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CONTACT: Kim Connolly
United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area
Phone: 434-972-1701
E-mail: kconnolly@unitedwaytja.org

More than \$2.4 Million Awarded to Benefit Virginia's Youngest Citizens *Virginia Early Childhood Foundation announces grants*

Charlottesville, VA (July 2, 2007) – The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) has announced the awarding of more than \$2.4 million in grants to community coalitions over the next two years to help ensure that Virginia's youngest citizens enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed in school and life. The VECF is awarding 16 grants across the state and \$400,000 of that amount has been awarded to the Charlottesville/Albemarle Partnership for Children.

"This support, coupled with the strong commitment of the citizens, business community and the elected leaders of Virginia will help to prepare Virginia's children for success in kindergarten and throughout their lives," said Scott L. Hippert, president of the VECF. "With over 80 percent of brain development taking place before age five, we need to invest early in children to help them develop a foundation for lifelong learning."

The Partnership for Children consists of 15 local agencies: Albemarle County Department of Social Services; Albemarle County Public Schools; Arc of the Piedmont; Charlottesville/Albemarle Commission on Children and Families; Charlottesville City Schools; Charlottesville Department of Social Services; Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority; Children Youth & Family Services; FOCUS Women's Resource Center; Jefferson Area CHIP; Monticello Area Community Action Agency; Region Ten Community Services Board; Thomas Jefferson Health Department; United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area; and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service.

Partnership for Children members will work in collaboration using this grant to implement best practice programs for early care and education. The significance of this partnership is that public and non-profit agencies are working together to develop comprehensive systems of early childhood development and family support across the community.

Jon Nafziger, Chair of the Charlottesville/Albemarle Partnership for Children, is pleased about the recent grant. "It helps strengthen our area's capacity to serve young children more strategically, more efficiently and to assist more families," Nafziger stated. "The most strategic investment in human capital is in early childhood, children ages 0-6. Receiving this grant showcases what good things can happen when the local business community joins together with non-profits and governmental agencies to make a difference. Our coalition receiving this grant demonstrates just how much everyone here understands that early childhood education provides the building blocks for a productive workforce and vigorous economy."

Local business support has come from State Farm Insurance, Virginia National Bank, Bank of America and Williams Mullen.

“Virginians have a long history of working together to solve their toughest problems,” said Hippert. “It’s that same can-do spirit that will allow us to create a system that works for all families and becomes a model for the nation.” According to Hippert this is only the first step in ensuring that the youngest Virginians are equipped with the tools necessary for lifelong learning and to become strong contributing citizens of the Commonwealth.

The VECF provides grants, training and technical assistance to local communities working to build their capacity to provide their families and children with high quality early childhood services and programs. Grants are made possible through support from the Virginia General Assembly and the Governor, corporate partners such as Capital One Financial Corporation, Ferguson Enterprises, Virginia Natural Gas, AGL Resources, Freddie Mac, Cargill, WHSV-TV3 and generous individuals throughout the Commonwealth. For more information, visit www.vecf.org

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About the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation: *The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation is a public-private partnership with a mission to provide collaborative leadership to foster Smart Beginnings for all young children in Virginia and through them a vital future for the Commonwealth. Our vision is that all of Virginia’s youngest citizens will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed in life. The VECF is a 501C3 nonprofit organization located in the historic Bookbindery Building in Richmond. Their offices are located at 2201 W. Broad Street, Suite 109, Richmond, VA 23220. (804) 358-VECF(8323)*

About the Charlottesville/Albemarle Partnership for Children: The Partnership for Children implements and coordinates a community-wide initiative focused on children, ages 0-6, and their families, to build a supportive community where children are born into healthy families and arrive at school ready to learn.

