

**For Immediate Release
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**Contact: Ken McFadyen
Regional Director
Blue Ridge Crossroads
Economic Development Authority
276-236-0391
kmcfadyen@crossroadsva.org**

16 Regional Educators Complete ‘Character Counts!’ Training

Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority Sponsors Virginia Cooperative Extension Two-Day Program

GALAX, Va. -- Sixteen regional teachers, guidance counselors and 4-H agents successfully completed a two-day Virginia Cooperative Extension “Character Counts!” training program.

The “Character Counts! programs emphasize ‘Six Pillars of Character:’ Trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

“Character education is as important to our workforce development programs as students learning technical skills to succeed in the workplace,” said Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority (BRECDA) board member Gary Larrowe, who is also Carroll County Administrator.

“Integrity commits employees to be punctual, honest and effective in their jobs,” he added. “Every employer is looking for honest employees.”

BRECDA sponsored part of the “Charter Counts!” training, a program the national non-profit Josephson Institute of Ethics offers to business, education and government leaders nationwide.

The 16 regional representatives completing the program, from Carroll County Public Schools: Guidance councilors Bea Wellborn, Judy Neal, Megan Chilton, Liz Anderson, Kim Reitzel, Jane Lookabill; high school teacher Melissa Mullins; and 4-H agent Emily Nester. Also, Hillsville Elementary School teacher Bobbietta Martin.

From Grayson County Public Schools: Guidance counselors Diana Booth, Sherri Hanks, Eileen Elrod, Linda Kirby; high school teacher Melissa Largen; and 4-H Agent Daniel Collins. Also, Tazewell County 4-H Program Assistant Rhonda Fuller.

Conducting the training, which took place Jan. 25 and 26, at the Crossroads Institute, was the Virginia Cooperative Extension. Presenters included Tonya Taylor, specialist, 4-H Youth Development, State 4-H Office; Glenda Snyder, extension agent, 4-H Youth Development, Botetourt County; John Blankenship, extension agent, 4-H Youth Development, Tazewell County; and Jennifer Unroe, extension agent, 4-H Youth Development, Alleghany County.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments.

BRCEDA, formed in 2007 to provide the leadership for economic development efforts to benefit the Twin County region, coordinates regional economic development activities for Carroll and Grayson counties and the City of Galax. Over the past two years, BRCEDA has established the most successful Small Business Development Center in Virginia, contributing to the creation of more than 100 new businesses. Before the stand-alone Wired Road Broadband Authority, BRCEDA led the effort to establish Virginia's first community-owned, open-access, regional broadband network.

Other current BRCEDA projects include working with the Town of Fries and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to introduce the new Fries Master Plan, which could lead to as much as \$15 million in new investments in Fries.

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For more information on "Character Counts!" and other Virginia Cooperative Extension 4-H programs, contact Emily Nester for Carroll County at ernester@vt.edu or 276-730-3110; or Daniel Collins for Grayson County at collindp@vt.edu or 276-773-2491.