

PRESS RELEASE



Visit [VACo's Achievement Award website](#) to view all entries in their complete format.

BEST ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

YORK COUNTY | Home-Based Business Assistance Program | [Read Submission](#)

In 2011, data showed that two-thirds of our businesses were home-based, a trend that is growing here and nationwide. No programs existed to meet the needs of this group, thus the York County Home-Based Business Assistance Program was born! This comprehensive economic development initiative began in 2011 and was enhanced in 2015 to help our home-based businesses grow, by providing the resources, support, and opportunities they need to do so.

BEST SMALL COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT

KING AND QUEEN COUNTY | Rural Emergency Medical Services Program | [Read Submission](#)

King and Queen County is served by three independent volunteer Emergency Medical Services agencies. Like many communities, the volunteer workforce has provided a considerable benefit to the community over the past 30 years. However, with changes in the national and local economy over the past 5 years, King and Queen County also faced the impact of declining volunteerism while facing increased demands for EMS service. King and Queen County deployed a model to integrate career and volunteer staff in a cost-effective manner in a rural community setting.

BEST LARGE COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Heroin Addiction Recovery Program (HARP) | [Read Submission](#)

HARP is a very intensive and demanding recovery program that specifically

addresses addiction from heroin only. It utilizes a myriad of therapeutic, medical and educational approaches to overwhelm the addict with options and tools to use that best fit their individual recovery path and what works best for them. The Commonwealth of Virginia calculates costs per day of each jail within the Commonwealth. The most recent cost per day for Chesterfield County was set at \$119/day. This equates to a total taxpayer cost of \$4.3 million annually as compared to an overall HARP program cost of just under \$200,000. With inception of the Male HARP only dating back to March of 2016, and the female HARP to September of 2016, long-term data is not available to track the success of the program. However, we have tracked recidivism rates with the limited data available to date. We have defined recidivism as any new arrest that could incur a jail and or prison sentence.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

ARLINGTON COUNTY | Energy Lending Library | [Read Submission](#)

The Energy Lending Library has several components that can be checked out at the Library. The goal is to increase energy awareness and move people to take action toward energy efficiency. The Energy Lending Library was rolled out in the 2016 at approximately the same time as Arlington's Home Energy Rebates. These tandem programs provide solutions to issues discovered by residents.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Larceny/Heroin Investigative Group | [Read Submission](#)

In early February of 2016, the Chesterfield County Police Department experienced an unprecedented number of opioid based overdoses and deaths. This caused an immediate impact on police department resources from our initial response to the investigation. In our immediate response, we notified all media outlets and our Metro Richmond partners of the spike in opioid overdoses. We assigned Special Enforcement Team members from our Uniform Operations Bureau to meet our investigative response needs while meetings were conducted with our Metro Richmond Law Enforcement Partners to assess and confront the impact to the region.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Mentoring Pilot Program | [Read Submission](#)

In late June 2014, Chesterfield County Leadership, in conjunction with the Chesterfield County Learning and Performance Center (L&PC), organized a committee dedicated to developing a mentoring pilot program. The committee

was comprised of members from the county's Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) and the Chesterfield Young Professionals (CYP), both of whom identified the need for a mentoring program because of the DAC's Generational Diversity Project and a CYP survey of Millennials in the county's workforce. With the successful completion of the program's pilot in February, 2017 and the launch of the full-scale program scheduled for September, 2017, opportunities to continue the enrichment of Chesterfield County employees look promising.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Play Smart with Toddlers | [Read Submission](#)

Play Smart with Toddlers is an innovative, collaborative way for libraries to provide avenues of learning for parents and toddlers. The focus is on teaching the parents how to provide developmentally appropriate activities for their children and give them the knowledge and tools to continue the learning at home. In a society that is heavily focused on book learning, play and its importance in development can be over looked, and this program changes that. The program also gives parents community contacts with whom they can establish relationships and discuss any questions or concerns they may have about their child's development. They have a vehicle, through professionals and connections with other parents, for learning what behavior and developmental stages are appropriate for young children.

DINWIDDIE COUNTY | Dinwiddie County Public Safety Communications "Ready for Hire" Program | [Read Submission](#)

Dinwiddie County's "Ready for Hire" program is an innovative response to high turnover among local Communications Officers. Public Safety and Human Resources directors worked collaboratively to identify contributing factors to the issue and then got creative with how to address them. After meeting face-to-face with all full-time public safety employees to obtain input, the County participated in an APCO (Association of Public Safety Communications Officials) review. The result was the realization that communications officers were becoming burned out, regularly working overtime to fill gaps left by vacancies. By nature, Public Safety Communications is a high-stress environment. This stress is compounded by increased workload during the time it was taking to fill vacancies. The "Ready for Hire" program creates a pool of qualified applicants, who have already been screened, tested and undergone background checks. When a vacancy occurs, it is from this pool that candidates are selected and offered employment. The program has shaved months off the lag time between vacancy and hiring and has also resulted in significant savings in overtime that was being paid to Communications Officers prior to the program.

