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Charlottesville Home Energy Makeover Contest Kicks Off Wave of Residential Energy Efficiency Initiatives

Charlottesville and Albemarle Homeowners Could Win \$10,000 in Energy Efficiency Home Improvements, are Eligible for \$1 Million in Incentives and Rebates

Charlottesville, Virginia – Charlottesville Mayor Dave Norris and local business leaders joined the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) today to announce the Charlottesville Home Energy Makeover Contest, which will award two winners with up to \$10,000 in free energy and water efficiency home improvements. LEAP also announced that \$1 million in incentives and rebates will be available to area residential property owners in the coming months. Together these are unique, trend-setting opportunities for local homeowners to increase their homes' comfort, safety and value while lowering energy bills, and it puts our local contractors to work enhancing the community's livability.

More information about the contest, including online registration, is available at www.cvillesaves.org. Check us out on Facebook "Local Energy Alliance Project (LEAP)" and follow us on Twitter @LEAP_VA.

Seeds for the contest and rebate packages were planted last year when the City and County successfully competed against 16 other communities in the Southeast for a \$500,000 grant from the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance. A 2008 report by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, *Energizing Virginia: Efficiency First*, found that the Commonwealth can meet close to 20 percent of its electricity needs by 2025 through energy efficiency, a strategy that also would cut Virginians' utilities bills by \$15 billion by 2025 and create nearly 10,000 new jobs – the equivalent of bringing almost 100 new manufacturing facilities to the state.

About the Home Energy Makeover Contest:

Homeowners in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County can register to participate in the Home Energy Makeover Contest for a chance of winning up to \$10,000. Two winners will be selected to receive free home performance assessments and energy improvements and eight runner-ups will receive free home performance assessments worth up to \$600. A home performance assessment includes an energy audit, which identifies areas of improvement within the home. Energy improvements can include adding insulation, weather stripping, and installing CFLs, etc. All work will be conducted by local contractors who are pre-qualified to participate in LEAP's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program. Non-profits are eligible to compete in the Non-Profit Challenge and win \$1,000 for bringing the most entries to the Makeover Contest.

Major sponsors for the Makeover Contest include Dominion Virginia Power, Monticello Media, and NBC 29 News.

About the \$1 Million in Incentives/Rebates:

In the coming months, LEAP is launching its flagship residential program for energy efficiency: Home Performance with ENERGY STAR. This nationally known program is new to the Charlottesville area. Administered locally by LEAP and funded by federal grant money, the program will provide pre-qualified

contractors, special financing and incentives, third-party quality assurance on the completed work and, most importantly, certification that the home has undergone energy conservation measures projected to increase its efficiency by 20% or more.

- A \$250 rebate will be available for Home Performance Assessments (energy audits) which are performed in LEAP's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program.
- 50% of the retrofit cost, up to \$1000, will be available as a cash incentive for homeowners who participate in LEAP's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program.

Rebates and incentives will be available to property owners living in the City of Charlottesville and Counties of Albemarle, Greene, Nelson, Louisa, and Fluvanna; i.e., LEAP's service territory of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District. In addition to the rebate and incentive, Energy Star's federal tax credit and the VA Appliance Rebate program can effectively reduce the cost for the retrofit by up to \$3000 (assumes air and duct sealing, adding insulation, and upgrading heat pump or furnace).

If one out of two homes in Central Virginia switched out 5 of their most used incandescents it could save the bill payer \$48 annually, for a community wide benefit of \$2.5 M of savings. If we apply the same scale to an energy efficiency retrofit in LEAP's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program, the benefits could be \$700 in savings for the property owner and \$36.4 M community-wide (assumes air and duct sealing, adding insulation, and replacing inefficient furnace).

What Community Leaders, Contest Sponsors and Homeowners Are Saying:

"LEAP allows citizens to act on the knowledge that the cheapest, most sustainable energy is the energy we don't use. By providing an easy method for making our homes and businesses more energy efficient, LEAP allows each of us to take charge of creating a cleaner energy future--which is great for our nation and our earth. It also shows the success we can achieve solving problems when the local, state and federal governments work together" – **Congressman Tom Perriello**

"Energy efficiency is a vast resource for energy, cost savings and jobs for the Commonwealth of Virginia, and I'm proud that the Charlottesville region is finding innovative ways to tap that source and engage the community in solutions to our energy challenges." – **Delegate David Toscano**

"This effort is unique and promising in its ability to bring together homeowners, contractors, banks, non-profits, utilities, companies and the City and County. We are proud to see a true community-wide program on energy efficiency that has at its foundation public-private partnerships that will help stimulate economic growth." – **Ann Mallek, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors**

"A livable community needs livable homes. This contest and LEAP's upcoming energy efficiency initiatives are yet another sign that our community is on the leading edge of energy solutions and sustainability." – **Dave Norris, City of Charlottesville Mayor**

"Dominion is excited to be a partner on the "Charlottesville Home Energy Makeover Contest" with LEAP, the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County and many local businesses. This is a great hands-on opportunity to demonstrate the importance of energy efficiency and show how improvements can help reduce utility bills, increase comfort, and boost home value. We look forward to seeing the energy efficiency improvements of the retrofitted homes." – **Brandon Stites, Director of Energy Conservation and Advanced Metering, Dominion Virginia Power**

"The benefits of energy efficiency – increasing your home's value and comfort while lowering your energy bills, already made for a smart investment. Now LEAP is adding a million dollars in rebates, incentives and customer support to the equation. Not only do we look forward to the dividends enjoyed by individual homeowners, but we

also look forward to the community dividends of economic stimulus and job creation." – **Cynthia Adams, Executive Director of the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP)**

“The Blue Ridge Home Builder’s Association supports LEAP’s residential program as a means to help homeowners improve the value and comfort of their homes. This effort is enhanced by having a workforce already in place with solid, long-term experience in the complexities of well-designed and properly installed materials and techniques that will add public confidence to the process.” – **Blue Ridge Home Builder’s Association**

“People know that their houses aren't functioning well. They have high energy bills and uncomfortable rooms. Contractors in our area have seen some difficult times and are anxious to hire their people back, get them trained and start performing energy efficiency upgrades. LEAP brings homeowners and trained contractors together through Home Performance with Energy Star.” —**Laura Fiori of Key Green Energy**

“We jumped at the opportunity to join the LEAP program based on a gut feeling that our house was not very efficient. We are very glad we did. Not only did we address all of their concerns about air sealing and insulation, but we learned a ton of building science which helps us develop better habits in our day to day lives. Our monthly energy bills have dropped dramatically, and we expect our involvement in LEAP will help when we are ready to sell our house, especially as the world is moving more and more green. Mostly it feels great to know we are not wasting energy.” – **John Tran, a resident of the Fry's Spring neighborhood in Charlottesville whose house went through a home energy performance audit and retrofit this spring.**

“For a long time, we had been thinking of ways to improve our heating efficiency, but we had been stalled by our lack of knowledge in this area. The guidance we have received during this process has been outstanding. We have learned a great deal about our home and its weaknesses and now have a list of options to enhance its efficiency and comfort. We plan to install improved insulation, and we are certain that we'll see a difference right away.” – **Christie Walker of the Venable neighborhood in Charlottesville, who had her house audited with LEAP after receiving information from Charlottesville Gas indicating their energy use in the winter was far higher than other residents in comparable homes.**