

PRESS RELEASE



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BEST ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Chesterfield County Police Experience Program | [Read Submission](#)

The main goal of the Chesterfield Police Experience Program (CPEP) was to connect with Virginia State University students and develop a greater understanding and awareness between law enforcement and the community. Beginning in 2016, the community policing unit partnered with VSU's criminal justice program. Officers began visiting classrooms and interacting with students during question-and-answer periods. After these initial interactions, the second part of CPEP was developed. Working with VSU criminal justice professors, the department provides transportation for students to the Eanes-Pittman Public Safety Training Center for a four-hour block of instruction that includes use-of-force simulations and role-playing scenarios. The cost of the program is low, but its impact is significant. Since its inception, over 100 students have participated in the program and their evaluations have been overwhelmingly positive. Students reported having a better understanding of police interactions and a different perception since the program. Officers have gained a greater understanding of their community and its needs and concerns. The program has also become a successful recruiting tool.

BEST SMALL COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT (50,000 or less population)

LOUISA COUNTY | Project First Responder | [Read Submission](#)

Learning to interact with first responders is critical. It is just as essential for first responders to understand how to effectively deal with our citizens who are part of the Autism, Alzheimer's, Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) community. This is the reason Louisa County Sheriff's Office started Project First

Responder, to begin to break the misguided communication between law enforcement, fire fighters or EMT's, and the AAIDD community. It is imperative that all entities involved work together to make these interactions safe, successful and productive. The Project First Responder program allows family members and other caregivers to provide crucial information about their loved ones to first responders, prior to any reported incidents. The information is utilized by emergency personnel to properly respond to situations involving AAIDD children or adults with details about proper interaction and care. The project provides the basis for training and officer awareness using interaction and incident simulation with the assistance of those living with any type of AAIDD.

BEST LARGE COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT

ROANOKE COUNTY | Meeting You at Your Wonder | [Read Submission](#)

In June 2018, Roanoke County Public Library (RCPL) became the first public library in America to recruit Pepper®, the humanoid robot manufactured by SoftBank Robotics, launching the library system into the national spotlight, and establishing them as an industry leader in Artificial Intelligence, robotics, and coding. The decision to procure the robot stemmed from a new strategic plan, where RCPL identified as a top priority addressing the changing needs brought about by the technological revolution. Foremost among reasons for taking this step were the desires to stem the tide of talent loss, build the future workforce, and more fully contribute to the economic development of the county and region. As Pepper was developed for service use, program delivery, and teaching coding to the community of all ages, library staff formed new partnerships in the community, created more sophisticated tech programming and grew their reach. Partnering organizations included RobotLAB, a San Francisco based software company helping to code Pepper, Girls Who Code, an international organization committed to closing the gender gap in technology, and local organizations such as Roanoke Robotics and Makers Club and Noke Codes, who help provide programming, The Advancement Foundation, an entrepreneurial start-up organization, and county agencies such as Schools, Communications and Technology, and Social Services. In this short period of time, approximately 7,000 people in the Roanoke and library communities have been exposed to AI and coding through RCPL's workshops, programs, and presentations. As staff is invited to write, present, and serve on panels, the library's reputation continues to grow and the knowledge shared with their newfound friends and partners across the nation is benefitting the local community in ways never imagined, demonstrating that a mid-size library system nestled in the mountains of Southwest Virginia can inform and contribute to national conversations and provide for its patrons in ways sometimes thought to be reserved for only larger systems with more abundant resources.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

ACCOMACK COUNTY | Sawmill Park | [Read Submission](#)

Sawmill Park is Accomack County's first "true" recreational park. It is the first public park in the County located off public school property and the first to contain multiple recreational opportunities. It was completed in 2018 and has been open to the public since its unveiling on June 30, 2018. The park was constructed on a parcel of land that previously served as an industrial-sized sawmill for over 70 years but ceased operation in 2007. By the time that the County purchased the property, the site had become overgrown and had fallen into a state of disrepair. Transforming a derelict industrial site into a recreation park was no easy task and proved to be very ambitious. The pre-developed site contained many safety hazards that required mitigation. Industrial-sized machinery had to be broken down and removed, concrete slabs had to be pulverized, abandoned structures had to be demolished and dozens of enormous piles of waste by-products left by a sawmill in operation for seven decades had to be properly disposed of. Preparing the property for use by the general public proved to be very taxing from the sheer labor required to the financial demands of rehabilitating a 35-acre site.

