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Virginia War Memorial Breaks Ground for the Paul and Phyllis Galanti Education Center

RICHMOND, Va. (December 17, 2008) – The Virginia War Memorial held a ceremonial ground breaking today for its new Education Center that will be named for Paul and Phyllis Galanti, two American heroes. Governor Tim Kaine, the keynote speaker, was joined in speaking by J. Stewart Bryan, Chairman of Media General, and both Paul and Phyllis Galanti. Over 250 people attended the event paying their respects to the Galantis and admiring the architectural renderings.

Governor Kaine remarked “As Governor, I have witnessed the devastation a family experiences after the loss of a loved one serving in our armed forces and have seen first hand the physical and emotional scars our veterans often face after their service to our country. We all have a duty to educate future generations about the sacrifices that were made by our Virginia heroes in order to protect our freedoms...which the Education Center will do for many years to come.”

Mr. Bryan commented “Our schoolchildren today know little of the sacrifices our servicemen and women have made for them. One survey just showed that eighth grade students in one district thought that, in World War II, Americans and Germans fought together against the Russins. We need to educate our children, and our citizens at large. Today’s groundbreaking starts a new era here above the James River.”

The Paul and Phyllis Galanti Education Center at the Virginia War Memorial will add 18,000 square feet of education, program and administrative space. Recent education and patriotic programs like the award-winning *Virginians at War* film series and *See Freedom Speak* Student Series have created the need to expand the 1950’s designed facility to accommodate the more than 20,000 students, families, veterans, and casual tourists who visit the Memorial each year.

Paul Galanti was a Naval Aviator of an A-4 Skyhawk that was shot down after a bombing run on June 17, 1966. He suffered privation and torture as a prisoner of war for the next 6 ½ years in North Vietnam’s notorious “Hanoi Hilton.” After his 1973 release, Paul continued his Naval career in Richmond, becoming the Commanding Officer of the Richmond Recruiting District. After being medically retired from the Navy in 1983, he and his family returned to Richmond, continuously supporting veterans and their welfare. He was awarded two Purple Hearts, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Navy Commendation, two Legions of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, and nine Air Medals in the course of his military service. Currently Paul serves

on the boards of the Virginia War Memorial Educational Foundation, the Families of the Wounded Fund, and the Virginia Aviation Museum Foundation. Also, Paul is the chairman of the Commonwealth's Board of Veterans' Services and serves on the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations.

While Paul was incarcerated as a POW, Phyllis became chairman of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. In her role she tirelessly petitioned US Congressmen, Senators and President Richard Nixon for the release of all 591 POWs. Phyllis was instrumental in orchestrating a letter writing campaign called "Write Hanoi," in which she formulated the plan, gathered the financial support, collected the letters and then personally delivered, with the help of nine others, all 750,000 letters from Virginians to the North Vietnamese embassy in Stockholm in 1971. In 1973, President Nixon said of Mrs. Galanti and other National League of Families members, "The reason that I said these are some of the bravest people America has ever produced is that they never wavered. They always said, 'We want our men back, but we also want peace with honor for what they fought for.' That is what they are."

About the Virginia War Memorial:

The Virginia War Memorial's mission is to *Honor our Veterans, Preserve our History, Educate our Children, and Inspire Patriotism in All*. Dedicated in 1956, the Memorial was designed to honor those Virginians who sacrificed their lives in battle since the beginning of World War II. The Memorial's Shrine of Memory now honors 11,638 Virginia heroes engraved on its glass and stone walls in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm. Efforts are underway to include those Virginians killed as the result of hostile action in the War on Terrorism. For further information, please visit the War Memorial's web site at www.vawarmemorial.org that provides in-depth information about the Memorial's history and programs as well as access to its schedule of events and past newsletters.

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