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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 16, 2017

GRASP (GReat Aspirations Scholarship Program, Inc.) expands staff organization to focus on future growth

GRASP (GReat Aspirations Scholarship Program, Inc.), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable, college-access organization that assists students and families in obtaining funding for post-secondary education, recently expanded its staff organization to focus on future growth of the organization. Ken Barker is now the President and Chief Executive Officer, focusing on growth and development, and Betsy Heggie is the Chief Operating Officer, focusing on operations. This leadership expansion will better enable GRASP to continue its goal of ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity for continuing education after high school, regardless of financial or social circumstances.

Ken is a retired executive of Dominion Energy with an extensive background of leading organizations in the power industry. He serves as the Chairman of the Board of the Dominion Energy Credit Union and has served previously on the Board of GRASP and other local non-profit boards in the Richmond area. Ken is married to Debbie, and they have two daughters, Jennifer and Rebekah. Personal interests include serving at Gayton Baptist Church and enjoying the beautiful mountains in Virginia.

Betsy began working at GRASP in 2006 as a GRASP advisor at two high schools. She subsequently served in additional roles as coordinator of GRASP programs (2007), Director of Advising (2008), and CEO (2010.) She has served on the board of Virginia College Access Network since 2013. GRASP has grown tremendously over the years, and in August 2017, she moved to the role of COO, to focus on the operations of the nonprofit. Betsy is married to Tom, and they have a daughter, a son-in-law, a grandson, and a Boykin Spaniel.

At its core, the GRASP program model has always been in-school advisors coaching students and parents, presenting financial aid education in school classroom settings, and delivering financial aid seminars in libraries and other public forums. GRASP currently serves 76 Virginia high schools from Bath County in the west to Brunswick County in the south to Northumberland County in the Northern Neck. Through the generosity of business and personal donors, GRASP awards, annually, at least one Last Dollar Scholarship per high school it serves. GRASP also recently launched a “2+2” renewable scholarship designed to assist students in receiving a baccalaureate degree from one of Virginia’s colleges and universities at a much lower cost and with less debt.

GRASP also offers scholarships through its Education Improvement Scholarship Program (EISP) for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade to attend a private school, with a focus on students with learning differences or other special circumstances. GRASP’s objective through the K-12 Education Improvement Scholarship Program is to promote successful outcomes for students with learning challenges. While public schools



are usually a good fit for most students, some students, particularly those with learning difficulties, may be better served in a smaller private school setting.

In 2015, GRASP received a Richmond History Maker award from the Valentine Museum. In 2016, Charity Navigator designated GRASP a four-star charity, and, in 2017, the organization became one of the few nonprofits in Virginia recognized by the Standards for Excellence® Institute as having met all the requirements for the Standards for Excellence Standards Basics.

Additional information about GRASP is available at the GRASP website, www.grasp4va.org. GRASP EISP information is available at www.graspeisp.org.

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