

THE HARVEST FOUNDATION NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Allyson Rothrock
276/632-3329

The Harvest Foundation is partnering with local schools to conduct needs assessment Study will focus on education in Martinsville and Henry County

MARTINSVILLE, Va., Feb. 14, 2003 - The Harvest Foundation has begun a comprehensive needs assessment of the school systems in Martinsville and Henry County. The effort will guide the development of a program focused on improving educational performance. This program will be the first beneficiary of foundation funding.

The education needs assessment has three objectives:

- To provide a status report on education in Martinsville and Henry County.
- To identify needs and opportunities that will form the basis of the foundation's first funded program.
- To provide the foundation's education program with direction and structure.

It is scheduled to conclude by the end of May with a final report to the foundation's board soon thereafter. Conducting the study will be nationally recognized education consultants, Dr. Kenneth Tewel of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and Dr. Betty Webb of Brooklyn Park, Minn. Dr. Tewel has helped develop similar initiatives on behalf of community foundations in New York, Florida and Louisiana, and across the nation.

"Strengthening education is the best way to provide a prosperous future for children as well as for the region in which they live," said Tewel.

In addition to his consulting work, Tewel has been a school and district administrator in New York City. Additionally, he has recently retired from positions as Professor of School Administration at Queens College of the City University of New York and a position as Program Professor of Child and Youth Studies at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Both Dr. Tewel and Dr. Webb have consulted and written extensively on empowering and promoting change in America's public schools.

"It's encouraging that education for every student is a top priority for The Harvest Foundation, and that they want to partner with us in developing improvements for each school based on their individual needs," said Ira Trollinger, superintendent of Martinsville City Schools.

Foundation staff and consultants have held an introductory meeting with school and district leaders from Martinsville and Henry County, in addition to the Carlisle School. The assessment process will begin in mid-February with interviews, focus groups, written surveys and student input.

"I'm impressed with the thought the foundation board has given to this process," said Henry County Schools Superintendent Sharon Dodson. "Their focus on capacity-building for the future is heartening," she added.

(More)

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The Harvest Foundation will utilize the findings to develop a grant program and will invite the school systems to submit grant applications based on the results. The foundation plans to begin awarding grants as early as fall 2003. A report on the effort will also be made available to the public.

“This is a cooperative effort between the foundation and our schools,” noted The Harvest Foundation Board President Donald Hodges. “Education is vitally important to our community and it’s important to us that our program is based on real needs in the classroom. Both school systems and the foundation are interested in long-term relationships focused on serving those needs and improving student performance.”

Education is one of three focus areas identified by the foundation. The other two areas, to be locally addressed in future studies, are health and welfare.

The Harvest Foundation was formed in 2002 from the sale of Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County to Province Healthcare of Brentwood, Tenn. The Harvest Foundation, which operates independently of the hospital, is charged with investing the \$150 million from the sale and awarding the approximately \$7 million in earnings it expects to generate each year to programs that benefit Martinsville and Henry County residents.

Inquiries should be directed to Allyson K. Rothrock, interim executive director, at 276/632-3329.

The Harvest Foundation is a non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation that is committed to honoring the legacy of Memorial Hospital and dedicated to making Martinsville and Henry County the residence of choice by enhancing opportunities and quality of life for all its citizens.

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