



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Mark R. Warner
Governor

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GOVERNOR WARNER ANNOUNCES EARLY RESULTS AND EXPANSION OF *RACE TO GED*

~224 GEDs awarded at five pilot sites; 50 sites to offer program by Fall~

RICHMOND -- Governor Mark R. Warner today updated promising early results of the Education for a Lifetime “Race to GED” initiative he launched last fall, and announced a significant expansion of the program to meet a goal of doubling the number of Virginia workers earning a General Educational Development certificate. Today’s announcement was made at Richmond International Raceway, a partner in a unique marketing relationship between the state and its motorsports industry to promote the workforce development initiative.

Race to GED reduces the time it takes to earn a GED certificate from one year to as little as three months. Since January, more than 850 people have qualified for **Fast Track GED** or **GED Prep** programs at Race to GED pilot sites in Russell County, Martinsville, Danville, Prince William County, Hampton, and Virginia Beach. GED testing is still underway at these sites, and 224 people so far have completed the program, tested, and earned a GED certificate.

- **Fast Track GED** includes an assessment that identifies individuals who, with targeted study, can pass the GED tests within 90 days. Fast Track students take a screening assessment that allows them to work on the knowledge and skills they lack, becoming ready to take the GED tests in 90 days or less.
- **GED Prep** also includes an assessment followed by instruction tailored to individual needs. Students in GED Prep can earn their certificate in as few as 180 days, longer than Fast Track, but much sooner than in traditional GED programs.

“Race to GED is about education and opportunity. When workers are able to raise their level of education, they are able to take advantage of new opportunities in the modern economy,” Governor Warner said. “And the economic benefits of getting a GED or high school degree are clear: A Virginia worker with a GED or a diploma makes more than twice the income of a worker without one.”

“We have set an ambitious goal of doubling the number of Virginians who earn a GED each year, to 20,000,” Governor Warner said. “A more educated workforce will benefit localities and regions as we work to bring new businesses and jobs to Virginia.”

Governor Warner announced that both **Fast Track to GED** and **GED Prep** will become available this fall at 50 additional adult learning centers statewide, and that more centers will offer the Race to GED programs as the program expands.

“Many men and women put off earning their GED because they are trying to balance several jobs along with children and a spouse. They simply don’t have the time to spend a year or longer taking classes to prepare for the test,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Jo Lynne DeMary. “The Race to GED provides qualified workers with an opportunity to earn a certificate in much less time.”

Governor Warner used today’s event at Richmond International Raceway to thank the motorsports industry for its marketing support of Race to GED. Racetracks across Virginia are giving away race tickets to GED graduates and hosting GED classes and GED graduations. Participating tracks include Richmond International Raceway, Lonesome Pine Raceway in Coeburn, Motor Mile Speedway in New River, Big Daddy’s South Boston Speedway in South Boston, Langley Speedway in Hampton, Martinsville Speedway in Martinsville, Bristol Motor Speedway in Bristol, and Old Dominion Speedway in Manassas. Governor Warner also thanked Virginia drivers and racing teams that are supporting Race to GED.

In launching Race to GED last October as part of his “Education for a Lifetime” initiative, Governor Warner cited the following facts:

- More than 700,000 working age Virginians between the ages of 18 and 64 do not have a GED or high school diploma.
- In 40 of Virginia’s 134 cities and counties, more than 30 percent of adults do not have a GED or a high school diploma.
- In some regions of the state, the adult population without a high school-level credential is as high as 47 percent.

“Today’s workers need education and skills unheard of a generation ago,” said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Michael J. Schewel. “The percentage of the workforce with a high school-level credential such as a GED is a key consideration for companies investing in Virginia. Many of these companies won’t hire anyone without a high school diploma or GED.”

Fast Track GED and **GED Prep** have been especially popular with men and women who have lost jobs in traditional industries such as textiles and need a GED to take advantage of educational benefits under the federal Trade Act of 2002, which provides assistance to workers who lose jobs because of competition from inexpensive foreign labor.

Governor Warner cited the example of Angie Wingfield of Patrick County, who lost her job in last summer's shutdown of the Pillowtex, Inc. textile plant in Martinsville. Ms. Wingfield earned her GED in March through a Race to GED pilot program based in Martinsville and is now a student at Patrick Henry Community College and looking forward to a career in nursing.

Race to GED will be promoted this summer and fall by the Virginia Lottery's special events program. Lottery Executive Director Penelope W. Kyle said Race to GED staff members will work side-by-side with the Lottery's special events team at every event to raise awareness about the Race to GED. The promotional campaign will start at Harborfest in Norfolk (June 11-13, 2004) and culminate at the Virginia State Fair (September 23 – October 3, 2004).

"The Virginia Lottery is all about education and at all Lottery special events we remind our audiences that every penny of Lottery profits goes directly to Virginia's public schools (K-12). We are very pleased to combine our efforts with Race to GED and the important educational message the program carries," said Ms. Kyle.

Virginians who lack a high school credential may find out more about Race to GED by calling the Race to GED toll-free help line at 1-877-37 MY GED (1-877-376-9433). Information also is available through the help line for employers interested in establishing a GED program for their employees.

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