

Contact:
Tara Nadel
703-879-7637
tara.nadel@cfnova.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Community Foundation for Northern Virginia Supports Civic Engagement
Program for Middle School Students
Makes \$23,000 Grant to Prince William County Public Schools**

Oakton, VA (December 22, 2015) – The **Community Foundation for Northern Virginia** has just awarded a grant of \$23,000 to SPARK, the Education Foundation of Prince William County Public Schools, to support a new Civic Engagement Program for 150-200 eighth grade students across the county. The program is designed to teach students how their local, state and federal governments work; to give them an understanding of how to change public policy; and to offer hands-on experience researching and debating current issues in the community.

This grant was made possible through the Haymarket Fund, a donor advised fund at the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia. This fund supports families and children with an emphasis on health, education, community development and improvement, and arts and culture.

The after-school program kicked off this week with a special program at George Mason University's Science and Technology campus in Manassas. Organized by Jeff Girvan, Supervisor of History and Social Sciences for Prince William County Public Schools, the students heard from Virginia Delegate Richard Anderson, enjoyed a reenactment by LeCount Holmes about the life of Frederick Douglass, and learned about a life of service from Colonel Richard Camp, USMC, Retired.

Their learning will continue with workshops and sessions in which they will identify a problem to study, gather information, examine solutions, develop a public policy, and create an action plan to influence the appropriate government or governmental agency to adopt the proposed policy. In February, the students will take a field trip to Richmond for a tour of the state capital with Delegate Anderson. The program will culminate in June with final presentations to government officials or agencies responsible for implementing the new policy.

“We funded this new Civic Engagement Program in Prince William County Public Schools because we believe it will both teach and encourage active citizen engagement with all levels of government,” said Eileen Ellsworth, President of the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia. “It is a terrific opportunity for these middle school students to acquire a much deeper understanding and appreciation of the role of government in our society and their capacity to influence the course of events.”

About the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia:

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia helps grow philanthropy to meet the most critical needs of the community. Comprised of giving circles, donor advised funds, community investment funds and scholarship funds, we help connect donors to community, meet community needs with community resources, and strengthen Northern Virginia.

During FY2015, the Community Foundation:

- Awarded \$4.2 million in grants to nonprofits, interfaith groups and schools addressing critical community needs
- Awarded \$215,000 in scholarships to graduating high school seniors in our region
- Reported approximately \$36 million in philanthropic funds established by individual and corporate donors.

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