



## PRESS RELEASE

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**Contact:** Helen Person, V-P, Marketing  
434/676-2666 ext. 1103  
helen.person@bcbonline.com

### **Benchmark \$mart\$start Scholarship application cycle open**

**Kenbridge, VA, March 1, 2017** – Benchmark Community Bank has announced the opening of the application period for its \$mart\$start Community Commitment Scholarships. Five \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to area high school seniors who have demonstrated their commitment to community service through past and present activities in and out of school.

Launched in 2015, the \$mart\$start Community Commitment Scholarship program awards high school seniors who meet the following criteria: 1. Is a resident one of the counties served by Benchmark’s full-service branches (Brunswick, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, or Prince Edward Counties) or has a banking relationship with Benchmark; 2. Will be graduating from high school during Spring 2017; and 3. Will be starting college or technical school in Fall 2017. Each applicant must submit an essay describing the impact of community involvement on their lives now and for the future.

“Our \$mart\$start Community Commitment Scholarships are designed to reward high school seniors who have worked hard to make an impact in their communities,” said Benchmark President Jay Stafford. “These students have learned early that investing their time, energy and dollars into their hometowns will come back to them in the form of improved services, amenities, and community spirit. It is our privilege to serve side-by-side with these dynamic young people.”

Students interested in applying for a \$mart\$start Community Commitment Scholarship are encouraged to go online to <http://www.bcbonline.com/scholarship> where they will find detailed information about program dates, rules, judging, and submission guidelines. Applications are available as online fillable and Word document. Applications are being accepted anytime through March 24, 2017. Applicant acceptance to an accredited school is a prerequisite to receiving the award.

A component of Benchmark's youth programs, the \$mart\$start program serves teens ages 13-17 and is the segue from the YES (Youth Excited about Saving) Club for children 5-12. Begun in 2011, the \$mart\$start program is designed to help participating youth develop good financial management skills. Among other teen-centered features, \$mart\$start includes a debit card and prepares students for the final youth-focused program, the Bridge Account, that supports young adults ages 18-25 who are in college or out on their own for the first time. To learn more about Benchmark's youth programs, visit your local branch or [www.bcbonline.com/youth](http://www.bcbonline.com/youth).

Benchmark Community Bank, founded in 1971, is headquartered in Kenbridge, VA. Along with its twelve banking offices located throughout central Southside Virginia, Benchmark operates loan production offices in Wake Forest and Henderson, NC. or the past ten years, Benchmark has been named one of the Top 200 Community Banks in the nation by American Banker magazine. To learn more about Benchmark, please visit [www.bcbonline.com](http://www.bcbonline.com).

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