

Cameron Foundation Grant Funds Petersburg Launch of Partnership's "Include Me" Inclusive Preschool Project

Richmond, Va. – The Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University announces the receipt of a \$27,551 grant from the Cameron Foundation. The funding will be used to offer specialized training to child care centers that provide inclusive quality education to children with special needs in Petersburg, Virginia.

The "Include Me" project provides information, training, and technical assistance to early childhood teachers to help them become more effective at including children with disabilities and developmental delays in their classrooms alongside typically developing peers. Expected benefits include: Children with disabilities served by the centers will show improvement in social interactions, and acquire stronger communication and development skills. Children without disabilities will show improved self-concept and greater sensitivity, and parents in the Petersburg area will have increased access to quality child care.

"This grant from The Cameron Foundation gives us the means to offer specialized training and technical assistance to two child care centers in Petersburg – ABC Learning Center and Burrow's Child Development Center. Helping early childhood educators allows communities and schools to include children with disabilities in ways that benefit the entire community," said Mary Lynn White, inclusion specialist and project director.

The Cameron Foundation is a not-for-profit organization established to promote and provide support for programs and activities that benefit the residents of the City of Petersburg, Virginia, and the surrounding area, as well as the areas historically served by the hospital now known as Southside Regional Medical Center.

The Partnership is Virginia's only federally designated university center for excellence in developmental disabilities. It operates as part of the VCU School of Education and maintains an interdisciplinary approach. For more information, see www.vcu.edu/partnership.

About VCU and the VCU Medical Center: *Virginia Commonwealth University is the largest university in Virginia and ranks among the top 100 universities in the country in sponsored research. Located on two downtown campuses in Richmond, VCU enrolls more than 30,000 students in nearly 200 certificate and degree programs in the arts, sciences and humanities. Sixty-three of the programs are unique in Virginia, many of them crossing the disciplines of VCU's 15 schools and one college. MCV Hospitals and the health sciences schools of Virginia Commonwealth University compose the VCU Medical Center, one of the nation's leading academic medical centers. For more information, see www.vcu.edu.*