



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: Montgomery County

Program Title: New River Valley Public Health Task Force - Communications & Marketing Team

Program Category: Communications

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Angela Hill

Title: Assistant County Administrator

Signature: Angela Hill

Executive Summary

In March 2020, a group of community leaders including public and private health officials, first responders, educational leaders, and local government representatives met to discuss the potential impact of COVID-19 on the New River Valley (NRV). The initial meeting took place before the first positive case of COVID-19 had been diagnosed in the NRV. It was at that time the New River Valley Public Health Task Force was formed. Since then, the task force met on a consistent basis. These regular and consistent meetings allowed the NRV community to prepare for and respond to COVID-19 in an extremely collaborative and consistent manner.

In an effort to support the goals and priorities of the NRV Public Health Task Force, several public relations and marketing professionals associated with the various task force member organizations began meeting on a regular basis as well. The various communicators quickly evaluated the key messages and best tactics for delivering those messages due to the breadth and depth of skills, resources, and ability represented through the diverse and collaborative team. As a result, a regional campaign was created that highlighted community strengths and provided key, localized messaging related to both COVID-19 facts and disease prevention methods. The “Be committed. Be well.” campaign was created and launched throughout the NRV Region by the summer of 2020.

Brief Overview

A task force of community leaders assembled in March 2020 to organize the New River Valley's response to COVID-19. Leaders across the region's municipalities and major health, educational, and first responder entities combined their efforts and resources to prepare and protect our community. Public relations and marketing representatives from the task force entities collaborated on the "Be committed. Be well." campaign to support task force priorities and raise awareness of our community wellness commitment.

The real proof of the success of the efforts made by the communicators associated with the NRV Public Health Task Force lies in the containment of COVID-19 and the prevention of spread throughout the NRV. In fact, the New River Health District experienced significantly fewer confirmed cases of the virus than was originally predicted by a University of Virginia COVID-19 model. In addition, the NRV community is often seen wearing "Be committed. Be well." branded face masks.

Award Submission

The New River Valley Public Health Task Force was formed in March 2020. The task force members included community leaders, public and private health officials, first responders, educational leaders, and local government representatives. Public relations and marketing professionals associated with the organizational members of the task force began meeting on a regular basis to identify and inventory skills and resources and to plan strategy, key messages, and deliverables to support the task force and the NRV community, which includes the counties of Montgomery, Floyd, Pulaski, Giles and the City of Radford.

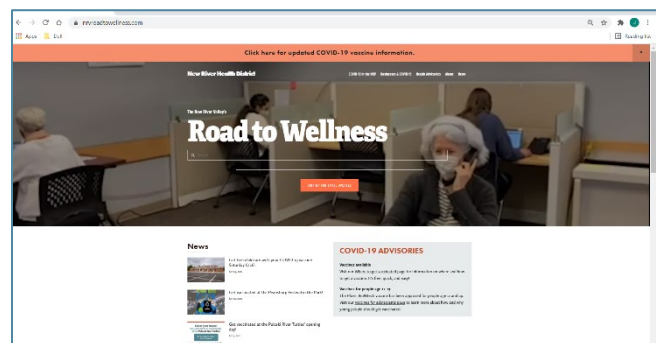
In response to COVID-19 and in support of the established New River Valley Public Health Task Force, a group of nearly 25 individuals committed to gathering on a regular basis, identifying target audiences, tactics and strategy for greatest engagement.

