

Press Release

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

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PATRICK COUNTY LEADERS ADOPT NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION...THEY'RE ALL GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Elected officials of Patrick County have agreed to go “back to school” during 2005 as a show of their commitment to the County’s efforts and those of the Patrick County Education Foundation to raise its education attainment levels as a means of attracting more new businesses and jobs to the area.

Leaders in this rural Southside / Southwest Virginia county have adopted this “New Year’s Resolution” to demonstrate by personal example that education is a key to the area’s economic future. “We’ve been impressed with the work of the Patrick County Education Foundation and want to convey our belief in the importance of education to our County’s future and to set an example for the people of Patrick,” said Crystal Harris, Chair of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors. “In making this ‘resolution,’ we’re meeting the leadership challenge of building a better future for us all. And as an individual, I’ll be clearly demonstrating that I value education as a way to expand my world and broaden my own horizons,” Harris added. County School Board Chair Rickie Fulcher agreed, saying that this initiative will send “a powerful message to

everyone that education is a lifelong commitment and holds the ‘key to opportunity.’ It is important to us personally and professionally and helps to strengthen our County’s economic future.”

As part of this initiative, participating elected officials, including the mayor and members of the Stuart Town Council and the Patrick County Board of Supervisors and School Board and other constitutional county officers will enroll in an educational, professional or continuing education course during 2005. “While we in Patrick honor and respect the past, there is no question that times are changing. The only way to stay abreast and compete, as we must, is for each of us, individually, to maintain or increase our own education and ability to deal with whatever the future may throw at us,” asserted Christopher Corbett, Commonwealth’s Attorney. Susan Gasperini, Patrick County Clerk of Court added “It’s a great idea to reinforce in this way the County’s commitment in raising education levels. Though many elected offices require continuing education, this resolution represents a powerful way we as individuals can lead.”

“This initiative, called ‘The Education Example,’ grew out of a recent conversation between Harris and former Virginia Governor and current Patrick County Education Foundation Chairman Gerald L. Baliles,” according to Gerald L. Hughes, Jr., Foundation Executive Director.

“The Foundation began in 2001 as a result of several meetings between Chairman Baliles and many local leaders,” said Hughes. In those meetings, they talked about the difficulty facing Patrick County in recruiting new businesses because of the County’s low education attainment levels. They agreed that the only way to make the county and its workforce more attractive to

potential businesses was to raise those education levels and so the Foundation was founded to lead the way. The Foundation provides assistance to county citizens to make it possible for them to attend college, get a high school diploma, and train for the jobs of tomorrow.

Since the Foundation's beginning, County leaders have enthusiastically endorsed its efforts to improve the education levels. "They've been behind us 100% and now they want to bring that endorsement to a more personal level by signing on to go back to school themselves," Hughes added. "'The Education Example' initiative is a logical and very welcome next step." Hughes added that he is enthusiastic about the "New Year's Resolution" and believes it will be well received in the County. He noted that the Foundation wants to help make this initiative succeed and has offered to find funding for it. "We're already ironing out the details of how we can support 'The Education Example' and working to identify a funding source for this one-time project. The initiative's cost is approximately \$10,000."

For more information on 'The Education Example', contact Gerald L. Hughes, Jr. at (276) 694-7233.

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