ARLINGTON COUNTY | Six-Step Public Engagement Guide for Capital Projects | [Read Submission](#)

Arlington County's Six-Step Public Engagement Guide for Capital Projects is changing the way that County professionals and the community think about meaningful engagement. In fall of 2016, Arlington convened a group of community leaders from civic associations, nonprofits, faith-based communities and more to learn how people who live, work, and play in the County experience engagement. That meeting was the start of a series of detailed discussions on community values and whether they were being met by Arlington's engagement practices. Recognizing the need for an agreed-upon engagement process, Arlington launched a six-step guide to help inform the planning processes that County staff regularly develop, and community members can now expect.

AUGUSTA COUNTY | The Trails at Mill Place | [Read Submission](#)

For many years, the citizens of Verona, an Augusta community centrally located on Route 11 and brimming with businesses and residents, did not have access to safe and public walking trails, natural areas, or fishing near their homes or work. With the completion of The Trails at Mill Place, located in the County-owned Mill Place Commerce Park, residents have access to two-thirds of a mile paved walking trail complete with benches, trash cans, and a picnic shelter. The cornerstone element of the trail is a two-acre stormwater management pond,

which is open for catch-and-release fishing – a textbook opportunity for adults and children of all ages to be introduced to recreational fishing. The \$243,000 project was completed over the course of several years through collaboration and cooperation of various August County staff and local businesses.

BOTETOURT COUNTY | Eagle Rock Seed Library | [Read Submission](#)

The Eagle Rock branch is in the most agrarian and rural part of the County, and many of its patrons have direct relationships to the family farms in the area. The patrons are keenly tied to the land. To offer an opportunity for patrons, especially children and teenagers, to engage with their agricultural roots, the branch library began a Seed Library. The library provides seed packets, many of which are rare and heirloom varieties, to patrons in exchange for the patrons returning seeds from their harvest back to the library at the end of the growing season. A plant sale has also been held to highlight the bounty of some of the participants in the Seed Library program. Moreover, the library continually seeks donations of rare and heirloom seeds to both add to the offerings of the program and to continue the legacy of local farming. The goals of the program have been exceeded. Patrons are excited to branch out beyond the normal experiences offered by the library and have an opportunity to learn about and provide local produce. The program also ties into the Board of Supervisors' vision of promoting agricultural innovation and furthering the next generation of farmers in the County.

CAROLINE COUNTY | Fire and EMS Mobile Training Lab | [Read Submission](#)

Faced with the challenges of delivering quality real-world EMS training, the Caroline County Department of Fire – Rescue and Emergency Management designed and built a Mobile Training Lab (MTL). The MTL was created by removing the rear patient compartment from a surplus ambulance and placing it on a trailer. With the support of a generous grant from the Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, staff worked in-house to add an innovative audiovisual system to the lab. Finally, a custom vinyl wrap was designed and applied to the unit that promotes volunteerism within the department. Excluding the \$1,500 grant, the Department was able to complete this project for \$17,685. These funds were collected from the sale of surplus vehicles/equipment. The result is a dynamic mobile training lab capable of easily traveling around the County in support of both new and continued EMS training. Additionally, the trailer is an effective advertisement tool for our volunteer recruitment program.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Chesterfield County’s Detention Review Team Takes Holistic View of Detained Juveniles to Maximize Services and Shorten Lengths of Stay | [Read Submission](#)

