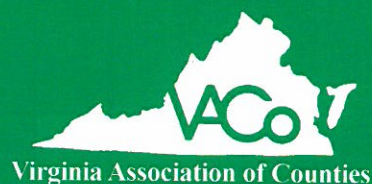


Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



2014 Achievement Awards

Call for Entries



2014 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 2, 2014

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2014.**

Program Information

Locality Pittsylvania County

Program Title Tobacco Barns Preservation Project

Program Category Environmental

Contact Information

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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name Otis S. Hawker

Title Interim County Administrator

Signature Otis S. Hawker



VACO, Virginia Association of Counties

2014

Achievement Awards Application

Short Overview of Program

In an attempt to help protect Pittsylvania County and Virginia's tobacco barns, and likewise, Virginia's tobacco heritage, Preservation Virginia, in conjunction with Pittsylvania County, began the Tobacco Barns Preservation Project in 2012. The project has been very successful and may prove to have further benefits by encouraging heritage tourism initiatives for the region.



Tobacco Barn in Pittsylvania County
Image courtesy of Preservation Virginia

The tobacco barns project has incorporated six elements: workshops on how to repair tobacco barns; a poster contest, *Save Our Barns So They Are More Than A Memory*, for local middle school students; an architectural survey of tobacco barns in Pittsylvania County; an oral history project to interview local tobacco farmers; a project to repair a well-known and visible tobacco barn on Route 29 in Pittsylvania County; and a mini-grants project to provide small funds to repair tobacco barns.

As a testament of the importance of tobacco heritage and its physical forms, the Tobacco Barns Preservation Project has expanded far beyond our expectations and has taken on a life itself, all because of the enthusiasm and support shown by Pittsylvania County residents.

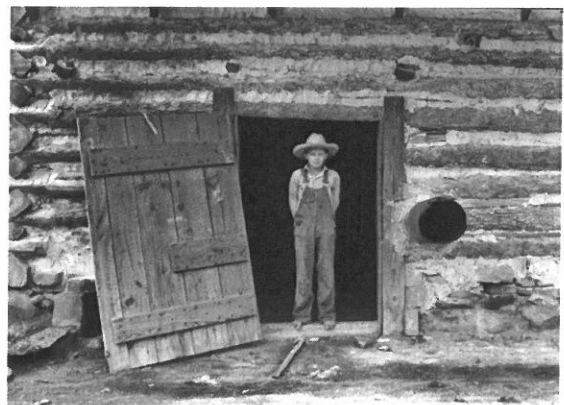
After bright leaf tobacco was discovered, tobacco curing barns and pack houses became widespread across Pittsylvania County's landscape. Most of the tobacco barns that can be seen as you travel Pittsylvania County's countryside were built by farmers, their families and friends as practical structures that served one important purpose- curing tobacco leaves. Not only were they built by the farmers themselves, they were also built from trees and clay straight from the farm. In this sense, tobacco barns are utterly "home-grown."

Thousands of tobacco barns existed in Pittsylvania County during the height of tobacco production but due to the development of more efficient barns in the 1980s and the general decrease in tobacco farming, older log barns became practically useless and only a portion remain standing today. Tobacco

heritage; however, remains firmly set at the center of Pittsylvania County's and Southside Virginia's heritage, and tobacco barns have come to symbolize not only Virginia's rural landscape, but also a way of life that incorporates rural Virginia's principles of farming and family.

What is the problem, challenge or situation faced by the locality and how did the program fulfill the awards criteria (innovation, partnering or collaboration and a model for other localities)?

Pittsylvania County has suffered through many years of hard economic times since the decline of tobacco production and the closing of textile mills, both of which employed hundreds of people in the region. Recent economic development opportunities have created new jobs but large manufacturing plants that employ many people and provide good wages continue to elude the region. One result of the mill closings and the general economic downturn is a weakening sense of pride shown by local residents of the area.



Farm Boy in Doorway of a Tobacco Barn, Person County, NC, 1939
Image by Dorothea Lange

However; as many localities know, protecting and celebrating a region's heritage has shown to help increase local pride in a region as well as provide educational, community and economic benefits.

