



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**TOBACCO SETTLEMENT FUNDS
TO BE USED FOR
EXPANDING EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN PATRICK COUNTY, VIRGINIA
- \$200,000 in grants will expand educational opportunities -**

RICHMOND, VA - Improvement to the educational opportunities in Patrick County, Virginia, has taken a step forward, as the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission approved \$200,000 for education initiatives in Patrick County.

At its most recent board meeting, the Virginia Tobacco Commission allocated \$100,000 to the Patrick County Education Foundation and \$100,000 to the Patrick County Public School System for projects that will work to expand access to education for county residents.

The \$100,000 appropriation to the Patrick County Education Foundation will be used to expand the adult education programs it has launched to improve community statistics on the number of adults with less than a high school education. Funding will be provided for General Education Degree instruction, materials, and direct grants for area residents that successfully complete the GED program. Funds will also be used for outreach efforts that will encourage local residents to enter the program.

The Patrick County School System will utilize \$100,000 to expand a distance learning initiative that will enable adult continuing education at eight sites throughout Patrick County. The program effort will include meeting the needs of special education populations, acquisition of instruction materials, and expanding opportunities for adult education throughout Patrick County.

Virginia's Secretary of Commerce and Trade Michael Schewel stated, "Governor Warner and this Administration have recognized the innovative approach taken by the Patrick County Education Foundation, and the cooperative approach of this grant request with the Patrick County school system. These funds are a testament to this unique experiment in improving educational opportunities in Patrick County. Improving the capabilities of our workforce is paramount to our economic development success, and this grant should work for that goal. This partnership should be a model for other communities throughout Virginia."

Patrick County School Superintendent Judy Lacks stated, "The Patrick County Public Schools look forward to expanding educational opportunities for all area residents, with particular emphasis on adult education. We will be working to link each of our facilities through new telecommunications infrastructure, making it easier for residents to seek a higher level of educational attainment. We certainly appreciate the confidence shown in this effort by the Tobacco Commission."

Jerry Hughes, executive director of the Patrick County Education Foundation, expressed the organization's appreciation for the positive action of the Tobacco Commission. He stated, "The Patrick County Education Foundation expresses its appreciation to the Virginia Tobacco Commission, as it works to reverse the economic condition of southside and southwest Virginia, and to the Commission's recognition that education is the key strategy to economic growth. With support for the Foundation's college access and GED initiatives now moving forward, we will be working to address the needs of the community workforce, as the need for a more technologically advanced labor force continues to grow. This will be the next phase of the Foundation's work."

Tobacco Commission executive director Carthan Currin stated that the Commission is always looking for unique program opportunities, and the Patrick effort was an example of the partnerships the Commission is looking for, noting "Having local groups work together toward the same goal has to become the working model for southside and southwest Virginia, and this joint effort is a great model for others. When you have a non-profit foundation working with a public body such as the school system, you immediately improve your chances of success. In this case, the residents of Patrick County will be the beneficiaries of this cooperation, and a model will have been created for others."

A joint presentation of the funding will is scheduled to take place in Patrick County as a part of a GED graduation ceremony on June 20.

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