Chesterfield County’s Detention Review Team is an innovative cross-departmental team comprising the Juvenile Detention Home, Court Services Unit, and Mental Health Support Services. Their purpose is to review, on a weekly basis, all juveniles being held pre-dispositionally to ensure cases are being expedited, services are being rendered in a timely manner, and juveniles are receiving necessary contacts with family members, probation officers, counselors, and attorneys. The goal of the weekly review team is to increase intergovernmental cooperation and coordination in addressing shared problems among a unique population. Since being implemented in July 2017, over 1,250 cases spanning more than 180 juveniles have been reviewed resulting in securing earlier court dates for detained youth, shorter lengths of stays in detention, releases to less-secure detention alternatives, an increase in services (including mental health, medical, educational, and others), an increase in both family and community engagement for juveniles, and as a byproduct, an overall cost-savings to Chesterfield County. The Detention Review Team has demonstrated that taking a holistic view and individual approach towards detained juveniles can lead to maximized services and shorter length of stays.

CULPEPER COUNTY | “I Voted” Sticker Contest | [Read Submission](#)

In August 2018, Culpeper County officially announced a contest to design the next “I Voted” and “Future Voter” stickers for the November 2018 Culpeper County Elections. The contest received national news coverage by the CBS evening news on Election Day 2018. The contest offered Culpeper County fourth grade students a creative opportunity to learn about voting in Virginia and to create a new design for the iconic stickers given out on Election Day. Middle school and high school students were also given the opportunity to design a special “Future Voter” sticker for Culpeper County. A competition such as this has taken place in New York City since 2016, but to our knowledge had never taken place in Virginia before. The contest was highly successful and voter turnout projected to be approximately 15,000 was a remarkable 19,530. The original artwork is currently on display at the State House of Virginia.

DINWIDDIE COUNTY | Government Day | [Read Submission](#)

Dinwiddie County leaders identified the need to better educate high school seniors on the basics of local government process. County staff collaborated with the Board of Supervisors, Constitutional Officers and public schools to develop an innovative Government Day program, whereby students spend an entire day immersed, alongside leaders, in a mock rezoning hearing or budget workshop.

While the cost is minimal, the impact of the program will last a lifetime. The program, now in its 6th year, is one that can be used as a model for other rural localities.

FAIRFAX COUNTY | Stream Critter Cube Lab | [Read Submission](#)

The Stream Critter Cube Lab connects students with freshwater ecologists to learn how local scientists determine stream ecosystem health through monitoring the diversity of life found in each stream. This program is offered free of charge by ecologists from Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) in Fairfax County, Virginia. The Watershed Education and Outreach group's mission is to inspire students to be environmental stewards. As future leaders of Fairfax, teaching students about the health of our watershed can increase their environmental stewardship and help reduce our negative impact on water locally. In addition to inspiring students to save our environment, our main goal is to get students outside.

HENRICO COUNTY | Caregiver Kits | [Read Submission](#)

Caregiver Kits at Henrico County Public Library (HCPL) enable those experiencing memory loss or dementia-related illness to connect easily with family members, friends, and caregivers by revisiting familiar themes from their lives. The kits contain books with vibrant photographs, DVDs of classic movies or television shows, popular music CDs, and discussion prompts, all chosen with the goal of encouraging memory and conversation. Each kit has a theme with broad appeal such as local history, cooking, or pets. Anyone with a library card can check out a kit to share with an older adult who may be suffering from a memory deficiency. Adults with memory disorders often have difficulty communicating verbally, but sensory stimulation reminiscent of their past, such as the images and music in Caregiver Kits, can stimulate deep memory and help them find the words they need to connect with their loved ones.

