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Coordinator Named for New Regional Nonprofit Project Serving Petersburg, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, Chester, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Prince George and Sussex Counties

Wendy Austin has been named coordinator of connectSouthside, a free, on-line network that connects and aids local nonprofits.

Austin brings to the position a professional background in marketing, publications and project management. Her credentials include a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern Mississippi, work in the graphic arts and retail business ownership and in recent years, she has been an active volunteer in community, school and civic affairs in Chesterfield County.

"I'm looking forward to collaborating with local nonprofits and agencies in the Southside region. I'm eager to learn what resources are needed and how we can provide them to our users," said Austin.

On Sept. 25 from 9 to 11 a.m., Austin will meet with interested citizens at the new Hopewell library to discuss the project. In the coming months, Austin will hold community meetings in Petersburg, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, Chester, as well as Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Prince George and Sussex counties to introduce connectSouthside and gain locality-specific insights and ideas. Nonprofit, business and government organizations as well as interested citizens are invited to contact Austin to learn more or schedule presentations and all are encouraged to add her to their distribution lists for reports and other information that would be of interest to citizens.

Reach Austin at waustin@connectnetwork.org or at (804) 458-6329 ext. 2010.

"I have found the resources, information-sharing and job listing services offered through Connect Richmond most helpful, and I am excited to now have these services specifically for the Southside region," said Sheena Mackenzie, Development Director of the Central Virginia Health Services. "I hope many non-profits and their employees will sign up for connectSouthside because the more we share, the stronger the connections."

Funded by the Cameron Foundation, and developed in partnership with the Southside Virginia Nonprofit Resource Center and the Appomattox Regional Library System, connectSouthside is the third Connect Network replication in a Virginia region. The resource serves localities by providing access to research and data useful for grant writing and program planning as well as guides and suggestions for running a nonprofit. Tools include a searchable nonprofit and

www.connectsouthside.org

government services database, a job finder, a database of volunteer opportunities, and a regional calendar designed for event planners. The most popular service of the Network is an email communication group that enables nonprofit and civic leaders, volunteers, and government officials to build stronger communities by communicating and sharing information and resources and all are invited to view the new Web site and join the email communication group at www.ConnectSouthside.org.

"The Cameron Foundation is proud to partner with Connect Network to provide this valuable resource to local nonprofits," said Anne Douglas of the Cameron Foundation. "connectSouthside will help build the capacity and effectiveness of nonprofit organizations in the region and support the other partnerships and capacity-building initiatives we have developed."

"The Network's power comes largely from the relationships it fosters via region-wide and issue-specific social networks," said Dr. Nancy Stutts, Executive Director of Connect Network. "With Wendy's focus on building participation among localities, connectSouthside will evolve expressly to meet local needs and leverage local assets."

As part of connectSouthside's partnership with the Southside Virginia Nonprofit Resource Center, Austin will be based at the Appomattox Regional Library in Hopewell. "Our library is proud to support innovative information resources and services," said Scott Firestine, Director of the Appomattox Regional Library. "Libraries have always been aggregators of information and this partnership is an opportunity to provide solutions that utilize networking communication with connectSouthside, training opportunities with Focus Inc., and grant mining services with the SVNRC."

connectSouthside is made possible by a grant from The Cameron Foundation. It is being created by the staff of Connect Network with advice and support from an advisory board and by a volunteer steering committee of local supporters and community leaders.