

Gov. Tim Kaine launches Return to Roots campaign in Southwest Virginia

LEBANON, Va. – Sept. 18, 2006 – Gov. Tim Kaine joined Southwest Virginia residents today in the launch of the Return to Roots campaign. Return to Roots is a campaign aimed at the estimated 15,000 alumni who have graduated from Southwest Virginia's high schools in the last 20 years and have moved out of the region.

"Many of Southwest Virginia's residents and past graduates may not be aware of the amazing opportunities available to them back home today," Kaine said. "Return to Roots is going to reach out to these former residents, and hopefully attract them back to this region to continue contributing to its vibrant culture and quality of life."

Financed by a Special Projects grant from the Tobacco Commission, this first phase of Return to Roots plans to reach out to former residents through a website, direct mail and the news media to inform them about the employment opportunities that exist in the region today, and to link these potential employees to regional companies with job openings.

The Return to Roots campaign was created because community leaders in the region recognized the potential in "positively addressing the brain drain we all hear about," Kaine said during the announcement in Lebanon. Prior to the economic development announcements last year by CGI-AMS and Northrop Grumman, companies that are bringing more than 700 information technology jobs to the region, Southwest Virginia was seeing an increase in job vacancies as employment rates have improved significantly in recent years.

Local officials indicate jobs such as computer programmers, network technicians, database administrators, as well as industrial, mechanical and electrical engineers, electricians and welders are just a few of the types of skilled job opportunities that exist in the region.

A website – ReturntoRoots.org – is the key communications vehicle for developing an extensive database of potential employees and linking them with southwestern Virginia companies with jobs.

The website contains the growing base of job opportunities, links to company job postings, and a place to post resumes.

"For parents and grandparents with children living outside the area, reach out to them and ask them to visit ReturntoRoots.org," Kaine said. "Let's help them begin considering a return back to the area they once called home."

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Contact:
Susan Copeland
Media Relations Coordinator
Return to Roots
susancope@comcast.net
276-628-7249