community like that."

One way that Avenue Scholars will be intrusive, in a positive way, is through a yearlong class for junior and senior students who qualify. As a Sunday World-Herald news story explained, an adviser will help students prepare for college entrance exams, work on budgeting and encourage critical thinking by debating lessons from other courses.

This focus suits the program's mission of doing more for students than simply helping them get to college. The placement of advisers on some of Nebraska's college campuses will be another way of accomplishing this goal. These role models will provide tutoring and financial aid assistance and also will work with the students' families.

"We want to create a resource center that helps them," Bird said. "They're just really caught without much information and financial and personal resources to help their kids and to help them fill in the cracks."

The Avenue Scholars program thus may open the door to important new opportunities for Omaha and its neediest residents. The foundation and several Omaha philanthropists deserve praise for not only helping students to fulfill their collegiate aspirations but also working to ensure academic success and show the way toward promising futures.