



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: County of Henrico
Program Title: Racing to Graduate: Graduation Victory Lap
Program Category: Organizational Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Victoria Davis
Title: Public Relations Specialist
Department: Public Relations
Telephone: 804-501-4933 Website: www.henrico.us
Email: dav127@henrico.us

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Brandon Hinton
Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration
Signature: 

Program Overview

As the 2020 school year approached its end, a traditional graduation was not possible for Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) seniors because of the COVID-19 pandemic. HCPS leaders decided on an appropriate send-off for the Class of 2020. The school division decided to collaborate with a familiar business partner, Richmond Raceway, to help create a one-of-a-kind in-person graduation experience.

Students and their families would attend Richmond Raceway at the designated time for their school's "graduation" and take a victory lap around the complex. Many students and families decorated their vehicles and their principals waved the checkered flag as they came around in their cars.

The outcome was phenomenal, as each graduating senior had the chance to have their moment as a creative alternative to the traditional graduation, they were unable to have.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold locally in March, it became increasingly clear that a traditional high school graduation would not be possible. As HCPS staff members, we know how important graduation is to students and their families. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we knew we had to put something in place to honor our 2020 graduates.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

This program involved a longstanding partnership between Henrico County Public Schools and Richmond Raceway. School and county officials, as well as the community realized the importance of having some type of graduation event for our approximately 4,500 high school seniors.

While many school divisions provided a virtual graduation alone, we were able to host a virtual graduation video and an in-person event in which seniors were able to see their teachers and principal, as well as their classmates, one last time before graduating. Multiple HCPS departments and schools worked together to ensure the success of this event. Many seniors commented and stated that they enjoyed this more than they thought they would have enjoyed their traditional graduation, because of the event's casual atmosphere and the chance to be creative and inventive by decorating their vehicles. This was a wonderful example of the support HCPS receives from its business and community partners. It could not have taken place without the willingness and commitment from the Richmond Raceway.

How Program Was Carried Out

Most students spend 12-13 years in school anticipating the big culminating event we all know as graduation. Seniors in Henrico County Public Schools had no idea that March 13, 2020 would be their last day of school for the school year. Students did not have a chance to say their goodbyes to their classmates or their teachers and administrators. Throughout the country, "virtual graduations" became an extremely popular event. While we offered a virtual component to our three-pronged graduation approach, we wanted to find some way to honor our students and families with a face-to-face option. On March 23, 2020, Gov. Northam announced that schools would remain closed for the 2019-20 school year. Soon after, in April, the planning of the Graduation Victory Lap event moved ahead in full force. The event was held June 10-12 at Richmond Raceway with all 10 HCPS high schools participating.

We knew that whatever event was held would have to require a large outside venue. With our already wonderful partnership with Richmond Raceway and the venue space they have, we were

able to offer a “victory lap” to each one of our graduating seniors over the four-day period in which each school was scheduled.

Victory Laps were held at various times throughout the day, spaced out by school. When students arrived in their vehicles, they were directed to a line. Once students were lined up, “Pomp and Circumstance” was played throughout the venue as the cars slowly rolled around for the track. Many students decorated their vehicles and showed great school spirit. One of the most important aspects of this event was that we had local businesses offer their services and vehicles to help students who did not have transportation. For instance, Richmond Ford picked up students in one of their newer model vehicles. Using creativity and generosity, we were able to reach all students.

HCPS radio broadcasting and journalism teachers worked together with radio station 103.7, WURV, with morning personalities “Melissa and Jack.” Melissa and Jack produced prerecorded hour-long “radio shows” for the graduates, which our own radio broadcasting and journalism teachers aired on Mix 91.1 FM during the individualized victory laps. In addition, our graphic communications shop produced programs for all families in attendance.

Furthermore, one of our Career and Technical Education courses, Radio Broadcasting and Journalism, teamed up with local radio station 103.7 WURV, with morning hosts “Melissa and Jack.” Melissa and Jack were kind enough to pre-produce 10 different shows, one for each high school. On the day of each school's victory lap, the Radio Broadcasting and Journalism class went live on air using their own station, mix 91.1 FM to showcase the graduations.

Another one of our Career and Technical Education courses, Graphic Communications, produced programs for all 10 events, tailored individually for each school. They also created numerous banners and signs for the event, which were located throughout the raceway complex. As part of

the graduation celebration, virtual watch parties were enthusiastically embraced and individual cap and gown photo sessions were also made available for each graduate.

The timeline for the entire series of victory laps was tight. All aspects of the event were done within a four-week period, with several different HCPS departments involved. This event focused on our students and families, helping them celebrate the various achievements of the year. In addition, most of the teachers and administrators from each of the high schools participated and showed their school spirit, since they have not been able to physically see their students the whole year. During every graduation, government officials attend the ceremony to bring greetings and they also attended this event to support the students.

Financing and Staffing

The overall cost of the program was fairly inexpensive in comparison to traditional graduations.

