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Hampton Roads 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." Several Hampton Roads residents were recipients of the 2009 Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Award.

- **AMERIGROUP Corporation, Virginia Beach:** *Business Award.*

From the realization that its employees shared the company's desire to reach out to the community, a companywide volunteerism program was born. AMERIGROUP instituted "RealCaring," comprised of three components: Volunteer Circle, Disaster Response Team and Capacity Building. Last year alone, 500 AMERIGROUP employees contributed more than 12,700 volunteer hours to organizations like the March of Dimes and Habitat for Humanity. Last year, Modern Healthcare magazine named AMERIGROUP as a "Best Place to Work in Healthcare."

- **John A. "Jack" Wilson, Williamsburg:** *Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Recovery Award.*

As an emergency services provider through the Citizen Corps Council, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Fire Auxiliary, Colonial Virginia Chapter of the American Red Cross, and the James City County Office of Emergency Management, Wilson is a major force in the community. Wilson wrote the first Neighborhood Emergency Plan for James City County. Today, that plan has become a template on which many others have been modeled. He went on to play a vital role in the creation of the Citizen Corps Council and remains active with the organization that has influenced more than 500 citizens to participate in volunteer projects. As a CERT volunteer, instructor and team leader in his neighborhood, Wilson helped to recruit new CERT volunteers through countless educational presentations and developed a public awareness program called "Disaster Ready Neighborhoods" to encourage neighborhoods to build their own CERT teams. Today, there are seven localized CERT teams in the area serving more than 18,000 people.

- **Patricia McCormick, Williamsburg:** *Faith-based Organization Award.*

McCormick is recognized for her dedicated and tireless work at the Grove Christian Outreach Center (GCOC), which serves an impoverished area in James City County. She is the volunteer executive director of GCOC and has held that role for nearly 10 years without compensation. McCormick is committed to helping Grove area residents through programs that have provided weekly food distributions, school backpacks and Christmas toy distributions, as well as special programs to

provide financial and supportive care for those who have special needs. With more than 1,200 households, the Grove area received more than 288,000 pounds of food from the organization in 2007. The GCOC has served meals to 1,628 individuals, overseeing nearly 70 volunteers each month.

- **Harry Blackwell, Hampton:** *National Service Individual Award.*

At 78 years old, Blackwell boards a bus near his home in Newport News, transfers twice, and walks several blocks to Cooper Elementary, where he volunteers 20 hours a week. As a volunteer with the Peninsula Foster Grandparent Program, he tutors children ages 5 to 10 and serves as a valuable role model for the many boys who have no positive male influence in their lives. Blackwell has been a volunteer at the school for four years, and has been involved in community service his entire life. He has been recognized for his service with the Star Achievers Academy YMCA award and by Cooper Elementary School as 2008 Volunteer of the Year.

- **Ann Quinn, Gloucester Point:** *Senior Volunteer Award.*

Quinn works with the Gloucester-Mathews Free Clinic, which serves low-income, medically uninsured residents of Gloucester and Mathews counties. She has filled many roles, from executive director to volunteer coordinator, board member, dental coordinator and even taxi driver. She has dedicated full-time hours to the clinic, refused any form of payment, and maintained regular personal donations to the cause. About 20,000 residents qualify for free services, and that number increases from year to year. Because of her talent and dedication, the clinic logged more than 3,400 patient visits and prescribed more than 14,000 medications to residents of Gloucester and Mathews Counties living below the poverty line.

- **Carolyn LeCroy, Norfolk:** *Volunteer Award.*

When LeCroy emerged from 14 months of incarceration in a Virginia prison for women, one of her first goals was to address a profound problem she witnessed among her fellow inmates. For many women, the most difficult part of incarceration is the separation from their children. The other side of the equation relates to the children themselves. Less than 50 percent of children of inmates are able to visit their parents in prison. LeCroy's solution to the problem was to utilize her talents and skills as a media producer and enlist the help of other media professionals to help mothers make videotaped messages for their children. The effort expanded to include incarcerated fathers. Since 1999, she and other volunteers have traveled to Virginia prisons at their own expense to produce an estimated 3,500 videotapes under "The Messages Project." The program has received national acclaim, including coverage on CNN and recognition by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu.

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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