

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Brian Skwirut
Development Officer
The Progress Fund
(724) 529-0384
bskwirut@progressfund.org

Suzanne Herman
Personal Assistant
Povertyneck Hillbillies
(724) 529-2000

PovertyNeck Hillbillies Get a Richer Sound

The Progress Fund backs local country band's national push

Dawson, PA – April 13, 2005 – When the PovertyNeck Hillbillies play in Pennsylvania, they draw local fans and admirers from several states around. When they tour the Midwest and the South, they communicate the region's vibrancy and values, loud and clear. In fact, the Fayette County band is now louder and clearer than ever, thanks to The Progress Fund.

The Progress Fund has loaned \$40,000 to Chris Higbee, founder of the PovertyNeck Hillbillies. The loan was used to purchase a top-of-the-line sound system. "New equipment has done wonders for our sound and has really uplifted the audience," says Chris Higbee, the band's founder, who sings and plays fiddle, guitar, mandolin and banjo. "Now, whether you go to watch the Charlie Daniels Band or Lonestar or the PovertyNeck Hillbillies, you'll hear about the same quality of sound."

The PovertyNeck Hillbillies, founded in 2000, now pack local venues like the Pepsi-Cola Roadhouse. "We'll get people from West Virginia, Ohio, and even Virginia coming in," says Higbee. They have just returned from a tour to North Carolina and Key West, FL, and expect to release their second CD in June.

"When the Chris approached us for financing, we quickly recognized that the band draws people into Pennsylvania, and generates interest in our region nationwide," says Progress Fund Loan Officer Jim Gonsman. "The value of having this kind of message about rural Pennsylvania going to crowds and radio listeners all over the country is incalculable, so we decided to help."

The PovertyNeck Hillbillies' seven members are dedicated full-time to their music, and a growing staff supports their efforts. Their music has been well-received by a growing

country music fan base, and noted singer/songwriter Bob Corbin produced their first CD, *Hillbilly State of Mind*.

Getting a loan from The Progress Fund was a smooth process, says Higbee, and the financing puts the band in position to play large venues nationwide. "We're still the small fish in a very big bowl," says Higbee. "It's nice to know that there's an organization out there that will help the little guys compete with the big guys."

For information on the PovertyNeck Hillbillies, call the Hillbilly Hotline at (724) 529-2000, or check out www.povertyneck.com. For further information on financing for tourism-oriented businesses, call The Progress Fund at (724) 529-0384, or visit www.progressfund.org.

The Progress Fund is a vigorous non-profit loan fund that creates jobs and improves communities by providing entrepreneurial coaching and capital to small businesses in the travel & tourism industry. The Progress Fund serves 39 counties in Pennsylvania and the entire State of West Virginia. The Progress Fund was founded in 1997, and has made 135 loans totaling more than \$9.2 million, while creating or preserving more than 770 jobs. The Progress Fund is an Equal Opportunity Lender. Discrimination is prohibited by Federal Law. Complaints of discrimination may be filed with the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.

###