



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Mark R. Warner
Governor

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**GOVERNOR WARNER ANNOUNCES EXPANSION
OF SUCCESSFUL RACE TO GED PROGRAM**

~Cost-effective initiative will include free testing, scholarships, and targeted instruction ~

MARTINSVILLE – Governor Mark R. Warner today announced that 35,000 Virginians have earned a General Educational Development (GED) certificate since the implementation of the Race to GED program in 2003. Last year, the number of GED graduates increased by 1,400 over 2003, and this year is expected to see 2,600 additional graduates over 2004. In addition, Governor Warner also announced several enhancements to the program, which is designed to assist adults who did not complete their high school education.

“We have increased the number of GED graduates by 28 percent since starting the Race to GED,” Governor Warner said. “Race to GED is worth every cent. The cost to the state for each GED graduate is only about \$350, and on average, a Virginia worker with a GED or high school degree can earn twice as much as one without. The GED Test Out hotline has seen a 300 percent increase in callers in just the last few months, putting us on track to further increase the number of Virginia’s on the way to higher earning potential.”

Governor Warner made the announcement at Martinsville Speedway, and was joined by Race to GED spokesman and NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series driver Elliott Sadler, a native of Emporia. Sadler has appeared on billboards and in television spots encouraging Virginians who have not completed high school to take advantage of the Race to GED. Sadler is in Martinsville to compete in Sunday’s Subway 500.

Through Race to GED, one of Governor Warner’s *Education for a Lifetime* Initiatives, adults who did not complete their high school education can receive a GED in less time than in a traditional one-year program. To earn a GED credential, a candidate demonstrates competency in math, science, reading, writing, and social studies. Adult learners can take a Fast Track class and earn a GED in less than three months.

Additional options for Race to GED announced by the Governor today include:

- **Virginia GED Bridge Scholarship:** Funded by the Alcoa Foundation, the scholarship provides money for graduates to continue their studies at a community college. In addition to the \$50,000 for scholarships this year, the Alcoa Foundation will provide an additional \$20,000 for scholarship funds in 2006.

- **GED Fast Track Career Bridge to the Health Care Industry:** The new initiative integrates GED instruction with industry-specific concepts to prepare graduates for jobs in the expanding health-care industry. It will be piloted in Bristol, Charlottesville, Martinsville, Virginia Beach, and Chesterfield County.
- **GED Test-Out:** Free testing is available through November to people who make a qualifying score on the practice test. The GED Test-Out billboards and commercials being aired on more than 50 radio and cable stations have increased informational calls to the GED Hotline, **877-37 MYGED (877-376-9433)**, by 300 percent in the last two months. In September, 1,967 adults took at least one of the five GED competency tests, 1,191 completed all five tests, and 1,039 earned GED certification.
- **Community for Opportunity Grants:** Totaling \$125,000, these grants will help 100 GED recipients and assist an additional 100 in workforce training. The grants are a partnership between the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Education. Community for Opportunity grants will go to Halifax County Public Schools Adult Education Program, Crossroads Shelter in Wytheville, the New River Community College Adult Education Program, King and Queen County Public Schools, Region 12 Adult Education Program, and the Southside Community College – Alberta Campus.

Kicking off the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup weekend, Governor Warner thanked the motor sports community for its support of the Race to GED.

“This unique approach to improve the lives of Virginia workers was pioneered in 2003 right here in Martinsville,” Governor Warner said. “The local adult education center created a faster way to put displaced textile, furniture, and other manufacturing workers ‘on the track’ to new careers.”

Beverly Heckford, a Race to GED graduate, read a portion of a letter she had written about her experiences. “Circumstances prevented my getting the education that I always wanted resulting in life being many times more difficult than it should have been. Without a high school diploma, every type of work that my natural abilities were suited for and the jobs I really wanted were unattainable,” she said. “The Race to GED program has allowed me to attend school when it was convenient. Time-saving testing methods were used to determine what subjects were necessary to learn. I did not have to waste time studying things that I already knew which made it so much easier than I had expected.”

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