ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

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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.
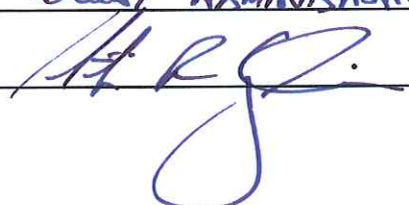
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Louisa

Program Title: Wireless on Wheels

Program Category: Information Technology

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: CHRISTIAN R. GOODWIN

Title: COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Signature: _[signature]_

2021 VACo Achievement Awards – Information Technology

PROGRAM NAME: WIRELESS ON WHEELS (WOW)

OVERVIEW

Louisa County Public Schools has created unique new approach to help make high-speed internet more accessible for its community. The school division constructed what it calls Wireless on Wheels (WOW) units. The units are solar-powered, Wi-Fi hotspots that operate based off of cell phone signals.

PROGRAM DETAILS

WOW, which stands for Wireless on Wheels, is an innovative solution designed and built by Louisa County Public Schools. It provides a WiFi signal to a 200ft radius that can support multiple devices at once. The internet service is provided by Louisa County Public Schools and has a content filter to ensure appropriate use.

When remote schooling efforts were compelled in March 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic, County school leaders wrestled with ways to help more students and families get online for class. Being able to connect students and families to digital resources and online learning opportunities is imperative during these difficult and uncertain times. Louisa is a rural County, and its many unserved and underserved broadband areas made access a challenge.

After exploring the costs of adding Wi-Fi hotspots to school buses, Information Technology and Career and Technical Education collaborated to design and build 12 trailers equipped with solar-powered Wi-Fi hotspots themselves.   The mobile hotspot serves as a way to make sure no Louisa student misses an assignment. The solar-powered unit is available 24 hours a day and serves as a convenient way to stay connected for families unable to access the Internet at home.

The hotspots are now situated across the county, many in church parking lots and other public areas. Every County resident is now less than 20 minutes' drive from a hotspot, and most families are much closer. Each of the County's six school parking lots are also hotspots, so families can park and access the internet in those locations as well.

The WOW program has taken an exciting new turn since the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Louisa County High School Career & Technical Education students are now building WOW units as part of their class, bolstering their engineering skills while providing a valuable service to the community at the same time.

Online map of WOW hotspot locations:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/embed?mid=1sqqJ0rNrQRz-6otqDK5n0BHDNDHUVbfi&hl=en&ll=37.959606327440014%2C-77.99330845000001&z=11

News coverage of the effort:

- https://www.nbc29.com/2020/07/18/louisa-county-public-schools-sets-up-wow-units-provide-free-internet-access/
- https://www.cbs19news.com/story/42042851/louisa-county-wireless-on-wheels-helps-families-connect

The school system is willing to help others who may want to build their own versions of the hotspots. All the details on the hotspots are available online, including how the units were designed and built, and all the necessary parts anyone needs to build one.