

PATRICK COUNTY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
5 PM EDT, October 15, 2004

Patrick County Education Foundation Announces Office Relocation and the Staff Changes

The Patrick County Education Foundation has announced a number of changes that include personnel as well as office relocation, according to Jerry Hughes, Executive Director.

The Foundation, an education-driven economic development initiative founded by former Virginia Governor and Patrick County native Gerald L. Baliles, has relocated its offices to 105 Stonewall Court in uptown Stuart. The new offices are located in the office complex across from BB&T. Since its founding in 2001 until this past August, the Foundation offices were located in the Patrick County Adult Education Center at 108 East Blue Ridge Street. Hughes noted that the move will increase the efficiency of the Foundation's operations and permit the orderly growth of the organization as it works toward its ten-year goal of moving Patrick County from near the bottom of the state's educational rankings to one of the top five rural counties.

The Foundation has also just announced several personnel changes. Diane Edwards joined the staff on July 1 as the Foundation's first Director of Development. Her duties include donor development, public relations, publications, and grant funding development. Ms. Edwards was a grant proposal developer, freelance writer and small business owner for seven years prior to coming to the Foundation. She also has over eighteen years experience in college student development. A

native of Southampton County, Virginia, Ms. Edwards is a graduate of Virginia Tech and the College of William and Mary. Hughes noted that Edwards will bring an increased and sustained focus to the Foundation's development work, including the addition of a local annual giving program.

Hughes also announced that on September 1, Lori J. Layman joined the Foundation as its first Director of Finance Administration. She is responsible for grants financial administration, general bookkeeping, financial reporting, and regulatory compliance. Mrs. Layman graduated magna cum laude from Radford University with a degree in Business Administration. She brings to the Foundation over six years in public and private accounting experience in her native Patrick County. Mrs. Layman resides in Patrick Springs with her husband Garry and daughter Kallie.

In other personnel changes, according to the Executive Director, Sandra Dales, who joined the Foundation at its beginning in 2001, has resigned to pursue personal and professional opportunities in Charlotte, NC. Hughes expressed his regrets at Dales' departure. "Ms. Dales made many friends in the County and contributed much to the Foundation's work. Her contributions to the College Access Program were significant."

As the Foundation begins its fourth year of operation, Hughes announced that June Gunter, who recently retired as Branch Manager of Sun Trust Bank in Stuart with over 40 years experience in banking, joined the Foundation in October. Gunter's particular focus will be on increased promotion of the Foundation's GED program. She is a Patrick County native and a graduate of Draughan Business College. Mrs. Gunter resides in Stuart with her husband Marvin. They have 2 children and 2 grandchildren.

The Honorable Gerald L. Baliles, Chairman of the Board, expressed optimism at the prospects of continued success for the Foundation as it focuses attention on educational improvements to the County's workforce as a means of attracting additional corporate interest in locating operations in Patrick County.

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. The Foundation was established as a response to the region's catastrophic loss of industries and jobs in the furniture, textile and agriculture-related sectors. 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. The Foundation's goals are to increase the percentage of high school seniors who attend college, cut in half the number of adults over 25 without a high school diploma and provide effective workforce training programs to prepare adult workers for jobs in the information-based industries of today and tomorrow. The Foundation is working to accomplish these goals through its three program areas: the College Access Program, the GED Promotion Project and the Workforce Training Program. Since 2001, the Foundation 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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