

NEWS RELEASE

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J. Sargeant Reynolds
Community College



The Community Foundation partners with Reynolds to address urban education needs in Richmond

RICHMOND, Va. (April 7, 2008) – There is a buzz in the community about a collaborative, tangible solution to a specific K-12 challenge in City of Richmond Schools – retaining urban teachers and equipping them with the skills required to succeed in an urban classroom. The solution is the Urban Teachers Institute at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, which recently received a \$160,000 investment for two more years of funding from The Community Foundation serving Richmond & Central Virginia.

The Community Foundation’s initial \$75,000 start-up funding in 2007 resulted in the creation of the Institute at Reynolds, conducted in partnership with Richmond Public Schools and Virginia Commonwealth University. The week-long intensive workshop series put on for 19 City math and science teachers, from 10 middle schools, meant they returned to class in the fall with new tools and strategies to teach local at-risk youth and share with colleagues.

One Institute teacher said, “My participation in the Institute has given me a better understanding of the type of students that walk through my classroom door on a day-to-day basis. I now understand that urban students have lifestyles and learning styles that are different from their peers in suburban school systems. As an urban teacher, I recognize that I have to address the emotional as well as academic needs of my students.”

According to another participant, “It has made me aware of the children that I teach, the neighborhoods that they come from and the obstacles that they face. But in spite of all of this, they still can be successful.” And one City teacher said, “I have learned that every child is capable of high achievement.”

Topics covered through the Institute include classroom management, effective techniques to deal with bullying, and diversity and multicultural understanding. The ultimate goal of the Institute is to close the achievement gap for Richmond's inner-city youth and allow them to thrive in a classroom setting, through supporting urban educators who face multiple challenges in K-12 schools.

The Community Foundation's investment will also support a pre-collegiate component of the College's urban education initiative, which is part of its first-ever Major Gifts Campaign to raise funds that address specific challenges in Richmond through educational programs and workforce training. The pre-collegiate project will expose a select group of City of Richmond high schools students to a career in urban teaching this summer in hopes to build a pipeline for much needed urban teachers in Richmond.

Dr. Harriet Morrison, director of the Institute and the Center for Teacher Education at Reynolds, is a regional expert on urban education needs. She visited several classrooms of UTI participants in the fall to see its impact first-hand. "There was a closer bond between the teachers and the students. Teachers showed greater compassion for their urban students as a result, and the students felt understood by their teacher perhaps for the first time in their educational experience," said Morrison.

To learn more about how Reynolds is addressing urban education needs in Richmond visit: www.reynolds.edu/urbanteachers. This year's Institute will take place June 22-27.

Serving over 18,000 students annually, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College is the youngest and third largest of 23 community colleges in Virginia. The College operates three campuses serving residents in the City of Richmond and the counties of Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Powhatan and Louisa.

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