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MEDIA ALERT

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Get Alarmed, Virginia! Program Saves 5 Lives

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA: – The *Get Alarmed, Virginia!* smoke alarm installation and education campaign, now in its eleventh year of helping to prevent fire related deaths and injuries across the Commonwealth by installing smoke alarms in at-risk homes, potentially saved 5 more lives in the Mt. Crawford community of Rockingham County, VA on June 9.

In the early morning hours of June 9, the Snuffin family was awakened by a lightning strike they initially thought had hit near their house. Unbeknownst to the family, the lightning strike had actually hit the roof of the home and started a fire in the attic. As they were preparing to return to bed, the Snuffin's daughter heard a beeping noise and brought it to her parent's attention. Using flashlights, since they had lost power from the lightning, they searched for the source of the noise, smelled smoke, and discovered the smoke coming out around the attic door. The family immediately evacuated the home and called 911.

The beeping noise that the family heard was the sound of a smoke alarm that had recently been installed in the attic as part of the *Get Alarmed, Virginia!* program. The family's son, Preston, had installed a total of 5 smoke alarms in the home as part of an Eagle Scout project. The Eagle Scout project was conducted under the supervision of the Rockingham County Volunteer Firefighters Association, which was awarded a *Get Alarmed, Virginia!* smoke alarm grant by the Virginia Department of Health earlier this year.

Since it was created in 1998, the program has documented over 106 lives possibly saved or injuries averted in Virginia, as well as prevented millions of dollars in property loss during those eleven years. It is funded through a grant by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and managed by the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Injury and Violence Prevention with assistance from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. Since its inception, 38 local communities throughout the state have partnered with the Division of Injury and Violence Prevention to implement the program. Because of their efforts, approximately 50,271 alarms have been installed, including over 500 smoke alarms for the hearing impaired, and 29,077 Virginia homes have been fully protected.

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“Properly installed and operating smoke alarms reduce a person’s chance of dying in a residential fire by half. They are a proven, cost effective fire safety measure that every home should have,” says Leonard Recupero, Community Injury Prevention Coordinator for the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Injury and Violence Prevention. “The *Get Alarmed, Virginia!* program strives to identify at-risk homes, install smoke alarms in those homes, and educate residents about fire and life safety practices.”

What makes the program effective is its grassroots approach. *Get Alarmed, Virginia!* is implemented by local agencies who can tailor it to their community’s resources and needs. In addition to identifying at-risk homes, installing alarms, and educating residents about fire and life safety practices, each program administers a ‘pre-survey’ on fire safety knowledge and practices in all the homes where installations are performed and monitors those homes post-installation to document any lives saved or injuries averted.

For more information about the *Get Alarmed, Virginia!* program, including a list of past and present program participants, visit www.vahealth.org/injury.

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