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VEDA RECOGNIZES THREE VIRGINIA COMMUNITIES WITH COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARDS (CEDA)

AWARDS PRESENTED AT THE VEDA SPRING CONFERENCE IN RICHMOND



RICHMOND, Virginia (March 29, 2022) — The **Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA)** has awarded its **2022 Community Economic Development Awards (CEDA)** to three communities in the Commonwealth for their efforts in advancing economic viability through economic and community development programs.

The winning recipients are:

- Franklin Southampton Economic Development, Inc.
- Blue Ridge Community College
- Roanoke County

Entries into the annual awards program are judged on factors that include innovativeness, transferability, community commitment and overall benefits derived from each.

VEDA will submit the winning entries to the Southern Economic Development Council (SEDC) for consideration under its award program that takes place later this year.

“We celebrate the outstanding work of economic developers throughout the Commonwealth, including the three worthy recipients of the CEDA awards,” said Rockbridge County Economic Development Director **Brandy Flint**, Chair of VEDA’s CEDA awards committee. “Each of the winning programs provides exemplary framework for other communities to replicate in order for Virginia to continue to attract new jobs and investment opportunities.”

Franklin Southampton Economic Development, Inc (FSEDI), administered by Franklin Southampton Inc., helps entrepreneurs start businesses through business education, which includes developing a plan and pitching it in a competition with prize money awarded for the top plans. The program titled *STARTUP* initially used funding provided through a Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development grant. FSEDI absorbed the program into its operating budget after the grant-funded first round that awarded 10 businesses prize money. Many of these startups have already expanded operations and created a transformative effect in that region. Vacant storefronts have been replaced by vibrant businesses — gyms, coffee shops, an interior designer and restaurant and entertainment options — in downtown Franklin, an overall benefit to that community that further resulted in a synergy among business owners. Today the program known as *STARTUP Franklin Southampton* is a role model for other communities to follow in their revitalization efforts.

Blue Ridge Community College in Weyers Cave, Virginia, was recognized for its advanced manufacturing training program in response to the Shenandoah Valley’s struggle to recruit and retain employees. Seven companies, six community organizations and Blue Ridge Community College collaborated to develop a pre-hire program comprised of three weeks of hands-on training that culminated in guaranteed interviews with participating companies for the graduates. Graduates also received stipends for completing the training. A General Assembly government appropriation awarded to the workforce development partnership among James Madison University, Blue Ridge Community College and Merck funded marketing, curriculum, development and instruction. *Job Starter: Advanced Manufacturing Training* resulted in eight individuals hired for entry-level positions. This program marked the first time economic development, education, workforce partners and industry aligned their missions to solve a challenge.

Roanoke County’s economic and community development plan, *Reimagine 419*, leverages public-private partnerships to develop a town center in the heart of Roanoke’s commercial corridor. The 390-acre area on Route 419, visible from Interstate 581 and close to the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, is ripe for growth. Reimagine 419 launched in 2016 thanks to support from community and stakeholders. Today the benefits of Reimagine 419 extend to Tanglewood Mall, repurposed and vibrant again thanks to redevelopment. A number of new restaurant and retail operations have made 419 Town Center attractive for future investment.



Franklin Southampton Economic Development Inc.



Roanoke County Economic Development



Blue Ridge Community College

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION

The Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) is a non-profit, non-partisan membership association for individuals with a professional interest in economic development across the Commonwealth of Virginia. VEDA serves as the voice of economic development in Virginia and was founded in 1982 to increase the effectiveness of individuals involved in the practice of economic development in Virginia by encouraging cooperation, exchange of information, and professional development activities. For more information, visit goveda.org.

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