

Press Release

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Patrick County Education Foundation Receives Grant from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) has announced that it is awarding the Patrick County Education Foundation a one-time grant of \$22,500 to fund the development and implementation of an early college awareness program for students in the Patrick County Public Schools system. This grant is being awarded through SCHEV with funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative. The GEAR UP program is designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

The Patrick County Education Foundation will use the funding from SCHEV through the Foundation's *College Access Program* to develop and conduct activities to raise student and parent awareness of careers and college education opportunities. These early awareness activities will target students in the traditional middle school and high school grades and their parents. According to Gerald L. Hughes, the Foundation's Executive Director, "The Patrick County Education Foundation's goal is to make Patrick County students and their parents aware that college enrollment is attainable, regardless of families' financial resources. For too long, parents of limited financial means have believed that a college education was not something their children could achieve or hope

for because of the cost. The Foundation wants to help County parents see that college is very much a possibility and an option for their students and we want to help them make that dream come true. Early awareness is the key.”

SCHEV is the agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia responsible for promoting the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education. It develops policies, formulae, and guidelines for the fair and equitable distribution and use of public funds among Virginia’s public institutions of higher education. SCHEV received its GEAR UP funding through a five-year grant from the U. S. Department of Education.

The Patrick County Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization begun in 2001 as an economic development initiative serving the people of Patrick County. Its purpose is to raise Patrick County education attainment levels to among the top five rural counties in Virginia in order to attract new businesses and jobs to the County by:

- Increasing the percentage of high school seniors who attend college,
- Cutting in half the number of adults without a high school diploma, and
- Providing effective workforce training programs to prepare adult workers for jobs in the information-based industries of today and tomorrow.

The Foundation is addressing these goals through three program initiatives: the *College Access Program*, the *GED Promotion Project* and the *Workforce Training Program*. Since 2001, it has committed \$258,750 to Last Dollar Scholarships for County high school seniors and assisted students with securing over \$2 million in financial aid for college. It has committed over \$49,000 in incentives to GED graduates and more than \$145,000 to fund innovative workforce training programs for County adults. The Patrick County Education Foundation is solely supported through

the generous contributions of individuals, organizations and corporations and through private and public grants. Persons wishing to learn more about the Foundation's programs or to make a donation may call (276) 694-7233.

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