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Charlottesville residents win Governor's Award

Awards mark beginning of Volunteer Week in Virginia

Richmond, Va. – Governor Timothy M. Kaine has announced recipients of the 2009 Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Awards. These awards highlight the efforts of outstanding citizens of the Commonwealth who seek to enhance the lives of others in their communities. The awards are presented to groups, individuals and families whose efforts exemplify extraordinary volunteer service.

"I offer sincere congratulations to the volunteers who made a difference in the lives of others this year," said Governor Kaine. "When we serve our community as volunteers, our unique skills, perspectives and experience make us a stronger Commonwealth."

A Charlottesville family is a recipient of the 2009 Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Award.

- **Bruce “Sonny” and Debra Beale, Charlottesville:** *Family Award.*

The Beales work to improve the lives of refugees who have resettled in Charlottesville through the International Rescue Committee. They have worked to meet a need that was not being provided by the larger community – to serve as friends to these refugees. Sonny made it his goal to teach his new friends how to find and purchase reliable transportation, do simple car maintenance, make electrical and plumbing repairs, operate household appliances, fill out job applications, negotiate with landlords and access services at the University of Virginia (UVA) Medical System. As manager of the UVA recycling division, Sonny has employed more than 20 refugees from 12 different countries and has worked to make them self-reliant so that they can, in turn, help other refugees.

As a teacher, Debra often serves as liaison between the school system and refugee parents who want to be involved in their children's education. She has been instrumental in making sure that the children have opportunities to become involved in extracurricular activities and has spent many hours registering children for and transporting children to sports practices, games, concerts and after school activities. As the need increased, Debra teamed up with UVA student Clayton Broga to create Bridging the Gap (BTG), an organization that pairs refugee children with UVA mentors. These mentors make sure that the children receive help with homework, gain exposure to the best of American culture and attend activities. BTG also created a lending library for the refugee children that was named in honor of Mrs. Beale. Debra has also assisted a group of African UVA students to create a similar organization.

Despite the fact that the Beales do not speak Maay Maay, Farsi, Russian or any of the other languages spoken by refugee families, they make themselves available at any time -- day or night -- to help families in need.

Governor Kaine has proclaimed April 19 - 25 as Volunteer Week in Virginia. As a prelude to the recognition week, these individuals and organizations were presented their awards during a special awards ceremony April 15 in Richmond. The Governor's Advisory Board on National and Community Service, Virginia Corps and the Virginia Department of Social Services' Office on Volunteerism and Community Service hosted the ceremony.

At least 1.7 million Virginians volunteer their time and talents annually. Virginians average nearly 243 million volunteer hours, equaling more than \$4 billion dollars worth of service to the state. For more information about the awards and Volunteer Week in Virginia, visit www.vaservice.org.

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