

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**THE HARVEST FOUNDATION OF THE PIEDMONT**

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***HARVEST CHALLENGE:  
\$50 MILLION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW FOUR YEAR PUBLIC  
COLLEGE IN MARTINSVILLE/HENRY COUNTY***

***MARTINSVILLE, Va., Jan. 10, 2004*** - The board of directors of The Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont, headquartered in the City of Martinsville, announces that the board has today unanimously approved a \$50 million challenge grant to the Commonwealth of Virginia conditioned on the Commonwealth's establishing a new four-year public college in the Martinsville and Henry County community.

Additional terms and conditions of the challenge grant, yet to be finalized, require that the Commonwealth establish and develop the proposed institution by January 2006 and maintain it thereafter. The challenge grant is to be known as the "Harvest Challenge," and could include funds for endowed chairs, property acquisition and renovation, dormitory and classroom construction, planning, and academic scholarships.

A new four year public college will revitalize Martinsville and the surrounding community. The area has suffered economically in recent years as its manufacturing and agricultural bases have eroded. Education and knowledge are the foundations of success in the twenty first century economy. Demand for higher education is increasing significantly in Virginia because of the state's burgeoning college-age population. Virginia has a tradition of excellence in higher education, and The Harvest Foundation is determined to establish that tradition for Southside Virginia.

The Harvest Foundation was created in 2002 after the sale of Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County. The Harvest Foundation's mission is to improve the overall quality of life in the areas of health, education, and welfare in the region historically served by Memorial Hospital. While over the years there have been several calls for a college in Southside Virginia, including most recently by State Senator Charles Hawkins and Lieutenant Governor Tim Kaine, the Foundation through its challenge intends to convert discussion to action.

The Harvest Foundation is assembling an advisory committee of prominent Virginia educators.

For further information contact the president of The Harvest Foundation, Donald R. Hodges at 276-656-4126, or the chairman of the Foundation's Grant Committee, Michael P. Haley at 540-484-6724 or 276-627-1900. Additional information regarding The Harvest Foundation may be found at [www.theharvestfoundation.org](http://www.theharvestfoundation.org).