

Press Release

Contact: Diane Edwards
Phone: (276) 694-7233

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
4 PM EDT, February 1, 2005

Patrick County Education Foundation Receives \$78,750 from WIA for Workforce Development Programs

The West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board has announced that it is awarding \$78,750 in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds to the Patrick County Education Foundation for workforce training programs serving Patrick County. The award will fund the Foundation's "Workforce Development for a 21st Century Economy" project and through it, provide job training to Patrick County adults who may be difficult to employ due to their level of education attainment, dislocated by employer closings or layoffs or currently employed in "at risk" occupations. These funds will enable the Foundation to provide free enrollment in its *TekAdvantage* certificate program and in its *Career Readiness Certificate Program*. Both courses are designed to upgrade critical job skills and provide employers with worker competency testing and certification.

TekAdvantage was first offered in June 2003 and was the first Workforce Training Program offered by the Patrick County Education Foundation. This 4-week course certifies student competency in basic computer skills and applications in four areas: basic computer knowledge, word processing, spreadsheet, and the Internet. Since June 2003, 234 Patrick County residents have been certified through 10 *TekAdvantage* classes. The *Career Readiness Certificate Program* is an 84-hour worker certification program launched in 2003 under Virginia Governor Mark R. Warner's

Workforce Development reforms of his Education for a Lifetime initiative. It was first offered in Patrick County in November 2004 through the Patrick County Education Foundation. This Certificate program was created to assist employers by certifying worker competency in skills required across multiple industries and occupations including applied mathematics, reading for information, and locating information. Both the *TekAdvantage* and the *Career Readiness* certifications are recognized by a number of prominent employers and are used in hiring and promotions decisions. Those programs are provided through a contractual arrangement with Patrick Henry Community College.

In announcing the award, West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board Executive Director Rebecca Aydlett stated, “The Board is pleased to be able to support the Patrick County Education Foundation’s workforce training efforts. Plant closings and layoffs have negatively affected Patrick County as well as Henry and Pittsylvania counties. The Foundation’s programs offer us a great opportunity to provide worker assistance programs in Patrick County. The Foundation has already established a proven record of success with workforce training programs and the Board desires to support programs like these that are providing such positive results. The mission of the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Area, Region 17, is to significantly upgrade worker skills and the Foundation’s training programs have proven they can do that very well.”

Patrick County Education Foundation Executive Director, Gerald L. Hughes, Jr. welcomed the funding by saying “The Foundation appreciates this opportunity to work with the Workforce Investment Board and to combine resources with them so that we can improve worker skill levels in Patrick County. The Foundation’s Workforce Training programs have been well received in Patrick County, both by members of the workforce and by current and prospective employers. In addition, because of our success with these programs, our efforts are being replicated in communities throughout the Southside and Southwest regions of Virginia. In the Southside area alone, over 1,000

adults have completed *TekAdvantage*. That the *TekAdvantage* program is working so well in these other areas as well as here attests to both its value and its quality. The Workforce Investment Board's confidence and financial investment in the Foundation's Workforce Training Program is greatly appreciated and enables us to move even closer to raising Patrick County from its position near the bottom of Virginia counties in education levels to among the top five rural counties by 2011."

The West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board provides leadership and direction on workforce issues and identifies local needs and develops strategies to address those needs within the Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA), Region 17. That region includes the counties of Patrick, Henry, and Pittsylvania and the cities of Danville and Martinsville. The LWIA's mission is to develop and implement local workforce strategies through the collaborative efforts of local businesses, elected officials and state agencies/programs that encourage economic growth through maximum employment and full utilization of workforce skills, experience and expertise.

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 over 25 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.

During the past two years, the Foundation has committed over \$115,000 to workforce training programs for Patrick County citizens.

End