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NEWS RELEASE

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PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY NAMED CERTIFIED WORK READY COMMUNITY

Prince Edward County and the Dan River Region Collaborative (DRRC) are pleased to announce that Prince Edward County has been designated as a Certified Work Ready Community (WRC). The nationally recognized designation by the Commonwealth of Virginia and American College Testing (ACT) will help Prince Edward County attract new businesses and jobs in addition to strengthening the skill sets of the region's high school students, job seekers and incumbent workforce.

Partners like the DRRC, Dan River Region Collaborative, Prince Edward County Public Schools, South Central Workforce Development Board, Southside Virginia Community College, STEPS, and regional employers supported Prince Edward County's efforts to achieve this important national certification. Such employers included Owens-Illinois (Pittsylvania), Eastman Chemical (Martinsville), Buitoni Food Company (Danville), YakAttack (Prince Edward), Ten Oaks (Patrick), Nucor Buildings Group (Mecklenburg) and Genesis Décor (Amelia). To become certified, a locality must achieve benchmarks in three areas of performance: high school graduation rate, number of ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ (ACT NCRC®) credentials attained in the locality and number of employers recognizing the NCRC.

“Working collaboratively to produce a regional work-ready talent pipeline has been truly rewarding, and Prince Edward County has added tremendous value to the effort,” said Dr. Julie Brown, Program Director of the DRRC and Director of Advanced Learning at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research. “We salute their accomplishments and the acknowledgment and resources of ACT as we continue to expand the Work Ready Community initiative and fuel the transformation of our economy together.”

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The WRC effort is a voluntary initiative guided by key community leaders – local elected officials, economic development teams, business leaders, chambers of commerce, educators and workforce development agencies. At the core of the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative is the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (ACT NCRC). Since January 2006, more than five million Americans have earned an ACT NCRC. This national, portable credential includes three essential workplace skill categories: applied math, workplace documents, and graphic literacy.

The Work Ready Community effort provides a third-party validated, data-driven system for economic developers to talk about the skill level of the region's workforce. This effort supports the Commonwealth's goal of expanding the number of Virginians who hold industry certifications valuable to employers. Use of the National Career Readiness Certificate demonstrates that Prince Edward County has a qualified and trainable workforce.

"I would like to extend my congratulations to everyone involved in helping Prince Edward County become one of 15 counties in Virginia that have become certified as a Work Ready Community. This program helps match the counties workforce development efforts to the needs of business and industry" stated Prince Edward County Administrator Douglas P. Stanley.

Chelsey White, Director of Economic Development and Tourism for Prince Edward County stated, "We are excited about reaching 100% of our ACT WRC goals toward certification which will help our community stand out to developers during the site selection process. Additionally, continued participation in this program will assist us in identifying skill gaps and quantify the skill level of our workforce. This data will support educators in building career pathways that will align with the business and industry needs of our local economy."

"It is important to develop and maintain a skilled workforce here in Prince Edward County. Workforce skills are a key component of economic development in today's economy and becoming an ACT Work Ready Community will support workforce development," stated Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors Chairman J. David Emert.

"I continue to be impressed with the determination of our students to plan for their futures, and the NCRC is another component of that preparation. Further, I am pleased that our successes have become part of the county's success in becoming a Work Ready Community" stated Dr. Barbara A. Johnson, PECPS superintendent.

"We are very excited and proud to have so significantly contributed to Prince Edward County reaching its goal of becoming a Work Ready Community. Our staff members continue to prepare our students for post-secondary opportunities and this accomplishment speaks to their efforts and our students' successes" stated Lucy Carson, PECPS Board Chair.



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"Being a Work Ready Community means Prince Edward County has the skilled labor workforce needed for expanding businesses and economic development," said Jordan Miles, who serves on the Virginia Tobacco Commission, and additionally serves as Vice-Chairman of the Southern Virginia Committee. "With the prospect pipeline being at its peak since the Virginia Economic Development Partnership was established, this designation is of the utmost importance to show prospective businesses that Prince Edward has folks who are ready to work. As we continue to see the economic effects of COVID-19 in the rearview mirror, this designation shows demonstratable results for future employers, including the framework of a linkage of workforce development to education, an alignment of the economic development needs of communities and regions, and the matching of job seekers to jobs based on their talents and skills sets."

In addition to Prince Edward County, the counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Brunswick, Charlotte, Henry, Halifax Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Patrick and Pittsylvania as well as the cities of Danville and Martinsville have been certified as Work Ready Communities. Other Commonwealth localities have launched their WRC initiatives and are on target to reach WRC status in the near future.

For more information on the WRC initiative, contact Lee Ann Mahan at leeann.mahan@ialr.org or 434.766.6750. To learn more about Prince Edward County's involvement in this program, please visit the following webpage: <https://www.workreadycommunities.org/VA/147>

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PHOTO ATTACHED:

