FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For additional information, contact Ken Heath, Director of Community and Economic Development, at (276) 378-5026 or email kheath@marionva.org

**MARION TO HOST AWARD-WINNING "POP UP MARION" ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT CLASS THURSDAY NIGHTS STARTING OCTOBER 13**

The Town of Marion will host the next round of its popular small business boot camp starting Thursday, October 13 at 6pm at The Henderson School. "Pop Up Marion", the community's five-week business development program, provides training for all levels of entrepreneurs, from those interested in exploring opportunities to seasoned business owners looking for a tune up.

Again this year, Wells Fargo announced its continued financial commitment to the classes, and along with the funds provided by the Town, Marion's Director of Community and Economic Development Ken Heath enjoys the annual class to continue the legacy created with the program. "Pop Up Marion was the first in Virginia to put all the pieces together for entrepreneur training," said Heath, "from teaching business basics to base grant funding for startup to mentorship, and we're so proud our program has been adopted by The Commonwealth of Virginia as their model for Community Business Launch to put more Virginians to work and in control of their own future. "

Marion's "Pop Up" Entrepreneur Development Boot Camp Classes offer intensive training on all the aspects of small business, from legal structure to financials, marketing to credit. Participants are able to use the information to develop a business plan, and can be eligible for up to $5,000 in startup grant funds and an additional $15,000 in low interest loan funds.

Since it began in the Fall of 2011, "Pop Up Marion" has trained 330 people, sold 13 downtown buildings, filled an additional 29 storefronts, created 38 new businesses, 145 new jobs, assisted with four facade improvements and over $2.9 million in private reinvestment. The program has dropped Marion's downtown storefront vacancy rates from over 17% to under 4%, and is being used in communities across Virginia and the region.

The next round for "Pop Up Marion" will be held Thursday evenings at 6pm at the Henderson School in downtown Marion beginning October 13. Classes are free, but pre-registration is strongly encouraged. For additional information, contact Heath at (276) 378-5026 or email kheath@marionva.org.

"Pop Up Marion" is a program of the Town of Marion's Department of Community and Economic Development, and is funded by the Town of Marion, The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, and Wells Fargo. The program has won numerous awards, including from the Southern Economic Development Council, Virginia Municipal League, and US Small Business Administration. Marion’s Small Business Loan Pool offers low interest loans up to $15,000 to new and expanding businesses within the Town of Marion, through a partnership with USDA Rural Development.

For additional information on “Pop Up Marion”, the Marion Small Business Loan Pool, or business opportunities within “America’s Coolest Hometown”, contact Ken Heath at (276) 378-5026 or email kheath@marionva.org.

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