HENRICO COUNTY | Life Enrichment for those Aging with Developmental Disabilities | [Read Submission](#)

Since 1985, the Life Enrichment program (LEP) has served individuals with intellectual disabilities who have high personal care needs and who were interested in learning and experiencing their community. As the individuals aged and their needs changed, it became clear that the program needed to change too. Since 2016, the Life Enrichment Program has made a commitment to support individuals to age in place. The program focuses on providing person centered services for individuals who are aging with Intellectual Disabilities accommodating the physiological and psychological changes that occur in these

individuals. Many individuals with Down Syndrome experience dementia symptoms starting between ages 40 - 50 years. The program focus was changed to allow these individuals to attend with their friends as long as they are physically able and to assist with their more intensive need for activities focused on maintaining skills and more intensive personal assistance.

HENRICO COUNTY | Making Peer Socialization a SNAP | [Read Submission](#)

In 2017, Henrico County Public Schools launched a summer program called “SNAPS,” an acronym for “Students Navigating Appropriate Peer Socialization.” SNAPS is geared towards students with high-functioning autism who struggle with everyday social skills. The classroom staff consists of a trained autism teacher, instructional assistant and a speech pathologist. They practice social skills in the classroom and during real-world opportunities with age-appropriate peers. Support from general education peers is also a part of each classroom, as peers serve as role models and buddies for each identified participant. Purposeful social skills are taught on Mondays within the school setting. Students go into the community Tuesday through Thursday to apply these skills in everyday life. The class visits local parks and recreation centers, community shopping centers, local eateries and nursing facilities each week. Outcomes are based on individual student data about goals and objectives pertaining to social skills in each Individualized Education Program.

HENRICO COUNTY | Setting the Bar High: CTE Letter-of-Intent Signing Day | [Read Submission](#)

Henrico County Public Schools’ first Career and Technical Letter-of-Intent Signing Day in Henrico County, Virginia, recognized and celebrated high school students who completed a career and technical education program and were offered positions in the workforce. The March 28, 2018, event emulated ceremonies that have become common for high school athletes signing letters-of-intent to play for NCAA programs. Students and representatives of their future employers signed symbolic letters of agreement, as families shared in their excitement and members of the media looked on. As with signing days for star athletes, the event is a way to honor a student’s accomplishments and decision to enter the world of work. The flash from cameras and the mounted video cameras of local news outlets added excitement. Local TV stations and newspapers conducted interviews with the students, parents and business representatives and national news outlets broadcast stories of the event. The program resonated with people across the U.S. and in Canada. The Career and Technical Letter-of-Intent Signing Day is now being replicated far and wide and has sparked a movement to celebrate students entering the workforce. After a year, the department still receives regular phone calls from schools, elected officials, industry groups and businesses asking for information on how to plan a similar event.

JAMES CITY COUNTY | Keep James City County Beautiful – A Framework for Public Participation: Wildflower Beautification Project | [Read Submission](#)

Through efforts initiated by the James City County General Services Department, Keep James City County Beautiful (KJCCB) organized a group of local volunteers and County staff to initiate the Wildflower Beautification Project. The project was intended to beautify our roadsides, deter those who throw litter from their vehicles, reduce Grounds Maintenance requirements and improve the environmental quality of the area. An Action Plan was organized by KJCCB and several volunteer groups including Master Naturalists, Parks and Recreation, the Planning Department and Grounds Maintenance to plant wildflowers native to Virginia. Stakeholders held several productive roundtable discussions to ensure the long-term viability of their efforts. The entrance of Freedom Park, one of the County's more popular parks, was targeted for the pilot project. County staff cleared the area of growth, tilled the soil, conducted soil tests, and laid down compost. Volunteers then sowed the seeds and controlled the weeds so the flowers could grow properly. The successful results included less litter, reduced mowing requirements, improved erosion control, expanded pollinator habitat and increased volunteer participation in the community. The group learned valuable lessons through this pilot project and has already expanded its efforts in other locations. This model will be used for future community-based projects supported by the JCC Strategic Plan through a collaborative process that maximizes shared values allowing citizens to feel intimately connected to and proud of our beautiful County.

