



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the 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: Botetourt County

Program Title: Building Colonial Elementary - Fulfilling a Vision with Collaboration During a Global Pandemic

Program Category: Community & Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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Website: www.botetourtva.gov

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Gary Larrowe

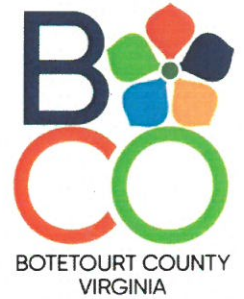
Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

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**Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards Application 2021**  
**Botetourt County – Building Colonial Elementary – Fulfilling a Vision with Collaboration During a Global Pandemic**

**Executive Summary:**

Botetourt County is a rural county located in southwestern Virginia. The county is 548 square miles and is home to approximately 33,500 residents. Botetourt County Public Schools enrolls approximately 4,659 students in the county in grades PK-12. The Economic Development Authority (EDA) of Botetourt County is responsible for providing guidance on economic development policy in the county.

In 2019, these three entities collaborated to begin building a new elementary school in Blue Ridge to replace an 80-year-old building that was no longer serving the students and staff in the most efficient way. This project marked the first time that a new school had been built since the mid-1990s. The county's EDA headed up the project and negotiated with contractors on behalf of the school system. It was the first time the EDA tackled a build of this magnitude, and it was a huge success for the county.

You might ask why this project is special and deserving of an award; construction happens every day. But not all construction projects had to overcome weather adversities, a move during the middle of the school year and a global pandemic. Because of the foresight and teamwork between the County, school system, EDA and parents in the community, the project came in under budget and on time which allowed students to begin learning in a state-of-the-art facility.



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### **Background and Program:**

Colonial Elementary School resided in a modest building located in Blue Ridge Virginia for 80 years. This National Blue-Ribbon Award-Winning School used to be a community high school that served the Blue Ridge Area. It all began as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" where federal funds were used to support the building of 45,000 new schools throughout the United States. The old structure was built in 1939 using a portion of this federal funding as well as school model plans provided by the FDR Administration. The building was subsequently expanded or renovated in 1949, 1969, 1975 and most recently in 1985.

In 2018, Blue Ridge Board of Supervisors Member, Billy Martin said, "After pursuing this project for the past eight years, I am delighted that it has finally come to fruition. Colonial Elementary was built 79 years ago, and while there is nothing wrong with age, our teachers and children in Botetourt County deserve to have a clean and updated environment in which to work and learn. It is good to recognize the families and staff that have been working so hard in adverse conditions over the years while teaching our children. We are so proud to finally see this happen." (WSLS, 2018)

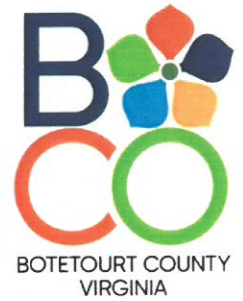
"We had utilized at the other school every closet, everything that you could possibly use, and rooms were absolutely being used for things they weren't intended to be used for," said Vicki Thomas, Colonial Elementary senior educator with 30 years of service at the school. "Hallways, every corner of the building were being used. So, it's nice to have rooms that are specific for what



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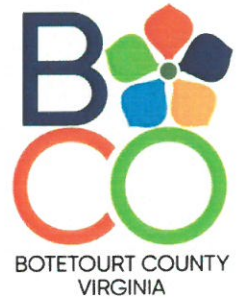
we need." (Roanoke Times, January 25, 2021)



