



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wilmington Chamber Foundation Donates \$10,000 to At-Risk Students Program \$75,000 Goal Achieved; Chamber Efforts Will Raise More than 60% of Goal

Wilmington, NC—In conjunction with the Wilmington Chamber’s work to raise funds for the Youth Enrichment Zone Summer Initiative, the Wilmington Chamber Foundation has voted to donate \$10,000 to help establish the program. The donation will be used to provide low-income, at-risk youth living in the Youth Enrichment Zone (roughly between 4th and 14th Streets) access to a summer program that includes academically and culturally enriching activities. The program will help decrease youth violence while working to eliminate summer learning loss and narrow the achievement gap among students performing below grade level.

In January 2014, at the “Crime Hurts Kids...and Business” event organized by the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, Wilmington attorney George Rountree III donated \$10,000 as part of the Wilmington Chamber’s Cape Fear Future initiative, and John Monteith (Monteith Construction Corp.) donated \$5,000. An additional \$6,000 was raised at the event through donations. City of Wilmington staff have recommended that the City donate \$15,000 to the Chamber’s Cape Fear Future initiative, which would also be earmarked for the program. If this is approved, the total raised by the Chamber will be \$46,000, more than 60% of the \$75,000 needed to fund the program’s first year. That donation will also complete the funding goal.

The Youth Enrichment Zone Summer Initiative will be piloted this first year with 60 rising 7th and 8th grade students that demonstrate high need and at-risk behaviors, and are underperforming academically. For five weeks (June 23rd-July 25th), the students will participate in the Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) program at D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy. BELL’s programs are proven to boost student achievement and narrow the achievement gap.

The program will be conducted four days per week for six hours each day. BELL expands learning time for students in grades K-8 who are performing below grade level by delivering targeted instruction based on scholars’ unique learning needs to help them accelerate their learning, catch up to their peers, and gain the confidence they need to sustain success in school. Academic instruction in the morning is reinforced by hands-on enrichment courses in the afternoons that are taught by partnering non-profit programs such as DREAMS and Kids Making It. Each Thursday program participants with go on culturally enriching field trips in and around New Hanover County and will also engage in community service projects.

“In the summer months children from low income households fall behind in their education while others progress, creating a gap that the low income students can’t bridge,” said Chamber

President & CEO Connie Majure-Rhett. “Every year of school it gets worse, setting a path of underachievement academically and the potential to be lured by criminal activity instead of staying in school and seeking a stable profession.”

To donate to the Youth Enrichment Zone Summer Initiative, please contact Jana Jones Halls, Executive Director of the Blue Ribbon Commission, at jana.jones@nhcs.net.

For questions please contact Connie Majure-Rhett: majure@wilmingtonchamber.org or (910) 762-2611 ext. 214.

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