NRV Public Health Task Force Communication and Marketing Volunteers								
Name	Organization	AV	Budget	Bus cont	Design	Mktg	PR	Soc/Web
Amy Southall	Christiansburg				x			x
Angie Hill	Montgomery County	x						
Ashley Briggs	NRVRC BCT		x				x	x
Ashley Schumaker	Radford University						x	x
Bobby Parker	VDH					x	x	x
Brenda Drake	MCPS						x	x
Brenda Watson	Virginia Tech				x			
Chip Herman	Town of Blacksburg	x						
Derley Aguilar	Montgomery County	x			x			x
Edmee Hasler	Town of Blacksburg							x
Fairen Horner	Virginia Tech							x
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg					x	x	x
Heather Ducote	Virginia Tech		x			x	x	
Holly Lesko	NRVRC BCT							x
Jen Harris	Montgomery County					x	x	x
Jenni Wilder	City of Radford					x	x	x
Jill Ross	NRCC				x		x	
Kelly Kaiser	NRCC					x	x	
Kristie Warack	NRV Regional Commission							x
Melanie Morris	NRVRC				x			
Melissa Demmitt	Town of Cburg					x	x	x
Theresa McCann	VCOM	x					x	
Tiffany Pruden	Virginia Tech				x	x		x

The primary target audience was identified as adults throughout the New River Valley, spanning a plethora of demographics. Creative assets and tactics were identified to reach the target audience. The communicators identified the main communication vehicles as web, social media, public meetings and fostering relations with local media partners. The group established an overall budget of \$505,000 in pooled CARES Act funding from all NRV municipalities to

help fund the purchase of advertisements and items to include branded face masks and ink pens.

One element of the “Be committed. Be well.” campaign that highlighted the collaborative efforts of NRV community leaders was a Community Wellness Commitment that municipalities, educational institutions, businesses, and first responder units adopted and posted widely in public areas. The Wellness Commitment outlines 10 tenets that the community established to protect and support each other through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Wellness Commitment was announced in a press release, with eight NRV localities signing resolutions agreeing to the Wellness Commitment. The *nrvroadtowellness.com* website was identified as the hub for all content to include news and resources related to the NRV Public Health Task Force and the “Be committed.



Be well. campaign.” The website is kept up-to-date with campaign messaging, graphics to download, video, and a dashboard, with the graphics and messaging including the Wellness Commitment, wear a mask, and stay six feet apart. The paid campaign marketing includes local transit ads inside and outside of the buses; about 370,000 campaign-branded face masks and 111,000 ink pens to distribute throughout the

community; yard signs, banners, and electronic signs, throughout the community; and a video featuring community leaders promoting the tenets of the Wellness Commitment that served as digital pre-roll ads geo-targeted at all internet users within the NRV.



Supporting Materials Created by the Team

1. Be committed. Be well campaign creative materials:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dH7IbFADMsdX74mdvcRSXtxlA6BPV729?usp=sharing>

Contents include:

- Digital Ads
- Logo
- Magazine Ads
- Signs and Banners – electronic and physical
- Social Media
- Wellness Commitment



2. Website:

<https://www.nrvroadtowellness.com/>

3. Virtual Town Halls: In an effort to increase public awareness and provide the community with as many answers as possible to their questions, a series of six topic-specific, interactive and virtual town halls was planned. The virtual town halls were conducted using Zoom and livestreamed on YouTube. To view the town halls, visit:

<https://www.montgomerycountyva.gov/coronavirus/nrvtownhall>

4. News releases:

i. Task force and outreach (12 total)