The approximate costs were:

- Facility rental: free
- Security/setup staff: \$9,148
- Programs, banners, and promotional items: \$3,799

The facility rental for the raceway would normally be several thousand dollars a day. With the unique partnership and countywide initiative to help students, Richmond Raceway was generous enough to let us use their facilities free of charge.

Program Results

Approximately 4,500 students participated in an in-person graduation and finished out their high school careers with a memorable event. Many high school seniors throughout the commonwealth of Virginia and the country were unable to have an event like this, and had to opt for an all-virtual

model. While quantitative data results for this event are minimal, the qualitative results we received were phenomenal. We had so many students and parents thank us for offering some type of in-person event for them. Many of them said this was a great way for them to be able to say “goodbye” in a safe environment.

Additionally, we received many comments, emails and calls from parents, expressing extremely positive feedback and appreciation that they had the opportunity to celebrate their child in a safe, relaxed and fun manner.

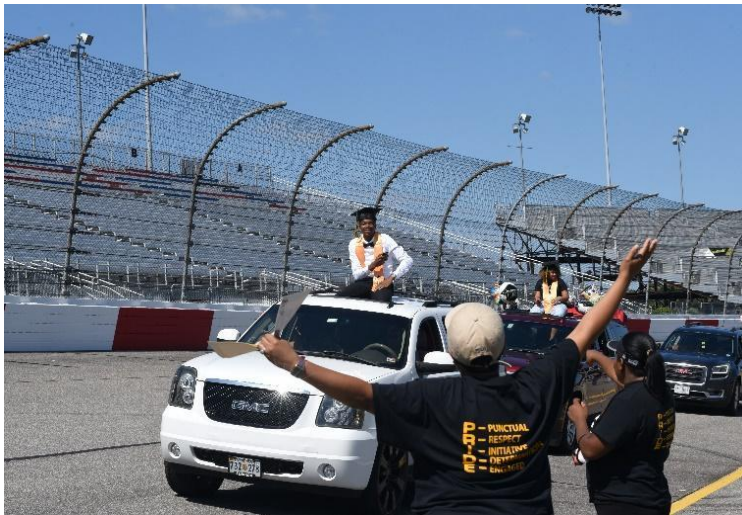
Overall, the program was extremely successful. Some staff members and students commented that they would rather have this type of environment for a graduation even after the pandemic. We appreciate Richmond Raceway and 103.7 WURV for their continued partnerships with Henrico County Public Schools, as we found a creative way to support our graduating seniors and close out the academic school year.

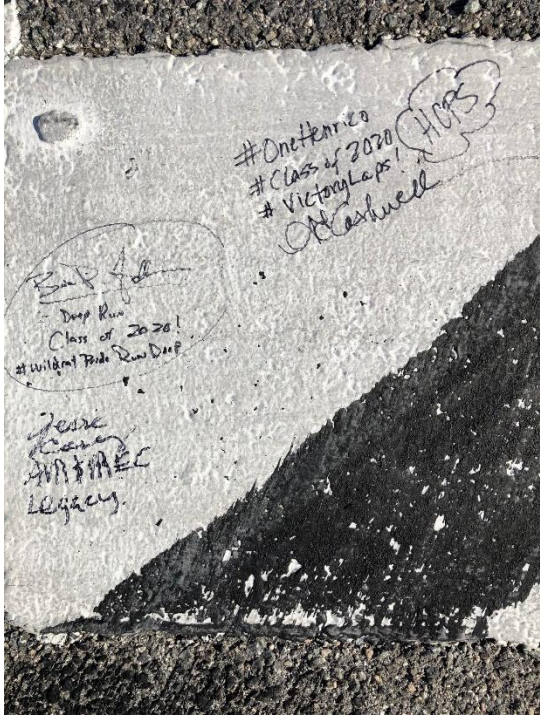
Brief Summary

With a traditional high school graduation not an option in the Spring of 2020, it became imperative to think innovatively about how to celebrate our graduates. HCPS staff members, county officials and our community knew how important graduation is to students and their families. Working together, a multi-faceted approach was created. This included an in-person outdoor event at the Richmond Raceway with a celebratory atmosphere, radio broadcasts, music and victory laps for students and their families. Partnering with Richmond Raceway, HCPS central office staff, the staff and administration of each high school, county officials and HCPS Career and Technical Education staff and students worked together to create a memorable and very well-received event.




The partnership with Richmond Raceway and the enthusiastic commitment of staff were key to the success of this event. It is a shining example of how communities can come together to provide amazing support and experiences for our students, even in the face of unprecedented challenges.

Racing to Graduate: Graduation Victory Lap Supplemental Material





Henrico County Public Schools
GRADUATION CELEBRATION 2020

-  Virtual Graduation Ceremony Watch Party
-  Graduation Victory Lap at Richmond Raceway
-  Cap and Gown Photo Session for each senior