



# 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 3, 2019.** 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: County of Henrico  
Program Title: Driven for Success: A New Kind of Open House  
Program Category: Customer Service

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Victoria Davis  
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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Anthony McDowell  
Title: Deputy County Manager for Public Safety  
Signature: *Anthony E. McDowell*

## **Program Overview**

In fall 2014, instructors in automotive technology classes at the Advanced Career Education (ACE) Center at Hermitage High School in Henrico County, Virginia, decided they needed a fresh program to spark interest in career advancement for the automotive industry. The ACE Center wanted to build awareness among students, families, business owners, car dealerships and postsecondary schools. Additionally, an enhanced program would serve as a means of increasing local businesses' interest in hiring Henrico Schools' students, while enabling businesses to serve as support systems, rather than waiting for students to join their businesses. After much thought and planning, the idea of an all-inclusive open house developed. In the four years since the program's inception, these goals have been realized and the program has experienced great success.

## **Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality**

In today's fast-paced and fast-changing world of automotive repair and maintenance, not only are skilled technicians in great demand, so are career opportunities in the field. While the students have the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills related to the automotive repair field, there was a missing link: how would the students fit into the larger picture of the automotive industry? While students understood that their classes at the ACE Center at Hermitage provided an entry-level skill set, they weren't always able to see additional opportunities they might encounter in and out of the service area. How would it be possible to bring elements of the broader automotive industry together to provide an opportunity for the students to develop both short- and long-term goals?

### **How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria**

This was a collaborative solution to increasing community awareness of a key career and technical education program. By pairing a school initiative with the involvement of postsecondary schools, businesses and auto dealers, the school division found an innovative solution to its need for more community awareness.

### **How Program Was Carried Out**

There were two goals in creating the open house. One was to provide students and their families the opportunity to explore the career and educational options available in today's automotive industry. The second goal was to open the eyes of the employers in that industry and give them a more comprehensive view of Henrico Schools' automotive technology students. We wanted to showcase how the students could fill entry-level positions in the automotive technology industry. The open house was set for the first week in December 2014, a date that continues today.

While it is not uncommon for the students to have guest speakers from the industry during classes, this event was held in the evening, allowing more parents and guardians to be involved with their child's career options, and the convenience of being able to attend with their child. To maximize participation, instructors started reaching out to the participants in the early fall. Students and parents were notified and asked to save the date. Businesses and post-secondary schools were contacted by the instructors and a business advisory council to see if they would be willing to participate and give our students this unique opportunity.

Each year, the program has grown. In 2017, five postsecondary schools, eight businesses, one branch of the military and three auto dealerships came together to empower students and give them ways to explore career and educational options. These groups help support the triple-E vision of Henrico County Public Schools, which states that, upon graduation, all students be enrolled, employed, or enlisted.

A station for each attending community member was set up in either a classroom or garage area. The evening started with a brief welcome and introduction of guests. The students visited each station to learn about opportunities in the particular area represented. This allowed students to explore their options and businesses to ask questions of the students, with the possible outcome of part-time employment or an internship opportunity. We had more than 130 students, parents and guardians attend and participate in the evening event.

### **Financing and Staffing**

For the first three years, the businesses paid for the cost of refreshments. This year, with the increased number of participants, Henrico Schools' Automotive Technology program was able to pay half the cost. Some parents volunteered to provide desserts to accompany the pizza and drinks. Additionally, the vendors provided more than \$1,500 in prizes and giveaways. The grand prize for the parents who attended was a set of new tires, donated by a local business, and valued at more than \$1,000. The cost of the program to Henrico County Public Schools is minimal. Existing staff time was used, and the event costs were limited to the electricity in the building for lights and electronics at each station.

Students in the Graphics Design program at the ACE Center created and printed the flyers that were used to advertise the program. The cost for the paper and printing was less than \$10.

## **Program Results**

The results of this program have been outstanding. Each year, additional businesses have asked to participate in our open house. Former students, now working in the automotive industry, have returned and are able to talk with current students about real-world experiences and give them recommendations on possible career options. The program also enabled students to see that the industry can be a support mechanism for them to advance their training. Parents have expressed gratitude in having the opportunity to interact with representatives of many different post-secondary schools and businesses available in one place.

To view a short video of the success of the Automotive Open House, please view the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/henricocoe/videos/2022049424690919/>

## **Brief Summary**

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