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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“Managing Our Mission” is the theme of
Community Foundation’s 12th Annual Meeting**
Education is biggest challenge

April 24, 2007 – The Community Foundation is working to improve and protect the quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts with its commitment to education, by promoting community collaboration, and by providing a flexible permanent vehicle for donors with diverse interests, according to a presentation at the 12th Annual Meeting.

CFSEMA highlighted its efforts to manage and achieve this mission at the meeting, held April 24 at Rachel’s Lakeside in Dartmouth. CFSEMA President Craig J. Dutra presented the various components of the Foundation’s mission and its accomplishments within each area.

“Education is our biggest challenge” in working toward improving the quality of life in the region, Mr. Dutra said.

The Foundation is also committed to improving our region’s historically high drop-out rate and to increasing the educational attainment of our residents. Over 40% of adults in Fall River and New Bedford have less than a high school education, and graduation rates for the two cities have hovered in the 65 to 70 percent range with little change. Both cities have been on the state’s corrective action list due to low MCAS scores.

CFSEMA’s commitment to education includes **four Education Endowment and Enrichment Funds** recently launched by public school districts in the region; 22 scholarship funds with \$3.3 million in assets; funding for drop-out prevention initiatives such as **SMILES and the Parent Child Advocacy Campaign**; the **Acushnet Foundation Fund’s** early literacy initiative; and sponsorship of the **Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance (SEEAL)**.

The Foundation also manages the New Bedford area grants program of the **Polaroid Foundation** under a contract with the Boston Foundation, providing \$100,000 in annual grants for workforce development with an emphasis on English literacy (ESOL) and adult education.

CFSEMA promotes collaboration and understanding among all community members as **fiscal sponsor** for AHA!, Greater New Bedford Coast, the SouthCoast Emergency Planning Partnership, the Lewis Temple/Sea Lab Scholarship, and the Fall River and New Bedford Mayor's Initiatives, among others; by sponsoring workshops through the **Fall River Healthy Cities Initiative**; and CFSEMA training programs.

The Foundation's efforts to promote collaboration are also evident in the **New Bedford Immigrant Families/Niños Fund**, established at CFSEMA in response to the March 6 raid on the Michael Bianco manufacturing plant in New Bedford. The Community Foundation responded to the need for a coordinated emergency response, and to date has raised \$150,000 and distributed \$75,000 to 85 families through the Niños Fund.

The Community Foundation has also provided a flexible vehicle for diverse donors with its 16 Donor Advised Funds (4 were added in 2006), which distributed \$630,000 in 2006. A total of \$1.3 million in grants and program support was distributed by the Foundation last year. CFSEMA also was awarded a prestigious Accreditation by the Council on Foundations last year.

About the Community Foundation

Since 1995, area residents have been turning to the Community Foundation to make their philanthropic giving as effective as possible. CFSEMA is a public charity serving thousands of people who share a common concern – improving the quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts.

While the Foundation's primary grantmaking focus is on the SouthCoast communities of Greater New Bedford, Greater Fall River, and Greater Plymouth County, CFSEMA is a regional foundation serving 41 cities and towns. To date, the Community Foundation has assets of more than \$16.7 million and has distributed over \$5 million from 92 funds to humanitarian, educational and cultural organizations in the region.

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