Figure 1 Photo Courtesy of the Roanoke Times

Groundbreaking for the school took place on August 20, 2019, and construction soon began. The project was a collaboration between Botetourt County, Botetourt County Public Schools and the Economic Development Authority (EDA). The EDA, in a first for Botetourt County, headed up the \$26 million project and negotiated with contractors on the school system's behalf. Plans were to construct an 82,000 square foot state of the art facility to allow for the newest technology, ample storage, room for growth, interactive classrooms, a new full-size gymnasium, new library, along





with other amenities. The school construction site was seated on 26 acres in a residential community with easy access for buses and room for the school along with outside green space. As a bonus of the construction, Botetourt County and Roanoke Gas Company partnered to bring natural gas service to the Blue Ridge Community. The new school uses natural gas-fired boilers; therefore, having the natural gas infrastructure in place is a critical piece of the success of the project. This means that this cornerstone utility will serve the school and the homes and businesses along the way to the school. The interior was thoughtfully decorated with bright and cheerful colors and provides a nod to the past with an interior wall decorated in pictures from the school's 80-year history. Students also were able to purchase inspirational quotes that were then installed throughout the school. Principal Tammy Riggs worked closely with construction teams and her students to allow her Student Leadership Council an opportunity to help make decisions for the interior of the school.

At the beginning of the project, the EDA established a "Clerk of the Works" position. Jim Whitten became the project manager, and he managed every facet of the program saving the county time and money on the project. He also ensured that the project came in under budget and on time. Whitten would literally roll up his sleeves and work hand in hand with contractors and builders at the construction site. Whitten also serves as the county's Building Official which allowed for expedited approvals of plans and the ability to change things as needed onsite. Construction began moving along but it was not without obstacles to overcome. In February of 2020, the project slowed as the valley experienced torrential rains. The construction site became a huge



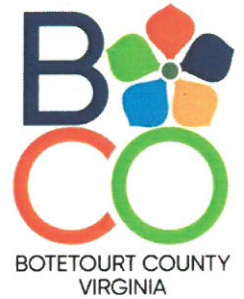
mud pit which delayed progress. By this time, however, construction and planning teams pivoted to keep the project moving forward. The gym was mostly completed, and much progress was made on the first set of classrooms. Prep work continued as students and teachers tested furniture. The project continued to move along and then the world was faced with the unknown – the COVID-19 pandemic. Students and staff were sent home and began learning virtually but construction continued to move forward at the new Colonial site with COVID-19 safety procedures put into place to keep the teams who were working on the project safe and healthy.

Not only did Whitten and the construction team complete the school within a one and half year timeline, but they also stayed under budget, spending a total of \$26 million. Teachers and parents of Colonial students were also instrumental in packing up the old school and moving to the new. Parents also pitched in to beautify the outside of the school and to help with installation of playground equipment. The school held a grand opening ceremony on January 25, 2021. "We are so excited for you to see this magnificent place that you get to learn in now," Principal Tammy Riggs said in a morning flag-raising ceremony. "This is not just for us, not just for you. Kids are going to be learning for decades and decades, here at this school.... It is a gift. It's our job to take care of it." **(Roanoke Times, January 25, 2021)**

### **Persons and Organizations Involved:**

The project was a collaboration between Botetourt County, Botetourt County Public Schools and the Economic Development Authority (EDA). The EDA, in a first for Botetourt County, headed up





the \$26 million project and negotiated with contractors on the school system's behalf working with G&H Contracting. A Clerk of the Works position was established and Jim Whitten, Botetourt County's Building Official worked closely with all parties involved ensuring that the project came in on time and under budget. Roanoke Gas Company was also an important partner during the process.

We would be remiss if we did not recognize the staff, students and parents of Colonial Elementary School. Led by Principal Tammy Riggs, Riggs and her team of dedicated teachers and staff helped orchestrate the move from the old Colonial Elementary site to the new location. Parents and community members also pitched in to help pack boxes and load trucks. They helped unpack at the new location. These same people also pitched in to beautify the outside of the school as well as help install playground equipment. Students that make up the Colonial Elementary Student Leadership Council worked directly with Riggs to help give tours of the new facility as well as help decorate the school with inspirational quotes. Mind you, this was all done during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Every obstacle that this construction team faced was met with grace and grit and showed the true meaning of community and collaboration.