LOUDOUN COUNTY | Fire Command and EMS Competency Center | [Read Submission](#)

The 2018 development and opening of a new Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System "Command Competency Center," which includes a fire simulation area and EMS simulation area, has resulted in major improvements to the county's incident command system. The center, designed and developed by County personnel, is used for ongoing training, for Lieutenant, Captain and Battalion Chief promotional processes, and for volunteer and career personnel to better understand the challenges that officers face. The center has greatly improved the system's incident command skills, unit tracking and communications skills. In addition, several outside fire and rescue departments have requested time in the center for their personnel. The system continues to build out more scenarios to include not only fires, but vehicle accidents, multi-casualty incidents and hazardous materials incidents, enhancing the county's response capabilities. In late 2012, a white paper was developed outlining a plan to establish a Command Competency Center with the intent "...to build, reinforce and evaluate officer command abilities." That paper initiated a sequence of events that ultimately led to the construction, outfitting and opening of the Loudoun County Fire and Rescue Command Competency Center in January 2018.

LOUISA COUNTY | Kindness Day | [Read Submission](#)

The power of kindness is infectious, positive, and necessary in our society today. Kindness Day, initially organized by the Louisa County Public Schools, has been an extraordinarily effective tool in spreading kindness both within our County and outside of our borders. The program is simple: staff plan and publicize Kindness Day projects such as helping at community functions, donating to worthy causes, assisting those in need, and others. The projects take place on designated Kindness Days which occur every few months. On Kindness Day, those who are helping wear their Kindness Day t-shirts, perform their projects, and we watch kindness spread! Several businesses and organizations have taken notice and gotten involved in the efforts, which have stretched from communities here in Louisa all the way to the Carolinas as we have assisted in their Hurricane Recovery efforts.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY AND FLOYD COUNTY | Family READS Program | [Read Submission](#)

In 2018, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library (MFRL) was selected as one of 20 public libraries nationwide to receive a \$10,000 American Dream Literacy Initiative grant from the American Library Association (ALA) and Dollar General Literacy Foundation. With the funding, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library, in partnership with the Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley (LVNRV), implemented the Family READS (Reading and English to Achieve Dreams and Success) Program, which focused on English as a Second Language (ESL) and family literacy throughout the MFRL service area. In addition to the grant funding, the MFRL and partners spent \$6,781.13 on the worthwhile program. The goal of the Family READS Program was to increase the English language skills of parents to achieve parenting, work, and community goals, and to fully partner in their children's education, while also increasing the English literacy and language skills of their children. The result was a 60% retention rate at the Blacksburg Library and a 100% retention rate at the Meadowbrook Library. Of the program graduates, 100% reported improved English vocabulary; 83% reported improved English listening and speaking; 100% reported improving skills to read with children; 100% reported increased use of library.

PAGE COUNTY | Recycling Challenges in Today's Market | [Read Submission](#)

Deteriorating recycling markets forced Page County Solid Waste Department to take a hard look at its recycling program. Under the old recycling practices, the Solid Waste picked up recycling containers from four resident drop off locations in the County and was spending up to \$34,000 a year in transportation costs to deliver its recyclable materials to processing plants with only a minimal amount of revenue generation in return. Our department's primary goal was to decrease costs associated with maintaining our resident drop off locations. Since

implementation of the new practices, the recycling program has transformed from a small revenue generator with high costs into a large revenue generator with substantially lower costs.

PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY | Prince George County Annual Back-to-School Fair | [Read Submission](#)

The Prince George County Annual Back to School Fair is a community wide “Family Fun Night” held each year on the 4th Thursday in August. The event celebrates the winding down of summer and is a collaborative partnership between county agencies, the school division, and community organizations with the goal of helping families prepare for the new year. There are three components to the Prince George County Annual Back to School Fair: a school supply giveaway, a community resource fair, and family entertainment. First, County Social Services leads a school supply drive throughout the summer to be able to distribute school supplies to school aged children attending the fair. Next, community organizations, local businesses, local churches, scouting and other youth and recreational programs set up booths and give away materials and fun items as part of a community resource fair for families. Then finally, family friendly entertainment is provided at no cost for the evening in the form of music, bouncy houses, children’s games, exploration of emergency vehicles, exploring a school bus for new students and parents, free haircuts, and free food. The goal of the Fair is not just to provide school supplies but to strengthen families by reminding them of the activities and resources we have in our community available to support them. The Fair is also a great place for families to come to have fun together before life gets a little more stressful. The fair is free and open to all county residents.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY | Prince William County Department of Transportation – Leaders in Innovation | [Read Submission](#)

Jurisdictions in Northern Virginia are working hard to deliver transportation facilities that can keep up with the growing population. In addition, Prince William County is constrained with limited funds available to construct improvements. The County is also in the process of becoming a more suburban/urban jurisdiction. To counter these difficult challenges, the PWC DOT Program focuses on creative approaches through every core function of the department. The department has implemented innovative approaches to transportation planning, project financing, project design and procurement of construction projects. Through dedicated cooperation and collaboration with local, state, and federal entities and effectively communicating the mobility needs of Prince William County, PWC DOT staff has proudly produced a \$1 billion, 5-year capital improvement program (from \$300 million 24 months earlier)

between FY 2019 and FY 2024. This program is being accomplished by a department composed of less than 50 staff.

RICHMOND COUNTY | Richmond County Department of Emergency Services Auxiliary Program | [Read Submission](#)

The increased need for career EMS providers in rural areas, including Richmond County, left a shortage in the number of providers available for hire. Unable to compete with the larger municipalities for employees to come to rural areas, Richmond County decided to offer our own EMT certification course and a corresponding auxiliary program to retain these newly certified providers in our County. We have successfully certified, trained, and subsequently hired several new employees within our organization at virtually no cost to the County. Additionally, we now have a pool of trained providers to assist in staffing ambulances and community events, as needed, that will be eligible for hire as the need arises.

ROANOKE COUNTY | Public Schools Planning Workshop | [Read Submission](#)

The Roanoke County Public Schools Planning Workshops sought to address two main problems. First, long-range planning efforts in the past have largely gleaned input from residents over the age of fifty, leaving planners to guess the preferences of younger generations. Secondly, students are rarely exposed to the planning profession and are not aware that it is a career option when they are making college plans. The program is a collaboration among Roanoke County, the City of Roanoke and Roanoke County Public Schools. The Public Schools Planning Workshops program successfully met the goal of soliciting a large amount of public input from residents under age 50 while simultaneously exposing them to the planning profession. The program is straightforward and mobile enough to be used repeatedly throughout the area's school systems. The example can also easily be adapted to other localities. Furthermore, the inter-jurisdictional collaboration has opened the door for future regional cooperation and planning efforts.

YORK COUNTY | Be the Change You Wish to See in the World: Leaders in Training | [Read Submission](#)

York County Parks and Recreation offers a Leaders in Training (L.I.T.) Program for Ages 14-16. This program serves as an excellent transition for teens from a camper to potential Recreation Leader, develops skills for future employment opportunities or civic duties, develops leadership skills, and is a meaningful way for youth to spend their summer breaks. In addition, this program helps provide volunteer hours for school or scholarships all while having fun. Participants assist

with our Summer Fun Camp and Field Trip Fever Program. A few of their responsibilities are assisting our staff with camp activities such as group games or crafts, operating games at our summer carnival, helping with field trips, and interacting with children who are shy or need additional assistance to help them become part of the group setting. The program provides training for L.I.T.s to be educated on characteristics of youth at different ages, daily procedures, playground supervision, CPR/First Aid, and more. They also receive training that provides team building activities as well as exercises to help develop their judgment skills, setting up for crafts, leading group games, etc. The program provides a training manual, t-shirts, incentives for volunteer hours, and an end of the summer social.

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

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