



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2018.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Dinwiddie
Program Title: Robert & Betty Ragsdale Community Center
Program Category: Parks & Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: J. Rayfield Vines, III
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: W. Kevin Massengill
Title: County Administrator
Signature: 

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Problem:

Dinwiddie County is a vast, rural locality. The County covers 504 square land miles and is home to more than 28,000 people. The Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism has expanded programming over the past 10 years and includes programs and activities for citizens as young as toddlers, through those in their golden years. The County operates the Eastside Community Enhancement Center which includes a fitness center, library, youth zone and classrooms for programs; as well as a ballroom and conference room for meetings and activities. The Enhancement Center also includes soccer fields, a playground and pavilion. The County also built an award-winning Sports Complex, which includes four baseball and softball fields, a football field and soccer fields. The complex has been well received by the community and sought after by major tournaments and teams. It was the recipient of a NACo Achievement Award in 2012.

The problem however, is both of these facilities are located in the more northern portion of Dinwiddie County. While the facilities are open to all citizens of Dinwiddie County, those in the more southern portion of the County, found themselves driving more than 30 minutes to access them. The expansion of programming to this portion of the County became a top priority of the Board of Supervisors and County leaders.

Awards Criteria: Parks & Recreation

Dinwiddie County identified and documented a need for expanded parks, recreation and tourism programs in the southern portion of the County. It happened that during this time, a building was donated to the County. This donation came with one stipulation, that the

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building be used to benefit the community. Considering the donated building, its prime location in the Town of McKenney, and the identified need; Dinwiddie County developed an **innovative** solution to address the need and adhere to the stipulation of the donation; the building would undergo renovation and become a community center. This project is one that can be used as **model** for other rural localities.

Program Description:

In 2007, following a tremendous loss, the family of the late Robert and Betty Ragsdale made a generous donation to Dinwiddie County. They donated a building that was formerly home to the Aleen Sewing Factory. The donation came with just one stipulation, the renovated facility must serve the community. The County conducted a needs assessment and confirmed that this building was a prime location for a much-needed expansion of Parks, Recreation and Tourism programming.

The project was put on hold in 2009 when the economy “tanked” and it wasn’t until 2015 that the County was in a position to move forward. An architectural rendering was unveiled in April 2015 and renovation/construction began in November of that same year. On May 2, 2017, which also happened to be the 265th anniversary of the founding of Dinwiddie County, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for the Robert and Betty Ragsdale Community Center in McKenney, Virginia.

In its first year of operation, the Ragsdale Community Center welcomed 13,500 visitors. This number is significant because it is equal to almost half of the population of Dinwiddie County!

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The Center provides recreational and leisure activities for the citizens of Dinwiddie and houses the McKenney branch of the Appomattox Regional Library System and a satellite office of the Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Dinwiddie County financed the renovation of this building, however, developed the “Leave a Legacy” Program through which donations are accepted in memory or honor of families or individuals for general support or naming rights to specific spaces within the facility. In its first year, the Leave a Legacy program generated more than \$23,000 in donations. The County also received a grant from The Cameron Foundation, which helped to furnish and outfit the Kids’ Zone.

An average of 900 people each month come to the Robert and Betty Ragsdale Center to enjoy the plethora of amenities, which include:

Ragsdale Building Supply Ballroom – the ballroom is designed to host a wide range of recreational classes, programs, special events and private rentals. The room seats 70 people, and includes the Fort Lee Federal Credit Union performance stage, an audio visual booth, kitchenette, dressing/coat room and an outdoor patio.

Workforce Development Computer Lab – the computer lab can host a variety of classes, trainings and programs designed to teach, enhance and prepare citizens for the workforce in a variety of learning content areas.

Walter R. & Caroline S. Wagner Seniors’ Lounge – the seniors’ lounge is available for adults over the age of 55. The area is designed to provide seniors a place to gather and

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enjoy recreational activities and programs tailored to their age group. The room is suitable for board games, arts and crafts, and for social meetings such as book clubs. There is also ample space for seniors to relax and watch television.

Crittendon Family Conference Room – the conference room is the ideal location for board meetings, training sessions, seminars and planning meetings. The room is available for private rentals and hosts seating for 14. There is a 65” flat screen available for presentations and videos.

Chip and Trae Rutledge Multi-Purpose Room – the multi-purpose room seats 24 and was designed to host a wide range of recreational classes, programs and special events, as well as, private rentals.

