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**W.K. Kellogg Foundation Reinvests a Second \$1,000,000 to Continue Support for Unique Dual-Generation School Readiness Initiative**  
*VECF-led effort builds communities' capacity to support parents & young children*

Richmond, Va. (Jan. 25, 2018) – The W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Mich., awarded a grant of one million dollars to the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) to renew support for **Smart Beginnings for Southside Families (SBSF)** – a unique dual-generation initiative that began in 2015.

The initiative serves families with young children in the cities of Danville, Emporia and Martinsville along with Brunswick, Greenville, Henry, Pittsylvania, and Sussex counties. In 2017, SBSF expanded to serve families in the Petersburg/Prince George County region. The new grant will support further expansion to the East End of Richmond, testing the strategies in both rural and urban localities.

Smart Beginnings for Southside Families takes a holistic approach, responding to the needs and challenges of both the adult and the young child in a home. Parents taking part in the initiative may have limited education and are either expecting their first child or have given birth to their first child within the past 12 months. The families being served often have limited income with limited access to resources which could help them to break out of the cycle of poverty.

VECF's full-time project coordinator will continue supporting a set of coaches who provide case management services for the participating families, along with the assistance of local Smart Beginnings partners, including Smart Beginnings Danville Pittsylvania, Smart Beginnings Martinsville & Henry County, Smart Beginnings Southeast and Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond.

Over the next three years, the initiative will embed "family ombudsman" strategies in the participating communities to ensure the durability of community-level changes in processes and policies for helping young families thrive. These strategies will guide the families as they navigate community resources and systems of support, as well as service providers to help problem-solve when systems work against families, rather than for them.

“Thanks to the generosity of the Kellogg Foundation, Smart Beginnings for Southside Families has opened doors of opportunity for families in high-risk communities in Virginia,” said Kathy Glazer, president of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. “This initiative is helping Virginia identify and trouble-shoot the gaps, barriers and policy issues that threaten families’ success. We are demonstrating and cultivating a problem-solving orientation for service providers, coaching families to advocate for themselves, and documenting our experiences to inform local, regional and state level policy reform.”

“In order to significantly impact school readiness for children in high-risk localities, we must address both quality of and access to services in a way that is relevant for today’s families,” said Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. (R-15<sup>th</sup> District). “This innovative initiative offers a collaborative, transformational approach that will ultimately strengthen the future workforce of Virginia.”

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**About the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation:** VECF creates results-oriented partnerships to ensure that young children are healthy and prepared for school, life and workforce success. To learn more about VECF and the Smart Beginnings initiative, visit [www.vecf.org](http://www.vecf.org).

**About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation:** The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life.

The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti. For more information, visit [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org).