Almost everyone from Pittsylvania County has been touched by tobacco in some fashion. The history of tobacco runs so deep that it is considered to be the most important aspect of local heritage. We believe that this project has helped to reassure and inspire residents' pride in themselves and their local heritage.

This can be observed in the amount of public support that has been shown for the project and the increase in tobacco heritage-related articles, art shows, museum displays and other programs in the area since the tobacco barns project began.

The project also has the potential to help bring about heritage tourism initiatives - something that is greatly missing in Pittsylvania County and the Danville. Tourism has shown to be a huge economic driver in Virginia. According to the Virginia Tourism Commission's *2012 Economic Impact of Domestic Travel on*

Virginia Counties, “The travel industry is the fifth largest private employer in Virginia. Domestic travel in Virginia directly generated more than \$2.7 billion in tax revenue for federal, state and local governments in 2012, up 3.3 percent from 2011. Domestic travel expenditures also directly supported 210,000 jobs within Virginia in 2012, comprising 7.0 percent of total private industry employment in Virginia. The most impressive contribution that travel and tourism makes to the Virginia economy is the number of jobs it supports. These jobs include a large number of executive and managerial positions, as well as service-oriented occupations.”

Also from this report, Pittsylvania County ranked 52nd and the City of Danville ranked 47th on the list of 2012 Domestic Travel Impacts in Virginia, with counties such as Roanoke, Franklin and Bedford and the City of Lynchburg all ranking higher.

One new initiative that has sprung from the Tobacco Barns Protection Program is a collaborative effort to utilize tobacco heritage to bolster local economies through the creation of a regional tobacco heritage driving trail. Preliminary meetings with representatives from Pittsylvania County, Franklin County, Halifax County, and several North Carolina counties have been held to discuss this idea and future meetings are being developed.



Barn from Kentucky Barn Quilt Trail
Image Courtesy of Kentucky Quilt Trail

How Was the Program Carried Out?

The Tobacco Barns Preservation Project began in 2012 and is still underway. The project has been administered by Preservation Virginia in collaboration with Pittsylvania County. Preservation Virginia staff has worked with county officials and county staff in countless ways to ensure the project is a success.

The first part of the project consisted of public



Public workshop on repairing barns, Chatham 2012
Image courtesy of Preservation Virginia

workshops on repairing tobacco barns. The poster contest was also held in 2012. In 2013 the field work for the architectural survey and the oral history project were completed. During this fieldwork, over 250 tobacco barns were surveyed and sixteen people who had backgrounds in tobacco farming were interviewed. A public presentation of the oral history films was held in April 2014. Also in 2014 the project to repair a very visible barn on Route 29 was completed and the Mini-Grants project was started. The Mini-Grants project and public workshops will continue into years 2015 and 2016.

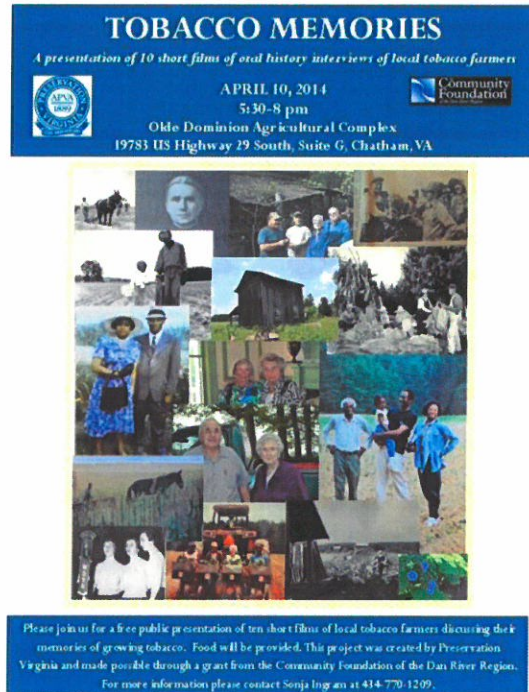
Pittsylvania County has provided letters of support for grants that have been obtained for the project.

Without the county's support, these grants may not have been obtained. Pittsylvania County also acted as the pass-through agent for funding received from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for the tobacco barns survey in Pittsylvania County.

