



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Governor McAuliffe Joins Virginia Gentlemen to Break Ground on JT's Camp Grom**

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – (April 2015) – The Virginia Gentlemen Foundation will officially break ground on JT's Camp Grom on April 17. Governor Terence R. McAuliffe will join the organization for the ceremony to initiate construction on the 70-acre site near Birdneck Road and Prosperity Road in Virginia Beach. JT's Camp Grom is being designed for children with disabilities, wounded veterans and families of the fallen.

The project includes a 20-acre adventure camp and park and 50 acres of wetlands that will remain undeveloped except for nature trails and an adaptable ropes course. The City of Virginia Beach entered into a land lease with the Virginia Gentlemen for \$1 a year for 40 years.

"Camp Grom will offer unique recreation and relaxation opportunities to children with disabilities, wounded veterans and families who have lost a loved one in combat," said Governor Terence McAuliffe. "I commend the Virginia Gentleman Foundation on their innovative idea to open up our Commonwealth's wonderful tourism assets to families who deserve an opportunity to enjoy them."

"We want Virginia Beach to be a place with world-class recreational opportunities for people of all ages and interests," said Mayor William D. Sessoms. "Building strong Virginia Beach families and neighborhoods is a high priority to me, and this exciting community project is a wonderful example of what can happen when we all work together to make positive things happen."

"We are so proud to see this project move one step closer to reality," said Ross Vierra, chairman and founding member of Virginia Gentlemen. "This will be the only park of its kind on the East Coast, and we already have had tremendous response from service organizations throughout Virginia and beyond to use this park when it opens."

The groundbreaking event will begin at 5 p.m. at Red Wing Golf Course at 1144 Prosperity Road with official comments to begin at 5:30 p.m. Following remarks from the Governor, organizers, supporters and guests will enjoy an oyster roast and BBQ.

The site designer and landscape architect on this project is WPL. Architectural plans have been initiated by Clark Nexsen with additional firms contributing. The concept includes a lake for fishing with a private beach and cable wakeboarding activities. The camp will have an indoor pool rehabilitative pool, Splash Park, FlowRider and a gymnasium with showers and lockers. An outdoor learning area will be built in addition to an athletic field for archery and other outdoor sports. The entire camp will be wheelchair accessible, and initial projections indicate the camp will accommodate hundreds of participants per day.

The adventure camp and park will be fully funded by donations and grants through the Virginia Gentlemen Foundation. Construction costs are estimated to be \$15 million.

The Virginia Gentlemen Foundation, a nonprofit organization, was formed in 2007. It consists of a group of young men who have grown up together in Virginia Beach and who want to make a difference in their community. Josh Thompson, brother of one of the founding members, was diagnosed with ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, and initially the organization narrowed its focus to support the local fight against ALS. The Virginia Gentlemen Foundation organizes the annual JT Walk, which has been recognized as the largest single-day walk and fundraiser for the National ALS Association.

The Foundation also awards stem cell research grants during its annual meeting in June. Past grant recipients have included Johns Hopkins Medicine, Emory University, University of Michigan, Eastern Virginia Medical School, Cedars-Sinai and Duke University. In 2010, the organization dedicated JT's Grommet Island Beach Park & Playground, a \$2 million oceanfront park for everyone. In 2012, the organization donated the Grombulance, a mobile intensive-care unit specially designed for children, to Children's Hospital of the Kings Daughters. To learn more, join in other activities of the Virginia Gentlemen or to donate, visit [www.vagentlemen.org](http://www.vagentlemen.org).

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