



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **VIRGINIA GENTLEMEN FOUNDATION GETS APPROVAL FOR LAND LEASE FROM VIRGINIA BEACH CITY COUNCIL**

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – (May 2013) – The Virginia Gentlemen Foundation is one step closer to realizing the vision of JT’s Camp Grom project after the Virginia Beach City Council approved a 40-year land lease for property at Birdneck Road and Prosperity Road in Virginia Beach for \$1 per year. The nonprofit organization will build an adventure camp and park designed for children with disabilities, wounded veterans and families of the fallen.

The official groundbreaking will occur in the fall after conditional-use permits are finalized with the city. Plans call for a 20-acre adventure camp and park. The other 50 acres are wetlands and will remain undeveloped except for nature trails and an adaptable ropes course. The location was selected due to its proximity to the Resort District and other major attractions such as the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, Ocean Breeze, Redwing Park and JT’s Grommet Island, which the foundation built and dedicated to the city in May 2010.

The site designer and landscape architect on this project is WPL. Architectural plans are being prepared by Clark Nexsen. The concept includes a lake for fishing with a private beach and cable wakeboarding activities. The camp will have an indoor pool, outdoor rehabilitative pool, flowrider standing wave, splash park, showers, lockers and a gymnasium and wellness center. An outdoor learning area will be built in addition to an athletic field for archery, putt-putt and other outdoor sports. The entire camp will be wheelchair accessible, and initial projections indicate the camp will accommodate 150 participants per day.

The adventure camp and park will be fully funded by donations and grants through the Virginia Gentlemen Foundation. Initial costs are estimated to be \$12 to \$15 million. Construction estimates will be finalized now that the land lease has been completed.

“We’re thrilled to get the green light on this project,” said Ross Vierra, chairman and a founding board member of the Virginia Gentlemen Foundation. “We have a tremendous amount of support for this project from the military community, local civic organizations and the array of organizations that provide services for children with disabilities in Hampton Roads and

Southeastern Virginia. There is no other opportunity like this available, and we hope to showcase this much-needed service here in Virginia Beach in 2014.”

JT’s Camp Grom will accommodate both children and adults with physical and/or intellectual disabilities. The camp will provide opportunities for personal development, educational programs, fitness, entertainment and social gatherings. Camp participants will gain a sense of self-discovery, independence and confidence that will improve their overall quality of life.

“We are confident that this community can make this a reality,” added Vierra. “We have already launched a campaign to raise the money needed to plan, build and operate the most unique park in America totally devoted to children, veterans and families who need our support. As the home of so many wounded veterans and families of the fallen, JT’s Camp Grom will be built to support and honor these heroes.”

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 Society.

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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