



**RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY
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**RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY, VIRGINIA
PRESS RELEASE**

October 4, 2022

VACo Achievement Award for FamilyFutures Program

Rappahannock County is very pleased to announce it has received an Achievement Award from the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo), recognizing the work of the county's unique FamilyFutures nonprofit venture. The Award, Rappahannock County's first, was presented at the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors meeting on October 3 by Karie Walker, VACo Coordinator of Programs and Development.

First-of-its-kind in Virginia, FamilyFutures provides supplemental financial education for public school students, beginning in kindergarten. Students earn by learning. When they complete activities that cement the FamilyFutures lessons, they earn money that is saved for them. FamilyFutures opens a \$100 "MyFuture" savings account in each student's name when they enter kindergarten, and each year through graduation the student can earn up to an additional \$100 by completing learning assignments. FamilyFutures was founded in 2019, and the inaugural kindergarten class from that year just entered third grade, meaning the program now includes half of Rappahannock County's elementary school students.

According to Debbie Donehey, Board of Supervisors Chair, "The county is very proud of FamilyFutures and the educational enrichment it is providing for our public school students. In barely four years, the FamilyFutures program has added so many opportunities for our kids to learn about money, so they can avoid the pitfalls and unhappiness that attend lack of sophistication about finance."

Rappahannock County Public Schools ("RCPS") Superintendent Shannon Grimsley – who showed her support for the FamilyFutures "MyFuture" learning and saving program by naming it as beneficiary of her recent birthday fundraiser on Facebook – notes, "MyFuture helps students tangibly see their own

effort pay off and see how this concept applies to planning for the future. Developing these skills early is essential to cultivating lifelong habits that translate to responsible citizenship and economic stability." The FamilyFutures program is embedded in the new RCPS strategic plan.

"Planning – thinking about the future – and being prepared is the real purpose of the accounts and the earning options over time," says FamilyFutures Board Chair Tom Massie, Jr.

Parents have recognized the value of FamilyFutures lessons and learning, and they are already seeing both financial and life skills reflected in their students' behaviors at home. First grader Yasemin made her own currency and saved money from her small business. Sophia's parent says she "has learned how saving can lead to bigger investments and how her time relates to her money."

Jane Eberhardt, former elementary school teacher and FamilyFutures Board member, explains, "By the time these kindergartners graduate from high school, we hope they will have not only a bit of money set aside, but more importantly a deeper understanding of how money works. We think working with these accounts can give students lots of chances to practice setting goals, making plans, and delaying gratification – important skills for life."

This year, FamilyFutures worked closely with RCPS K-3 teachers to formalize and improve sequencing of the learning program's curricula, including adoption of regular assessment steps to evaluate each grade's curriculum and the success of the program overall. Alert to opportunities to provide resources for students beyond those formally enrolled over the past four years, FamilyFutures has: (i) partnered with RCPS to provide curriculum that will enrich the mandatory economics and personal finance class taught to high school juniors, and help to prepare GED students to enter the working/earning/spending/saving world; (ii) provided a free online "money camp" for quarantined middle-school students during the summer of 2020; and (iii) offered counseling and other resources directly to adults who seek assistance, as well as to and through other area public and nonprofit entities.

VACo awards are designed to recognize excellence in local government programs. For information on the VACo awards program, contact Gage Harter (804) 343-2502 For information on FamilyFutures, see the website at familyfuturesva.org

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From left: Debbie Donehey; Tom Massie, Jr.; and Karie Walker

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