1. MONTGOMERY CO. OFFICIALS CONVENE PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE, March 12, 2020

- <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/montgomery-co-officials-convene-public-health-task-force/>
2. NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT OPERATES PUBLIC HEALTH HOTLINE (task force mention), March 16, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-health-district-operates-public-health-hotline/>
 3. MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS SEEKS VOLUNTEERS FOR COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE (task force mention), March 16, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/medical-reserve-corps-seeks-volunteers-for-covid-19-emergency-response/>
 4. PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE OFFERS COVID-19 VIDEO AND PODCAST, March 26, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/public-health-task-force-offers-covid-19-video-and-podcast/>
 5. NEW RIVER VALLEY PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE HOSTS INTERACTIVE, ONLINE TOWN HALL ON COVID-19 AND HEALTH CARE, MAY 6, May 4, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-valley-public-health-task-force-hosts-interactive-online-town-hall-on-covid-19-and-health-care-may-6/>
 6. NEW RIVER VALLEY PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE HOSTS INTERACTIVE, ONLINE TOWN HALL ON COVID-19, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, MAY 13, May 8, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-valley-public-health-task-force-hosts-interactive-online-town-hall-on-covid-19-law-enforcement-and-emergency-services-may-13/>
 7. NEW RIVER VALLEY PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE HOSTS INTERACTIVE, ONLINE TOWN HALL ON COVID-19 AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, May 17, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-valley-public-health-task-force-hosts-interactive-online-town-hall-on-covid-19-and-local-government/>
 8. NEW RIVER VALLEY PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE HOSTS INTERACTIVE, ONLINE TOWN HALL ON COVID-19 AND LOCAL AND SMALL BUSINESSES, May 24, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/4769-2/>
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9. NEW RIVER VALLEY PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE HOSTS INTERACTIVE, ONLINE TOWN HALL ON COVID-19 AND EDUCATION (K-12), June 1, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-valley-public-health-task-force-hosts-interactive-online-town-hall-on-covid-19-and-education-k-12/>
 10. NEW RIVER VALLEY PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE HOSTS INTERACTIVE, ONLINE TOWN HALL ON COVID-19 AND HIGHER EDUCATION, June 5, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-valley-public-health-task-force-hosts-interactive-online-town-hall-on-covid-19-and-higher-education/>
 11. New River Valley task force launches Community Wellness Commitment, July 24, 2020
<https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2020/07/unirel-wellness-commitment.html>
 12. NRV TASK FORCE URGES RESIDENTS TO “BE COMMITTED. BE WELL.” WITH NEW COVID-19 OUTREACH CAMPAIGN, August 17, 2020 <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/nrv-task-force-urges-residents-to-be-committed-be-well-with-new-covid-19-outreach-campaign>
- ii. Cases, testing and deaths (25 total)
1. NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT CONFIRMS ITS FIRST CASE OF COVID-19, March 24, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-health-district-confirms-its-first-case-of-covid-19/>
 2. NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT CONFIRMS CASE OF COVID-19, March 27, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-health-district-confirms-case-of-covid-19/>
 3. HEALTH TASK FORCE ACTIVATES DRIVE-THRU TESTING FOR COVID-19, March 31, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/health-task-force-activates-drive-thru-testing-for-covid-19/>
 4. HEALTH TASK FORCE CONTINUES DRIVE-THRU TESTING FOR COVID-19, April 2, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/health-task-force-continues-drive-thru-testing-for-covid-19/>
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5. HEALTH TASK FORCE CONTINUES DRIVE-THRU TESTS, MALL SITE ADDED, April 5, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/health-task-force-continues-drive-thru-tests-mall-site-added/>
6. NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT ANNOUNCES FIRST CASES OF COVID-19 IN GILES COUNTY, April 5, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-health-district-announces-first-cases-of-covid-19-in-giles-county/>
7. NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT ANNOUNCES FIRST CASE OF COVID-19 IN FLOYD COUNTY, April 10, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-health-district-announces-first-case-of-covid-19-in-floyd-county/>
8. NEW RIVER VALLEY PUBLIC HEALTH TASK FORCE CONTINUES DRIVE-THRU TESTING IN DUBLIN, April 11, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-valley-public-health-task-force-continues-drive-thru-testing-in-dublin/>
9. HEALTH TASK FORCE CONTINUES DRIVE-THRU TESTING, IN FLOYD, April 17, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/health-task-force-continues-drive-thru-testing-in-floyd/>
10. NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT CONFIRMS FIRST FATALITY ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19, April 22, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-health-district-confirms-first-fatality-associated-with-covid-19/>
11. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES IN BLACKSBURG, April 22, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-in-blacksburg/>
12. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES IN CHRISTIANSBURG AND BLACKSBURG, April 27, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-in-christiansburg-and-blacksburg>
13. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES NEXT WEEK IN PEARISBURG AND BLACKSBURG, April 30, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news->

