

For Immediate Release

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Foundation for Roanoke Valley Launches “The Belonging Initiative”

Five-year grant program will benefit the well-being of older adults throughout the Roanoke Region

Roanoke, Va. (May 5, 2009) ó Foundation for Roanoke Valley launched today “The Belonging Initiative”, a bold, five-year, \$1.5 million grant program to benefit the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of older adults in the cities of Roanoke and Salem, and Roanoke, Craig and Botetourt counties. The initiative will provide grants to five organizations for the purpose of increasing public awareness of resources available to older adults and their caregivers, mental health education, social companionship, home maintenance and security, and rural community outreach.

The five grant recipients selected for 2009 are the Council of Community Services, LOA Agency on Aging, Mental Health America (Roanoke Valley Chapter), Rebuilding Together (Roanoke Chapter), and the Botetourt Resource Center.

“This is a significant moment both for the community and Foundation for Roanoke Valley,” said Alan Ronk, Executive Director for the Foundation. “As a community foundation, we are tasked with identifying where our endowment funds will have the most considerable and lasting impact. Over the years, we’ve seen strong interest from donors to establish funds for programs and organizations benefiting older adults. With “The Belonging Initiative,” we are bringing together these common philanthropic objectives in an exciting, strategic way that will greatly improve the lives of this population and strengthen the community as a whole.”

First year components of the program include:

- **Rural Community Outreach** (Botetourt Resource Center) ó A program of the Council of Community Services, the Botetourt Resource Center offers services to the rural community in Botetourt County with emphasis on older adults. The Center requires major facility and equipment upgrades to meet a growing demand by the population it serves. In its first year, “The Belonging Initiative” grant will fund necessary facility renovations and enable the Center to hire an additional part-time employee.
- **Home Maintenance and Security** (Rebuilding Together) ó With a goal of helping between 15 and 20 older adults over the course of a year, Rebuilding Together will provide home modifications to improve safety and functionality. Candidates will be selected based on income, critical need, disability, number of children residing in the home, and special circumstances such as large medical expenses.
- **Lack of Awareness of Existing Resources** (Council of Community Services) ó To better inform older adults about available resources for information and care, Council of Community Services will embark on an aggressive awareness campaign to promote the 2-1-1 program that provides free human services information.

- **Mental Health/Depression** (Mental Health America) ó Through a series of public seminars and conferences, Mental Health America will educate older adults and their professional and non-professional caregivers about mental illness and depression.
- **Social Isolation** (LOA Area Agency on Aging) ó LOA's Senior Companions program partners two older low-income adults ó one who is homebound or disabled and the other who serves as a friend and does light housekeeping, cooking, and shopping. Through "The Belonging Initiative" LOA will receive funds to recruit new volunteers for the program in order to reach older adults who are more socially isolated and have not benefited from the program. Funds will also support the modest stipend for the senior companions.

"The five organizations chosen to receive grants through this new initiative have the dedication, leadership, and commitment to make a strong impact on the many older adults who will be touched through the programs," said Ronk. "The next five years will be certainly be exciting ones as we work together for such a great cause."

Foundation for Roanoke Valley has served the Roanoke Valley for more than 20 years and currently administers over 240 named endowment funds on behalf of the community.

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