

# PRESS RELEASE



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## BEST ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**CHESTERFIELD COUNTY** | Connecting All Community Residents to Public Schools | [Read Submission](#)

Public schools don't exist in a vacuum. In the best situation, they are a solid foundation for a thriving community. In less-than-ideal situations, public schools become adrift on a sea of community indifference or neglect. Chesterfield County Public Schools is working to build strong support in a community where a majority of residents are not connected on a daily basis to K-12 education. This is seen as an ongoing process where the tools utilized incorporate both informing a population about the school division's work while also building active involvement from the community-at-large as partners with the schools.

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

**ORANGE COUNTY** | Whole Blood Project | [Read Submission](#)

To promote best possible outcomes for our patients, Orange County's Fire & EMS Department undertook an innovative project in 2021 to carry lifesaving "whole blood" units aboard on-duty response vehicles. Whole blood refers to the completeness of the product, as distinct from components such as plasma, platelets, etc. Evidence supports the use of whole blood in emergency response since it replaces everything a patient is losing and does not require sophisticated diagnostic equipment to determine which component is needed. Our department was the first to

achieve this in our area and was an overall leader across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Accomplishing this goal required extensive training of more than 40 staff members, locating a reliable source for the blood units, writing new protocols and procedures to promote proper handling, and procuring new equipment to allow both preservation and preparation of blood units. As a result of these efforts, our staff can provide treatment, as quickly as possible, to help prevent one of the leading causes of patient mortality, blood loss. Going further, Orange County is able to support neighboring localities through mutual aid agreements.

## BEST LARGE COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT

### **PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY** | Early Diversion Program in Domestic Violence Cases | [Read Submission](#)

For judicial economy and efficient use of government and prosecutorial resources, the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office began the Early Diversion Program for Domestic Violence cases. A Staff Attorney employed by the office, Thomas Scartz, reviews incoming Domestic Violence cases. For any case that does not involve a high degree of violence or threat of violence, the Staff Attorney contacts the victim to try and understand the nature of the relationship and root cause of the assault. The Staff Attorney also reaches out to the police officer to obtain his/her point of view regarding the case. If both the victim and the police officer agree, the case is put into the Early Diversion Program. The Staff Attorney recommends that certain early intervention services take place such as requiring either party to complete anger management, mental health treatment, family or individual counseling, substance abuse treatment, parenting classes, and more. The Early Diversion Program works with community partners from Local Probation, Prince William County Police Department, Manassas City Police Department, and other local law enforcement agencies, as well as the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court.

# ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

## **ARLINGTON COUNTY | DPSCEM COVID EOC Finance & Administration | [Read Submission](#)**

During the last two years the County has dealt with the unprecedented in almost every facet of the pandemic. County personnel and contract support staff have worked tirelessly to slow the spread of the virus and meet the needs of affected parties by conducting contacting tracing; establishing a testing operation for County residents; and providing other means of assistance through feeding programs, isolation and quarantine facilities, and response resource acquisitions and distribution. From establishing logistics and warehouse operations, to setting up testing and vaccine clinics, to the purchase of never before sourced items, the list of resources and operations seem endless. Within the emergency response structure, Arlington County's Emergency Operations Center Finance and Administration (F/A) Unit ensured that the expenses incurred by the operation are reimbursable through the myriad of Federal grants available for this incident. One of the nation's largest relief programs, FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) program, has been a major source of funding for the COVID Emergency Operations for the last two years. As a grant program, FEMA's PA program offers public-sector emergency response and recovery assistance on a reimbursement basis to state and local governments. Arlington County's F/A Unit has worked with partners at FEMA and VDEM to establish core financial principles and cost recovery measures to ensure that eligible funding comes back to Arlington County. These measures not only resulted in over a 95% cost recovery rate but were identified by both FEMA and VDEM as best practices and led to Arlington County being nominated as a local government representative to FEMA on Public Assistance Cost Recovery Advisory Committee.

