

GOVERNOR BUSH ANNOUNCES NEARLY \$9 MILLION FOR LITERACY EFFORTS

~~Grants available to Front Porch Family Literacy and Community Technology Programs~~

TALLAHASSEE - Governor Jeb Bush today announced the availability of \$8.8 million in federal Adult Education grants designed to help eliminate adult illiteracy and align with the state's goals of economic development and a skilled workforce. These funds will enable adult education components to be added to Front Porch Florida and Digital Divide programs --key parts of the Governor's efforts to improve literacy through the *Just Read, Florida!* initiative.

"Adult literacy is vital to our efforts to ensure that every child is reading at grade level by 2012," said Governor Bush. "Too often parents are not able to read to their children. Instilling a love of reading among parents and kids will benefit them throughout their lives, opening new doors of opportunity for them."

"Competing for high-quality jobs in today's society requires literacy skills and technological knowledge," said Jim Horne, Secretary of the Florida Board of Education. "We hope that providing funding to existing computer labs and Front Porch Florida communities will help give more adults the opportunity to a better education."

The Florida Department of Education plans to award the \$8.8 million over two years through its Division of Workforce Development. An estimated \$3.6 million will be available on a competitive basis to 16 existing Front Porch communities through the *Front Porch Family Literacy Program*. An estimated \$5.2 million will be available through the *Community Technology Program*.

"The support and promotion of family literacy is critical to the continuing education of Florida's students," said Education Commissioner Charlie Crist. "These grants will serve to provide the necessary resources to those needing them, and will work to encourage families to read, learn and grow together."

The *Front Porch Family Literacy Program*, in the Department of Community Affairs Office of Urban Opportunity, is aimed at improving the literacy levels of adults in the Front Porch Florida communities. Parents will be encouraged to further their education and become more active in the education of their children. Support services, including childcare, transportation, tuition, and books, may be provided to assist adults who are willing to pursue their educational goal on a full-time basis. Eligible applicants may be a public or private non-profit entity, local educational agency, community-based organization, volunteer literacy organization, institution of higher education, library, public housing authority, or consortium of these organizations. Charter schools may apply, but must submit their application through their sponsoring agency.

Aligned with the Governor's Mentoring Initiative, the *Community Technology Program* is designed to help underserved adults succeed in the digital age. The intent is to provide parents or caregivers with easy access to and training on the use of computers by establishing computer labs in local communities. The objectives of the project are to:

- ?? Work directly with parents or caregivers to promote digital literacy and positive development;
- ?? Develop relationships with local schools and non-profit organizations;
- ?? Provide adults with the opportunity of acquiring a GED through online distance learning; and
- ?? Provide adults with the ability to assist their children with reports through the use of the Internet.

To be eligible for *Community Technology Program* funding, potential applicants must operate a digital divide program that is currently in existence. Sample eligible programs with current digital divide efforts include PowerUP, First Serve and Department of Juvenile Justice computer lab sites. A list of such eligible sites is available by logging onto www.flamentoring.org.

The Florida Department of Education, Division of Workforce Development, will be accepting applications until 5:00 pm EST June 17. Copies of the application can be obtained by logging onto www.flamentoring.org or www.firn.edu/doe/workforce, by calling 850-414-6987, or by writing to:

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For more information on education reform and reading efforts in Florida visit www.myflorida.com and access the *Just Read, Florida!* page. Families interested in accessing adult education anywhere in the state should call the Florida Literacy Coalition at 1-800-237-5113.