HENRICO COUNTY | Children and Teen Neighborhood Collections | [Read Submission](#)

Neighborhood Collections are a new way of organizing materials that is more responsive to the way that children and teens look for books. The program began in Henrico County Public Libraries (HCPL) in 2012, when Erin Lovelace, a Children's librarian in the county, noticed a need for children's books to be organized by subject to improve ease of access. The first Neighborhoods were created for children, and the subjects were Dinosaurs, Transportation, and Farms. Each of these Neighborhoods included both fiction and non-fiction titles for preschool to early elementary children. The program was then expanded to encompass teen literature, and teen books were grouped into Neighborhoods based on emotion and mood. After assessing the program, both the Children's and Teen Neighborhood Collections added to the customer experience and improved circulation of materials.

HENRICO COUNTY | Local Government 101: Youth Education Program | [Read Submission](#)

To expose and educate the youth in the central Virginia region about the impact of local government, the County Manager's Office hosts a brief seminar to explain the structure and functions of Henrico County. The seminar includes an interactive presentation, hands-on experience in civil responsibilities, and a public meeting. The children and teenagers engage in outlining the County Manager Form of Government during a brief presentation and participate in activities demonstrating the wide array of services provided by Henrico County. After the seminar, they are encouraged to stay for a regularly occurring public meeting convening immediately afterwards. The first Local Government 101 program was held in the spring of 2016. A total of six sessions have been held with an aggregate attendance total of 122. Youth attend to satisfy requirements for a scouting badge, obtain extra credit for class, or for general interest. The age spectrum ranges from five years old to 18 years old. Additionally, the program is not limited to Henrico residents. Thus, we have hosted participants from almost every surrounding locality. This program has led to a closer relationship with the Heart of Virginia Council Boy Scouts, the adult chaperones, and it has created another opportunity for government and elected officials to proactively interact with the public, as well.

HENRICO COUNTY | Student Congress | [Read Submission](#)

HCPS Student Congress was formed in 2004, for students to research, brainstorm, collaborate and advocate for necessary changes to countywide practices, regulations, buildings, and curricula. Each of Henrico County's ten

high schools sends ten representatives to serve on HCPS Student Congress. The makeup of HCPS Student Congress reflects the county's diversity in its culture, race, and academic achievement. These student leaders come together quarterly to learn about leadership skills and team dynamics. They work collaboratively with local educational leaders, School Board members, business partners, and other experts in related fields. Henrico Student Congress is a platform for student opinion that allows their involvement in the decision-making that directly affects their education and community. Additionally, the experience allows students from different backgrounds and locales to come together and appreciate the community's diversity. In addition to participating in the decision-making process of Henrico Schools, the students play a larger role: many of the county's directors and specialists can use HCPS Student Congress as a means of making decisions for their departments, to the benefit of the whole county. Without these students, division leaders would not have a readily available forum for vetting ideas. Student Congress provides them with a thoughtful and experienced sounding board.

HENRICO COUNTY | The Zika Working Group and Pick-a-Day to Fight-the-Bite Initiative | [Read Submission](#)

The Henrico County Zika Working Group (ZWG) is a collaboration of county departments that share responsibility in reducing the potential impact of Zika virus. The overarching objective of the ZWG is to protect Henrico County residents by delaying and/or preventing local transmission of Zika virus, then, to intervene quickly and efficiently should local transmission occur. The Henrico County Standing Water Initiative (SWI), Henrico County Health Department (HCHD), and Division of Fire (DOF) developed an integrated approach. Through reliable communication and the introduction of a "Pick-a Day to Fight-the-Bite" Initiative, residents are successfully prepared to help prevent Zika virus. The Initiative focuses on maximizing education and outreach, providing timely and accurate information, coordinating community events, facilitating mosquito surveillance, site inspections, and laboratory diagnostics, and providing residents with effective mosquito protection practices. The ZWG established a Unified Command which allowed county partners to develop and implement the Henrico Zika Preparedness and Response Plan/Incident Action Plan. The execution of Plan objectives resulted in measurable results, including the establishment of a volunteer workforce, new safety protocols, outreach and education guidelines, increased professional competency, and profound awareness of Zika-related issues. The collaborative efforts of ZWG partners has enriched and strengthened county services and relationships, thus affording residents increased protection.

LOUDOUN COUNTY | Clerk of Circuit History Programs | [Read Submission](#)

The Loudoun County Clerk of the Circuit Court Historic Records Division developed and implemented a public campaign of programs to promote and enhance public awareness of Loudoun County's historic court records. The majority of the general public and even professionals in the historic and educational community do not realize the wealth of historic documents in the Clerk of the Circuit Court Office. As mandated by the Library of Virginia, all Clerk of the Circuit Courts in Virginia are guardians of the court records dating back to the county's formation. Virginia Circuit Court Clerks are responsible for proper storage, conservation and public access to the county court records. Loudoun County has one of the most complete and diverse collections of historic court records in Virginia. Loudoun is also the only county in Virginia's northern neck to possess a vast collection of the court's records since its formation. The Clerk's Office retains nearly all court records dating back to 1757. In contrast, most Virginia counties have lost substantial portions of their court records collection as a result of theft, loss, war and fire, predominantly during the Civil War.

