

Gov. Kaine to speak at annual GED graduation ceremonies

Governor Timothy M. Kaine will deliver the keynote address for the annual Patrick County GED graduation ceremonies on Friday, June 1, at the Reynolds Homestead in Critz.

Foundation chairman and former Governor Gerald L. Baliles made the announcement saying, "This is a great honor for our 2007 GED graduates and for Patrick County. Governor Kaine was favorably impressed during his visit here last November by the foundation's progress toward its goal of raising education attainment levels in Patrick to rank among the top five rural counties in Virginia. He was particularly pleased to see that the people of Patrick are so enthusiastically embracing the practice of going "back to school" and of lifelong learning.

"One only has to attend one of these GED graduation celebrations to grasp the significance this achievement has in the lives of the graduates and their families. It is a powerful and moving experience."

According to foundation executive director Jerry Hughes, the GED graduation event is the culmination of much hard work by the graduates and dedication of their Patrick County Public Schools Adult Education instructors.

"Committing to complete one's high school education after many years absence from school is a big step," Hughes said. "It takes courage and it takes a willingness to rearrange lives. It's a significant and highly personal investment of oneself.

Hughes added, "We believe those who are successful deserve our heartiest congratulations and our thanks because they are transforming Patrick County and shaping its future. We are pleased that Governor Kaine has agreed to be this year's speaker. This really underscores the importance of education and of lifelong learning for our graduates and our community."

Governor Kaine met with the foundation board and staff members in late November, 2006, to learn

more about the organization's education-based economic development initiatives. During that meeting, Kaine remarked that the foundation's efforts to raise county education attainment levels as a way to attract new businesses should serve as a model for other rural Virginia counties struggling to rebuild their local economies.

These annual GED graduation celebrations have taken place in Patrick County since 2003 and include a dinner for graduates and their families followed by traditional graduation ceremonies. Graduation speakers have included a former Virginia governor, a justice of the Virginia Supreme Court, a local circuit court judge and two university presidents.

These celebrations are sponsored by the Patrick County Education Foundation, Patrick County Public Schools and the Stuart Rotary Club. Reserved seating will be provided for GED graduates and their guests. Remaining seating will be available to the public on a first-come basis.