Several Pittsylvania County School's staff members were instrumental in initiating the *Save Our Barns So They Are More Than a Memory* poster contest for the county's middle schools. Without this assistance, the poster contest would not have materialized. Sixty-three entries were received from four different middle schools from the county, making the contest extremely successful.

The county has also provided mapping assistance and parcel data as well as meeting space for many of the project's committee meetings. The county has also allowed for public announcements to be held at county parks.

The county is currently assisting with the erection of a historical marker that will explain the importance of tobacco barns to the region. This marker will be placed on Route 29 near a barn that is being repaired through the program.



Flyer for Oral History Presentation, 2014
Image courtesy of Preservation Virginia

Financing and Staffing

The project was financed by grants obtained from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the Community Foundation of the Dan River Region and JTI-Japan Tobacco International. Staffing for the project was provided by Preservation Virginia with assistance from Pittsylvania County.

Program's Results

The results for this program have been, and continue to be, very positive.

1. Increased Community Involvement

Heritage awareness and educational efforts instill a greater sense of local identity and pride and help to increase community involvement. Since the Tobacco Barns Preservation Project began, we have received an unprecedented amount of interest in protecting the area's tobacco barns and heritage. The project has also garnered attention from groups that, in the past, have shown little interest in local history or historic preservation. This project which focuses on a locally beloved rural heritage resource—tobacco barns— has bridged local ties and we anticipate will have positive impacts beyond its original scope and link to other community efforts.

2. Improved Partnerships

As stated above, the collaborative nature of this project has helped the region move toward greater community collaboration and civic pride. Many local organizations have expressed interest and support for this project including the Pittsylvania Historical Society; Danville Historical Society; Pittsylvania County Agricultural Development Office; Danville-Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce; Danville Regional Foundation; Booker T. Washington National Monument; Bedford County Historical Society; Halifax County Historical Society; Caswell County, NC Historical Society; Preservation North Carolina and The Reynolds Homestead. Several state and national organizations have expressed interest in the project including the Virginia Department of Historic Resources; the National Park Service; the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Vernacular Architecture Forum.

3. Repair of barns

The program has currently funded the stabilization and repair of a very visible tobacco barn in Pittsylvania County. Once the Mini-Grants project gets underway, approximately 20 total barns from Pittsylvania County, Halifax County and Caswell County, North Carolina will also be repaired. It is expected that the Mini-Grants program will continue in 2015 and 2016 and that 20 more barns will be repaired in each of these years, making a total of 60 tobacco barns repaired over a three year period and in a three-county region.



Images of tobacco barn on Route 29 being repaired
Images courtesy of Von Wellington Photography

4. Improving Regional Perceptions

The tobacco barns project has received, and we anticipate will continue to receive, a large amount of public attention in newspapers, magazines, television and social media outlets. This interest can only work to advance the opinions and perceptions of people outside the region and potential visitors to the region.

List of some of the articles and stories on the Tobacco Barns Preservation Project:

1. Richmond Times Dispatch article, January 14, 2012
2. CBS News story on barns project, February 14, 2012
3. Danville Register and Bee article on barns project, February 29, 2012
4. WSET TV 13 news story on barns project, March 20, 2012
5. Danville Register and Bee article on heritage tourism, June 10, 2012-09-11
6. Danville Register and Bee article on poster contest winners, May 20, 2012
7. Virginia Living Magazine story, October 2012 edition

5. Education

Practical and up-to-date information and technical assistance has been made available to barn owners on how to repair tobacco barns and how to more effectively use or adaptively reuse barns as well as older farm buildings. The educational components of the project have also helped local students better appreciate the significance of their local agricultural heritage.



First and second place winners from the *Preserve Our Barns So They Are More Than a Memory* Poster Contest

6. Future Results

We firmly believe that this project will continue to draw awareness to the rich agricultural history of the area and help more firmly brand the region's distinctive qualities. This increased awareness, public buy-in and branding can only help future heritage tourism initiatives to successfully take root in the region.

Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this application for the Virginia Association of Counties 2014 Achievement Awards. We are very proud of the Tobacco Barns Preservation Program and anticipate that it will be used as a model for all parts of the Commonwealth on how to engage communities by protecting and celebrating local agricultural heritage. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.