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Two Virginia Elementary Educators Receive \$25,000 Milken Awards *Chesapeake and Loudoun County Teachers Honored*

Two fifth-grade teachers — one from Chesapeake and the other from Loudoun County — each received \$25,000 awards today from the Milken Family Foundation. Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright and Milken Family Foundation Chairman and Co-founder Lowell Milken presented the awards during surprise assemblies at each winner's school.

"Every day these two educators model and inspire excellence in their students, their colleagues and their schools," said Dr. Wright. "Today they are receiving recognition through the Milken Family Foundation's National Educator program for making a significant difference in the lives of Virginia students."

The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards are designed to reward and provide recognition for elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and other education professionals who promote excellence and innovation in public education. The 2010 Virginia recipients are:

- **Joel Christopher Robins**, a fifth-grade teacher at Deep Creek Elementary School in Chesapeake. Noted for his daily use of hands-on learning technology, games, discovery learning and problem-solving activities, Robins has participated in a Standards of Learning mathematics review committee. He has been recognized as the 2007 Deep Creek Community Teacher of the Year, the 2008 Deep Creek Elementary School Reading Teacher of the Year and the 2009 Deep Creek Elementary School Teacher of the Year. Robins earned a bachelor's degree from Virginia Wesleyan College and a master's degree from the University of Virginia.
- **Sean Patrick Griffin**, a fifth-grade reading and social studies teacher at Belmont Station Elementary School in Loudoun County. To help motivate students, Griffin incorporates lyrics to popular songs, a blog for reading assignments and an online American cities museum project in his instructional practices, while providing adaptations for students with special needs at both ends of the learning spectrum. As part of his school division's "History Alive" grant team and in partnership with George Mason University, Griffin helped develop lessons and activities. He earned a bachelor's degree from Niagara University.

Robins and Griffin join 34 other Virginia educators who have been recognized by the Milken Family Foundation since Virginia began participating in the awards program in 1999. Educators are recommended for the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each participating state's department of education. Recipients of the awards are selected on the basis of numerous criteria, including:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by student achievement and outstanding instructional practices in the classroom, school and profession;
- Outstanding accomplishments and potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community at-large.

The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards — dubbed "the Oscars of teaching" by Teacher Magazine — were first presented in 1987. Since the inception of the program, the Milken Family Foundation has distributed more than \$62 million in awards to more than 2,500 educators across the country. This month, 55 new recipients are being announced in surprise assemblies at their schools. This year's award winners will receive their unrestricted \$25,000 prizes in spring 2011 at the Milken Educator Forum in Los Angeles.

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