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**2011 LEAD VIRGINIA CLASS VISITS BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO LEARN ABOUT
TECHNOLOGY AND WORKFORCE INITIATIVES**

Community Leaders Gather to Explore Regional Issues

RICHMOND, Va. (June 23, 2011) – *LEAD VIRGINIA*, an organization of community leaders from across Virginia, brought its 2011 class to the Shenandoah Valley from June 16-18, 2011. The program, which brings together experienced senior-level executives and community leaders from public and private entities across the Commonwealth, met with state and local leaders and experts to learn about important local and regional issues and opportunities. On Saturday morning, June 18, the Class of 2011 met with Dr. John Downey, President of Blue Ridge Community College, at the school's new Advanced Technology Center, which will open for classes this year. The building houses a mixture of classrooms and large technology labs, specifically for advanced manufacturing and computer technology programs. BRCC consults directly with regional manufacturers in an effort to ensure their students receive the appropriate hands-on training they'll need to secure employment, once they completed their program.

Dr. Downey states, "The Advanced Technology Center at Blue Ridge Community College will provide highly technical training on state of the art equipment that will support the workforce development needs of area manufacturers and related businesses. Programs offered in the building include Computer Repair and Electronics Technology, Mechanical Design Technology, and Manufacturing Technology, as well as supporting courses in mathematics and physics. Local employers will benefit from a greater skilled workforce, and individual students who graduate from these programs can enjoy high paying jobs while pursuing a baccalaureate degree if they choose to transfer to a partner college or university."

LEAD VIRGINIA's visit to the Shenandoah Valley is the third of seven visits to different regions of the Commonwealth. In addition to the tour and overview of BRCC's workforce development initiatives, the

class toured SRI Shenandoah Valley & Cadence, Inc., heard an economic development briefing by Brian Shull, economic development director for the City of Harrisonburg, and visited two healthcare systems – Augusta Health and RMH Healthcare – where they learned about the similarities and differences between an independently owned community hospital versus a larger health system, each providing their specific markets with award-winning services. Bill Harrison, director of economic development for the City of Staunton shared information on how Staunton has capitalized on its historic district footprint and expanded opportunities for increasing its tax base.

LEAD VIRGINIA class participants also heard from a panel of local educators about the challenges they face in the region, specifically the growing diversity within the public schools; the panel consisted of representatives from James Madison University, Shenandoah University, Blue Ridge Community College, Waynesboro Public Schools, and Harrisonburg City Schools. The Class of 2011 enjoyed local fare from Local Chop & Grill House in downtown Harrisonburg and learned more about farm-to-table initiatives in the region.

“Through *LEAD VIRGINIA* I have been able to connect with a diverse group of leaders from all different sectors in the Commonwealth that are tremendous resources for my work and mission here,” said Rebecca Polan, Vice President, Allied Logistics, Waynesboro. “Now, I have a deeper understanding of how our local issues also affect the Commonwealth as a whole.”

LEAD VIRGINIA has visited the Shenandoah Valley each year since its inaugural year in 2005. The two-day sessions offer leaders a forum for gaining deeper insights into complex statewide issues, exchanging resources, creating momentum and working within and outside the political arena to usher in positive change for the Commonwealth. In-depth dialogue, on-site field studies and experiential activities are designed to highlight the diverse interests of each of the regions visited.

“Each region’s leaders bring a fresh, unique perspective to Virginia’s diverse and talented makeup,” said Susan Horne, President & CEO of *LEAD VIRGINIA*. “The *LEAD VIRGINIA* program continues to be successful because of the willingness of regional leaders, like those in the Shenandoah Valley to share their thoughts on how the Commonwealth can nurture its strengths and overcome obstacles.”

The 2011 *LEAD VIRGINIA* class kicked off with an orientation and opening session in Williamsburg in mid-April. As part of the *LEAD VIRGINIA* curriculum, class participants will visit Southern Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley, Northern Virginia, Southwest Virginia, and Hampton Roads before concluding with a session and graduation activities in Richmond in November.

To view pictures of the *LEAD VIRGINIA* visit to the Shenandoah Valley, visit our [website](#).

About *LEAD VIRGINIA*

LEAD VIRGINIA was incorporated as a charitable and educational organization in March 2005 and is patterned after similar models of statewide leadership programs across the nation. Led by a board of

directors composed of business, education, government, non-profit and community leaders from across Virginia, *LEAD VIRGINIA* uses a proven model for developing a statewide network of leaders by engaging academic, business, civic and government advisors to educate class members on the wide range of key issues in Virginia. 2011 sustaining sponsors of the program include Altria, Bon Secours Richmond Health System, HCA Virginia and Norfolk Southern Corporation. Additional sponsors include Dominion Resources, Northrop Grumman Virginia Business, Columbia Gas of Virginia, A Nisource Company, MWV, Verizon and XO Communications. For more information, visit www.leadvirginia.org to download our media kit.

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