Lounge – the lounge is open to the public whenever the facility is open. The area boasts comfortable seating, tables, a 65” television with cable, and free WIFI.

Stepping Stone Academy / Sunnyside Crafts Room – the crafts room is set-up to accommodate a variety of cultural programming, classes and activities. Furniture in this room is the perfect size for our smaller patrons.

Kids’ Zone Indoor Play Area – this is where children come to play! This 552 sq. ft. room includes an indoor playground, which encouraged children 8 years and younger, to explore, climb and play in a fun, safe, climate-controlled environment.

Game Room – this room holds something for patrons of all ages, but was designed with tweens and teens in mind. The open-concept room includes three gaming

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systems, a variety of board games, foosball table, a pool table and an air hockey table. There is also a large-screen cable television, free WIFI and comfortable seating. This is the perfect after school and weekend hang out spot!

Aerobics / Fitness Studio – this 1,400 sq. ft. room is home to a variety of fitness classes intended to keep our community active and encourage healthy lifestyles. The room includes a 65” flat screen television and sound bar.

CrossFit Exercise Room – this is one of the more popular amenities offered at the Ragsdale Community Center, and averages 120 patrons each month. The room houses two treadmills, one elliptical machine, one ab bench, one recumbent bike, one leg raise station, a spin bike and five-stack universal weight machine. Patrons sign in and workout for \$1 per hour. Much more affordable than a typical gym membership!

Lloyd Meade Harrison, Jr. Virginia Cooperative Extension Education Office – this serves as the southern satellite location for VCE in the County. The VCE is the local connection to Virginia’s land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University. Through educational programs, VCE helps the people of Dinwiddie improve their quality of living. Educational programming includes agriculture, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development and community viability.

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McKenney Branch – Appomattox Regional Library System – in addition to housing thousands of titles covering all genres, the McKenney Library includes 3 meeting rooms, a night book drop and is ADA accessible.

The Robert and Betty Ragsdale Community Center is a shining example of what can result from local government working in collaboration with communities and citizens. The 20,000 sq. ft. center is staffed by two full-time and six part-time employees. In addition to this, there are fitness instructors, library staff and Virginia Cooperative Extension staff. The facility benefits the County of Dinwiddie as well as other regional and state entities, including the VACo.

The project was not cheap. With a price tag of \$3.35 million; Dinwiddie County, the family of the late Robert and Betty Ragsdale, and the generosity of local businesses and citizens, have provided a community center that will serve Dinwiddie County for the next 50+ years.

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Executive Summary:

Dinwiddie County covers a vast 504 square miles. While the County has a robust menu of parks and recreation offerings, most are physically located in the northern, more densely populated area of Dinwiddie. County leaders recognized the need to expand offerings to the McKenney area, which is in the southernmost portion of the County. Dinwiddie County received the generous donation of a building in the Town of McKenney and seized an opportunity to expand Parks, Recreation and Tourism in a facility that would benefit citizens of all ages for many years to come. With the support of local funding, grant funding and donations from the community, the Robert and Betty Ragsdale Community Center opened its doors on May 2, 2017 and quickly became the much-needed hub for recreation in the previously underserved area.

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Brief Overview:

The Robert and Betty Ragsdale Community Center in Dinwiddie County is the result of innovation and collaboration on the part of County leaders, local businesses and citizens. The building, an abandoned sewing factory, was donated to the County by the Ragsdale family following the loss of their parents. The family's only request was that it somehow be used to benefit the community.

Dinwiddie leaders had been considering ways to address the documented need of expanding parks, recreation and tourism services to the southern portion of the county and this donated building was the perfect solution as it was located in the heart of McKenney, which is exactly where services were most needed.

While the County funded the lion's share of the \$3.35 million project, support was also received through a grant from a private foundation and donations from local businesses, community organizations and citizens.

The Robert and Betty Ragsdale Community Center opened on May 2, 2017 and has exceeded expectations for popularity and usage. More than 13,500 people visited the center during its first year of operation, which is staggering considering the population of Dinwiddie County is only 28,000.

The Center includes a fitness center, ballroom, conference/meeting rooms, seniors' lounge, game room, and kids' zone. In addition to these areas, there is a branch of the Appomattox

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Regional Library System and a satellite office of Virginia Cooperative Extension. The center is friendly and inviting and has quickly become the “hot spot” for community activities.