

SREB, PCEA announce plans to expand adult learning program

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and Virginia's Patrick County Education Foundation have announced a joint effort to expand current county activities to address the needs of adult learners.

The effort is part of a broader initiative under way at SREB to focus more attention on the adult learning challenge in the South. SREB leaders believe the efforts in Patrick County can help other rural communities across the South establish successful programs.

Over the past several months, the Patrick County Education Foundation has been recognized by Virginia Governor Mark Warner and other state leaders for its comprehensive approach to workforce training, GED preparation and college access.

In announcing the project, SREB President Dave Spence noted that the challenges in Patrick County are similar to those of many rural counties in SREB states.

"Patrick County has witnessed significant changes in its economy, and it is addressing the challenge by promoting education and workforce development," said Spence. "We believe this story is an important

one to tell other communities. This project aims, in part, to do this."

Former Virginia Governor Gerald Baliles, a native of Patrick County, chairman of the Patrick County Education Foundation's Board of Directors and former chairman of SREB's Commission for Educational Quality, indicated that the partnership with SREB can help expand the efforts of the foundation.

"We are pleased that SREB has chosen to work with Patrick County and with the foundation's Adult Learning Campaign. This will strengthen our efforts to serve more citizens in Patrick County as we pursue our goals. We're delighted at the prospect that the Patrick model might be replicated elsewhere," Baliles said.

The Patrick County project will include documenting the development of the foundation and its programming efforts; assessing policy barriers facing adult learners; creating additional ways to address the adult literacy challenge; and increasing access to information and programs for adults, including a greater Web presence—all with the goal of increasing adult participation in post-secondary education in the county. SREB staff will work with

the education foundation staff, Patrick County and state leadership in the project.

SREB's Adult Learning Campaign is supported by a grant from Lumina Foundation for Education. For more information about SREB and the Adult Learning Campaign, visit www.sreb.org or contact Dr. Angela Birkes, associate director, Adult Learning Campaign, at (404) 875-9211. For more information about the Patrick County Education Foundation, visit www.patrickfoundation.net or contact Jerry Hughes, executive director, at (276) 694-7233.

The Southern Regional Education Board, headquartered in Atlanta, was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to help leaders in education and government work cooperatively to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. SREB has 16 member states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Each state is represented by its governor and four gubernatorial appointees.