FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 20, 2010
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TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS COLLEGE AND COMMUNITIES
TUSCALOOSA – Collaboration between three West Alabama organizations is helping residents of Greene and Sumter Counties hurdle barriers that traditionally have limited access to workforce training and higher education.

By partnering to provide transportation to students from this two-county area, the Greene/Sumter Enterprise Community, Inc. (GSEC), Shelton State Community College (SSCC), and the West Alabama Public Transportation Service (WAPT) are serving and impacting the lives of West Alabama residents. During the fall 2009 and spring 2010 semesters, a 14-passenger van from WAPT has transported enrolled students from low-income households in Greene and Sumter counties to the College’s Martin and C.A. Fredd Campuses in Tuscaloosa.

The initiative began in August 2005 to address the needs of residents in this particular two-county area, where approximately 18 percent of households do not own or have access to transportation. By utilizing in-kind dollars with WAPT through 2007, the GESC continued to work within its mission to impact communities in Greene and Sumter counties by developing partnerships, and targeting resources and efforts on moving people toward greater self-sufficiency and out of poverty. GSEC has provided services for more than 100 students since 2005.

“This service is entirely about the education of our future leaders of rural America,” says Stella Anderson, GSEC Director. “The GSEC Board of Directors and staff acknowledge sincere appreciation to President Mark Heinrich and the Board of Shelton State Community College.”

The GSEC is a 501 (c) (3) community-based, grassroots organization with over 16 years experience of providing trainings, technical assistance, and resource development. GSEC serves several rural economically distressed areas of the Black Belt where more than 31 percent of the 24,772 residents in Greene and Sumter counties live in poverty, and where double-digit official unemployment rates have prevailed for decades.

Collectively the counties are largely African American (80 percent in Greene County and 73 percent in Sumter County). In both counties, almost 40 percent of the population lives below poverty level and a significant percentage of the population live at or slightly above poverty level. The region served by GSEC—one of the poorest in the nation by most standards—is challenged and burdened with persistent poverty and economic distress, and is ranked at or near the bottom in the percentage of children in poverty, educational achievement of young people, infant mortality, and other key poverty indicators.

For more information about the GSEC, call 205.392.1166 or E-mail, greenesu@bellsouth.net.

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