LOUDOUN COUNTY | The Year of the Cat | [Read Submission](#)

Loudoun County Animal Services had previously struggled with finding live (adoptive) placement for cats and kittens, leading to the development of a group of programs dedicated to life-saving, collectively referred to as "The Year of the Cat." The programs included comprehensive vaccination protocols, community engagement through volunteer-driven foster care, affordable herd health-oriented treatment for contagious disease, progressive adoption programs and training of a volunteer corps known as "Kitty Candy Stripers" to provide compassionate, hands-on care to sick kittens being housed at the shelter. Launched in October of 2015, the percentage of cats leaving Loudoun County Animal Services alive went from 57% to 84%. Additionally, the increased traffic generated from public awareness of these programs and community engagement led the Department to see an overall doubling in volunteer hours, and euthanasia of all species dropped by 67%.

MATHEWS COUNTY | Increasing Cardiac Arrest Survival Rates in a Rural County | [Read Submission](#)

The Mathews Volunteer Rescue Squad (MVRS) serves an older, widely dispersed population through a centrally-located Rescue Squad Station. Increasingly, the Squad had become concerned about the time required to drive between its Station and far-distant victims who were experiencing symptoms of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). Sudden cardiac arrest is life-threatening. Rapid response is critical

with survival rates decreasing with passing minutes. Despite its quick response to 911 calls, MVRs knew reaching parts of Mathews in time to potentially save a life would be difficult. Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) can be life-saving. Working with County Officials, MVRs identified AEDs located in various buildings in the County. It was discovered, however, the AEDs would often be inaccessible in actual emergencies, particularly when the buildings were closed. Working together, MVRs and the County created Operation AED to acquire and place AEDs in strategic locations so AEDs would be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. County and MVRs budgets were already strained so private funding would be required. MVRs designed and managed a public relations campaign to raise awareness of the life-saving role of an AED; created the Chili Cook-Off; and developed free training classes, combining CPR and AED techniques, for the general public and for students in Mathews Middle School and High School. Operation AED is a success. MVRs has purchased 16 AEDs, now accessible throughout Mathews. The community has become informed about SCA and the importance of rapid response. Nearly 1,000 people have been trained in the proper use of an AED and in performing effective CPR. MVRs is proud to share detailed information with Counties experiencing similar challenges with the hope more lives will be saved.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY | Forest and Landscape Restoration on New County Projects | [Read Submission](#)

The continued loss of natural forest conditions through new development impacts water quality, air quality and wildlife habitat. Typical development practices remove valuable top soil from the site and replace former forest cover with lawn. As a result, new trees and shrubs installed have poorer health and aesthetics and are more likely to die before reaching maturity due to increased drought stress, loss of soil organic components and low nutrient levels. Turf requires more frequent maintenance such as mowing, fertilization and pest control at both a fiscal and environmental cost to the County. Prince William County has recently expanded the concept of our robust reforestation program to become an integral part of the design and review process for new County projects. This more holistic look at forest and landscape management identifies opportunities to minimize clearing good quality forest and to utilize reforestation in place of managed turf, reconnecting new trees to conserved forest. This approach is popular with citizens, elected officials, and developers because it brings cost savings and greater tree preservation during the development process. The future of this program includes on-site reservation of topsoil harvested from disturbed areas (typically sold by the clearing contractor to off-site interests) for reuse within both reforestation and traditional landscape planting areas. This will foster healthier and longer lived plant communities and will allow greater infiltration of stormwater.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY | Wills for Vets: A Legal Service for Veterans |
[Read Submission](#)

The WFV program is a partnership between the Prince William Area Agency on Aging and the Prince William Bar Association to provide Wills, Power of Attorneys and Advanced Medical Directives to veterans, spouses of veterans and their caregivers. The program is offered in three series: 1) all participants must attend an information sessions and complete a questionnaire; 2) meet with attorney to review legal documents; and 3) meet with attorney and witness to execute the documents. The program provided legal documents to 60 veterans. The Prince William Area Agency on Aging staff provided the time and resources to coordinate the program and the Prince William Bar Association provided the legal expertise. The program was provided to veterans at no additional cost to the Prince William Area Agency on Aging, the Prince William Bar Association or to the veteran. Having these important legal documents in place provides the veteran and their family with a sense of security to ensure their wishes are upheld.

VACo exists to support county officials and to effectively represent, promote and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia.

CONTACT

Gage Harter | 804.343.2502 | gharter@vaco.org

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

1207 East Main Street | Richmond, Va. 23219 | www.vaco.org