- [releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-pearisburg-and-blacksburg/](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-pearisburg-and-blacksburg/)
14. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES NEXT WEEK IN RADFORD AND BLACKSBURG, May 6, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-radford-and-blacksburg/>
 15. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES NEXT WEEK IN BLACKSBURG, May 15, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-blacksburg/>
 16. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES NEXT WEEK IN DUBLIN AND FLOYD, May 24, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-dublin-and-floyd/>
 17. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES THIS WEEK IN RADFORD AND BLACKSBURG, June 1, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-this-week-in-radford-and-blacksburg/>
 18. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES NEXT WEEK IN PEARISBURG AND BLACKSBURG, June 5, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-pearisburg-and-blacksburg-2/>
 19. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES THIS WEEK IN BLACKSBURG, June 15, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-this-week-in-blacksburg/>
 20. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES NEXT WEEK IN RADFORD, June 24, 2020
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-radford/>
 21. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES NEXT WEEK IN BLACKSBURG, July 1, 2020

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-blacksburg-2/>

22. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES THURSDAY IN BLACKSBURG, July 8, 2020

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-thursday-in-blacksburg/>

23. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES THIS WEEK IN FLOYD AND BLACKSBURG, July 14, 2020

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-this-week-in-floyd-and-blacksburg>

24. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES NEXT WEEK IN PEARISBURG AND BLACKSBURG, July 16, 2020

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-next-week-in-pearisburg-and-blacksburg-3/>

25. DRIVE-THRU COVID-19 TESTING CONTINUES THIS WEEK IN DUBLIN AND BLACKSBURG, August 3, 2020

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/drive-thru-covid-19-testing-continues-this-week-in-dublin-and-blacksburg/>

- iii. This work began before Sept. 1; these releases were published afterward. (2 total)

1. New River Valley Public Health Task Force and Partner Localities Encourage Public to Follow CDC Guidelines for Safer Halloween Celebrations, October 6, 2020

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d8b8d0028ac7b58bd131867/t/5f7f570e33b6227a6f22e900/1602180879963/Halloween+Release.pdf>

2. NEW RIVER HEALTH DIRECTOR OFFICIAL URGES WORKERS AND WORKPLACES TO MAINTAIN BEST PRACTICES WITH COVID-19, October 16, 2020

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/2020-regional-news-releases/new-river-health-director-official-urges-workers-and-workplaces-to-maintain-best-practices-with-covid-19/>

5. **Working Smart. Working Safe Guide:** The communicators associated with the NRV Public Health Task Force also helped communicate and promote a Working Smart. Working Safe. Guide, which was created in May 2020 to help support organizations and they planned to reopen and continue operations amid COVID-19.

https://www.montgomerycountyva.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/nrv-working-smart-working-safe-resource-guidebook-052020.pdf?sfvrsn=c3306ae1_2

6. Campaign Videos:

- a. “Be committed. Be well.” Wellness Commitment (10 tenets)

<https://youtu.be/Fjr6LHseVjs>

- b. HokieBird Masks

https://video.vt.edu/media/t/1_18o114zr?utm_source=cmpgn_news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=vtUnirelNewsDailyPublicCMP_102320-public#

(This work began before Sept. 1; this video was completed after.)

Results

The real proof of the success of the efforts made by the communicators associated with the NRV Public Health Task Force lies in the containment of COVID-19 and the prevention of spread throughout the NRV. In fact, the New River Health District experienced significantly fewer confirmed cases of the virus than was originally predicted by a University of Virginia COVID-19 model. In addition, the NRV community is often seen wearing “Be committed. Be well.” branded face masks. Through August, the website had 1,749 page views with 85% of visitors being new visitors. In August, the digital ads served 124,300 impressions, received 519 clicks, for a click through rate of 42%. Of the 124,300 impressions served, the videos were viewed to completion 74,767 times or 60% of the time.