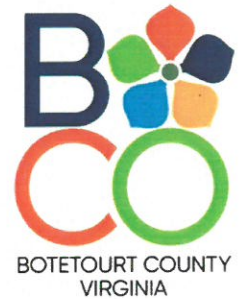
### **Expected Outcomes and Results:**

The new Colonial Elementary School located at 142 Murray Dr., in Troutville, VA was built with opportunities for expansion as the enrollment rises. The school currently serves over 400 children

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in the Blue Ridge District of Botetourt County. Through the world class partnership between Botetourt County, Botetourt County Schools and the Economic Development Authority (EDA), a state-of-the-art facility was built that will help educate children for decades to come. The students are the reason that this building was constructed, and school leadership continues to make sure that students are at the heart of decisions being made. The process of allowing the EDA to take the lead on projects such as these will enhance future building opportunities within our county.

#### **Beneficiaries of the Program:**

Through the collaboration on this project, the whole community benefitted. The 400 plus children, plus their families are all direct beneficiaries of a world class education taught in a state-of-the-art school facility. The County and EDA will also benefit from the construction of this new school. Strong schools make strong students and Botetourt County will continue to lead the way in providing gold star education, making Botetourt County a desired area to live, work, play and raise a family.

#### **Replication:**

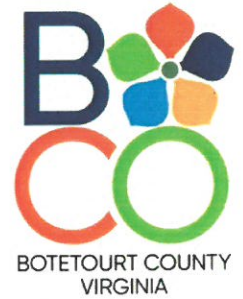
In order to replicate this collaborative effort, it is important to make sure that all entities involved are on the same page and have the same goals in mind. Utilizing the Economic Development Authority (EDA) to execute contracts and be the governing body made the process run smooth and steady, even amidst weather delays and working during COVID-19. Establishing a Clerk of the



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Works position is also imperative to ensuring that projects of this magnitude stay on time and on budget.

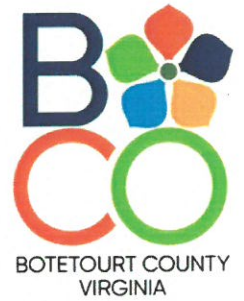
### **Conclusion:**

COVID-19 was a game changer for our county, region, country and world. It made many of us realize what is most important and that is our friends, family and loved ones. Tackling a construction project and completing on time and under budget during these working conditions was truly remarkable and the planning and construction teams are to be commended. The end product provided a state-of-the-art facility for the Blue Ridge region of Botetourt County. The school is an anchor in the community and serves as a true testament to what can be done when teamwork is at the center of the project. The school teaches Steven Covey's 7 Habits and this construction project, completed during a global pandemic, is a shining example of what can happen when you think "win win" and when you "start with the end in mind".

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Photo's courtesy of the Colonial Elementary School Facebook Page



Figure 2 Colonial Elementary School Ribbon Cutting, January 2021



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Figure 35th Grader Olivia Pierce, a member of the Student Leadership Council, shows off some of the quotes chosen by students that were installed at the new school.

