



Virginia Association of Counties

# ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Henrico County

Program Title: Literacy and Math Nights at the Library

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Cristol Klevinsky

Title: Management Specialist

Department: County Manager's Office

Complete Mailing Address: 4301 E. Parham Rd., Henrico, VA 23228

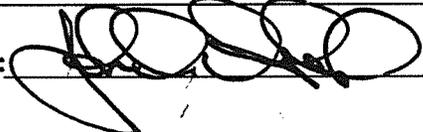
Telephone: 804-501-4370 Website: henrico.us

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: John A. Vithoukas

Title: County Manager

Signature: 

## **1. Short Overview of the Program**

Since the spring of 2013, the children's department of the Tuckahoe Area Library partnered with a nearby Title I elementary school, Ridge Elementary, to host Literacy Nights and Math Nights each year for students and their parents. Since many of the families live within walking distance of the library, attendance at these events has consistently been high. On average, 150 students and family members have attended each program. Before the programs, Children's Librarians Sue Van Tassel and Kathleen Harris, attend meetings with the teachers at the school to plan activities for the night. On the night of the program, teachers volunteer to assist with the program, along with library staff. Literacy Night is held in the fall of each year and Math Night in the spring. The popularity of these programs has helped the school to meet its goal of getting more parent participation and the library to meet its goal of reaching out to members of its community.

## **2. Problem/Challenge/Situation**

As a Title I school, Ridge Elementary School hosts family events about different topics such as math, literacy, health and/or finances throughout the school year. Prior to 2013, many of these events were held at the elementary school and often did not get very good attendance. In 2013, administrators from Ridge Elementary approached the Tuckahoe Area Library to see if the school could hold these programs at the library. Since many of the families live within walking distance to the Tuckahoe Area Library, the school thought attendance would increase, as it would be easier for family members to get to the library.

The library recognized this as a great opportunity to reach families who live in its community. Many of the students at Ridge Elementary are refugees or children of immigrants, so the main language spoken in their homes is not English. The public library often has a hard time reaching this community because of language and/or cultural barriers. Library staff recognized that hosting a school event at the library would help immigrant families feel more comfortable with the public library.

### **3. How the Program Was Carried Out**

Both Literacy Nights and Math Nights are organized and planned in the same way to accommodate a large crowd. The activities are offered simultaneously in the library's large meeting room, children's program room, and children's section of the library. The interactive stations are developed and led by school teachers and library staff. During the program, children and their parents visit the different stations at their own pace, allowing them to interact with school teachers and library staff. Over the years, library staff and school teachers have developed many fun, educational activities using inexpensive materials, as well as technological games on the iPad. Listed below are a few examples of the different activities families engage in during each event:

**Literacy Night:** Book character bingo; book character scavenger hunt; creating a pocket journal; iPad Osmo "Letters" game; a wall graph of first names A to Z.

**Math Night:** Make three dimensional shapes using straws and pipe cleaners; play with fake coins and dollar bills in a “race to a dollar”; take measurements in comparison to real life animal sizes; iPad Osmo “Tangrams” game; a wall graph of birthday months or number of family members.

Since many different languages are spoken at Ridge Elementary school, the school hires interpreters for the program who interpret for the families. This is a perfect opportunity for library staff to answer parents’ questions about the library, which would not be possible without the help of an interpreter.

Each year, Crystal Heflebower, Title I Reading Specialist at Ridge Elementary School, creates fliers for the Literacy and Math Nights and sends the fliers home with students two weeks before the event and another reminder flier a couple of days before the event. In addition, the events are mentioned during the morning announcements.

#### **4. Financing and Staffing**

The library was able to keep the cost of the program low by creating many of the activities with recycled materials such as empty egg cartons, or inexpensive items such as straws and pipe cleaners. As previously mentioned, the Friends of the Tuckahoe Library purchased the iPad gaming system, Osmo. This purchase was well worth the investment as library staff has used the Osmo in several other library programs. The iPad itself was also purchased by the Friends of the Library to use for a wide variety of library programs and services. A list of the materials purchased for Literacy Nights and Math Nights include:

- Osmo iPad Gaming system plus additional new game, "Numbers": \$80
- Play coin & dollar sets: \$20
- Game pawns: \$15
- Set of dice: \$15
- Various craft materials such as pipe cleaners, construction paper, straws, etc.: \$50
- Interpreter paid for by HCPS with Title I funds - \$35/hour x 2 hours

TOTAL: \$250

## **5. Program Results**

There has always been a good attendance at both the Literacy Night and Math Night programs. An average of 150 students and family members attend each of these events. The large meeting room at the library is used to accommodate this crowd as well as the children's program room and children's section of the library. The Literacy Night held on October 29, 2015, had record attendance, over 200 students and adults attended the event. Library and school staff attribute the larger than usual crowd to the fact that children were encouraged to wear their costumes since the event was just a couple of days before Halloween.

The teachers that volunteer during the programs always comment on how much they enjoy interacting with their students and parents in a fun, educational setting. Library staff are always amazed at how many new faces they see at these events. Many parents apply for library cards after the program, often with the help of an interpreter, a service that the library would typically not be able to provide. And many participants return each year, showing that they find the program valuable.

## **6. Brief Summary**

Since the spring of 2013, the children's department of the Tuckahoe Area Library partnered with a nearby Title I elementary school, Ridge Elementary, to host Literacy Nights and Math Nights each year for students and their parents. Since many of the families live within walking distance of the library, attendance at these events has consistently been high. On average, 150 students and family members have attended each program. Before the programs, Children's Librarians Sue Van Tassel and Kathleen Harris, attend meetings with the teachers at the school to plan activities for the night. On the night of the program, teachers volunteer to assist with the program, along with library staff. Literacy Night is held in the fall of each year and Math Night in the spring. The popularity of these programs has helped the school to meet its goal of getting more parent participation and the library to meet its goal of reaching out to members of its community.

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The Literacy Night and Math Night programs at the Tuckahoe Area Library are an excellent example of a successful partnership between a school and public library. Both organizations

have similar goals and the Literacy Night and Math Night programs provide an opportunity for both organizations to meet their goals. The school meets their goal of getting more parent engagement, while the library connects with new members of their community, a continuous goal of the library. One of the most significant aspects of Literacy Night and Math Night is that hosting school events at the library helps to break down language/cultural barriers between the immigrant population and the Tuckahoe Area Library. The success of the Literacy Night and Math Night programs demonstrate how important it is for county agencies to develop strong relationships with each other so they both can succeed in reaching their goals.