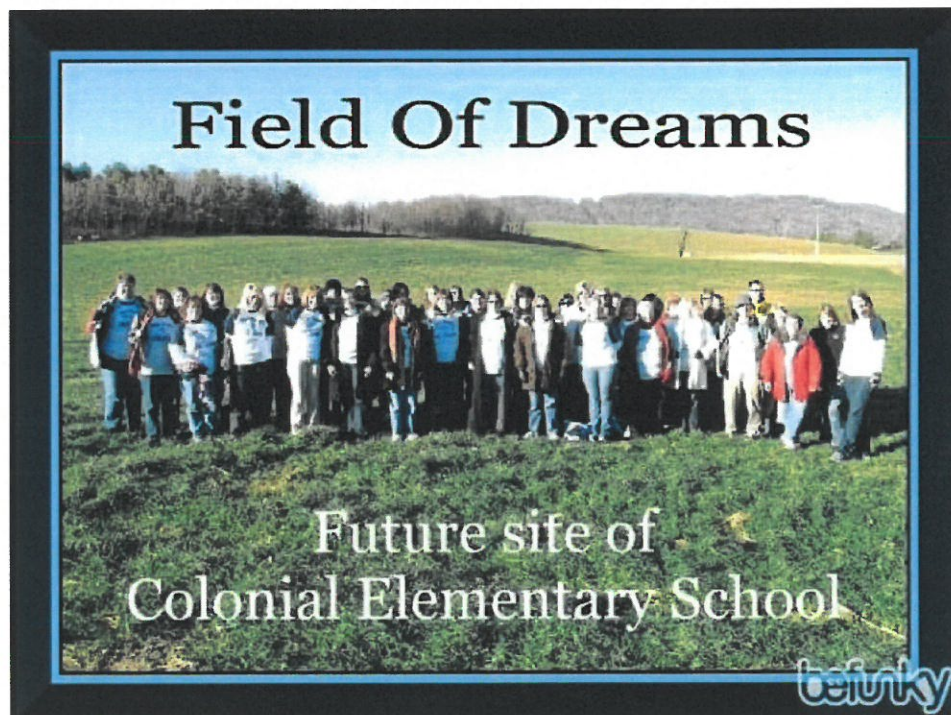


Figure 4 Teachers and Staff stand on the site of the new school before construction began.

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**Thank you to the staff, parents and community that helped facilitate the move to the new school and also who helped to beautify the outside for our students and visitors!**

For more information about the construction journey, visit:

[https://roanoke.com/news/education/students-teachers-break-ground-at-new-colonial-elementary-school-in-botetourt-county/article\\_c8e40ff4-b84c-577c-b13d-cc7216a1d703.html](https://roanoke.com/news/education/students-teachers-break-ground-at-new-colonial-elementary-school-in-botetourt-county/article_c8e40ff4-b84c-577c-b13d-cc7216a1d703.html)

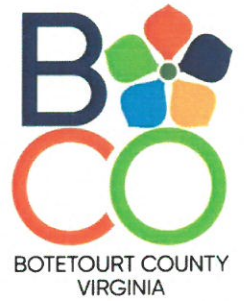
[https://roanoke.com/gallery/photos-a-tour-of-botetourt-countys-new-colonial-elementary-school/collection\\_b345bcd4-5f42-11eb-9d3b-6b12cb1c10e5.html](https://roanoke.com/gallery/photos-a-tour-of-botetourt-countys-new-colonial-elementary-school/collection_b345bcd4-5f42-11eb-9d3b-6b12cb1c10e5.html)



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<https://www.wdbj7.com/2021/01/09/colonial-elementary-school-students-and-staff-celebrate-their-last-day-at-the-82-year-old-building/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dgby0Fnxks>

<https://thebotetourtbee.com/2021/03/11/colonial-elementary-ribbon-cutting/>

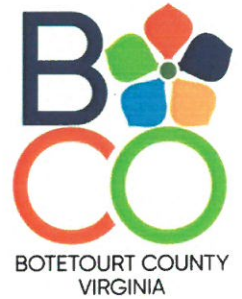
<http://www.ghcontracting.com/colonial-elementary-school-opening/>

<https://www.roanokegas.com/botetourt-county-and-roanoke-gas-company-partner-for-service-in-blue-ridge/>

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**Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards Application 2021**  
**Botetourt County – Building Colonial Elementary – Fulfilling a Vision with Collaboration During a Global Pandemic (Overview)**

Botetourt County is a rural county located in southwestern Virginia. The county is 548 square miles and is home to approximately 33,500 residents. Botetourt County Public Schools enrolls approximately 4,659 students in the county in grades PK-12. The Economic Development Authority (EDA) of Botetourt County is responsible for providing guidance on economic development policy in the county.

These three entities collaborated to build a new elementary school in Blue Ridge to replace an 80-year-old building that was no longer serving the over 400 students and staff in the most efficient way. This project marked the first time that a new school had been built since the mid-1990s. The county's EDA headed up the project and negotiated with contractors on behalf of the school system. It was the first time the EDA tackled a project of this magnitude, and it was a huge success for the county. Amid weather delays and a global pandemic, the project was completed in a year and a half and came in under budget. The final product is a state-of-the-art facility for the Blue Ridge region of Botetourt County. The school is an anchor in the community and serves as a true testament to what can be done when teamwork is at the center of the project..