## **ARLINGTON COUNTY | Residential Food Scraps Collection Program | [Read Submission](#)**

In September 2021, Arlington County began collecting food scraps as part of its residential curbside trash, recycling and organics collection program. The Residential Curbside Food Scraps Collection program ("Food Scraps Program") was created to give residents an alternative to incinerating food waste and to allow Arlington County to make progress towards its sustainability and waste diversion goals. With the launch of the Food Scraps Program, Arlington County became the first county in the Commonwealth to implement curbside food scraps collection as part of its standard curbside service. The program has been

successful and well received, as revealed by a March 2022 Food Scraps Program survey of the community. The survey indicated that 79% of respondents were participating in the program. Additionally, internal waste audits indicate approximately 27% of the food waste in the single-family residential waste stream is now being diverted from incineration to composting. We expect this percentage to continue to increase as the program matures. The Food Scraps Program has been a major step forward in the County's efforts to increase its recycling and waste diversion rate.

**BOTETOURT COUNTY | Botetourt Fire & EMS Agency of the Year**  
[| Read Submission](#)

Botetourt County is a rural county located in southwestern Virginia. The county is 548 square miles and is home to approximately 33,500 residents. Some parts of our population are greater than 30 minutes from a community hospital. The populations are also aging, with 59% of residents being over 40 years old. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, local communities pivoted and supplemented state and local health departments to improve COVID-19 mitigation efforts. After the initial December 2020 vaccine rollout, communities across the country faced challenges concerning equitable distribution of vaccines. Homebound populations, especially those with mobility and transportation challenges, had difficulty accessing vaccines. Minority communities and those with language barriers also struggle with accessing vaccine information or are hesitant to receive them. To ensure equitable vaccine access, Botetourt Fire & EMS leveraged community paramedicine (CP) and launched "Boost Botetourt." The goal of this project was to use the mobility and flexibility afforded to EMS providers to vaccinate rural citizens and address existing gaps in vaccine distribution. Because of the department's innovative thinking with "Boost Botetourt" along with other EMS advances, the department was recognized at the state level and received the 2021 EMS Agency of the Year from the Governor's Office!

**CAMPBELL COUNTY | Campbell LEADS | [Read Submission](#)**

The Campbell County government organization is dedicated to professional development and growing leadership skills in employees. Based on a people-driven value model, staff identified leadership training as core operating principle through which the organization could enhance customer service, communication, ethics, budgeting, and higher levels of institutional knowledge and collaboration. In September 2021, the Strategic Leadership Team (4 department heads and the County Administrator) collaborated to launch a new 8-month internal Leadership Academy focused on communication skills, the

essence of government service, challenging ethical issues faced in local government, change management, and planning/team building skills. An initial cohort of 10 leaders/ managers were selected as a pilot group. Campbell County's first internal Leadership Academy, Campbell LEADS, met monthly (September 2021- April 2020) for 3-hour training sessions on topics that directly impact managers. Throughout the program, each participant received several leadership development books that aligned with the topics of discussion for advanced reading. In addition, they were assigned to teams of 3-4 to address organizational and community needs, opportunities, and potential innovations for the County. At the conclusion of the program, Campbell County had provided 10 employees with an in-depth Leadership Training, new connections in the organization, and engaged them in a practical project. This was achieved at the same price point of sending 2 employees for outside Leadership Training.

## **CHESTERFIELD COUNTY** | Chesterfield County's Juvenile Detention Home Reimagines Behavior Management | [Read Submission](#)

Behavior management programs are the cornerstone of a secure detention home's efforts to provide a safe environment by maintaining order and compliance, while at the same time offering incentives to residents that can ease their stay in a secure residential setting and encourage pro-social decision-making. Chesterfield Detention had already made programmatic changes in 2013 to reduce the number of physical restraints but the use of room restriction remained high. After much research, surveying, and benchmarking, it was determined we could address this issue by 1) providing more, as well as better, incentives for residents and 2) shift the focus from residents "buying" these incentives with points to being automatically eligible for them based on positive, pro-social behavior. By developing and implementing a new behavior management program that centered around incentives chosen by residents and adopting this change in perspective, we saw the use of room restriction decrease 77% and the use of physical restraints decrease 88% from 2017 to 2021.

## **CHESTERFIELD COUNTY** | 'Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece' Youth-Centric Social Media Campaign | [Read Submission](#)

Chesterfield County Communications and Media, in partnership with the county's Mental Health Support Services and Citizen Information and Resources, worked with the Youth Services Board (YCB), a group of high schoolers appointed by the county's Board of Supervisors, to craft a highly successful mental health

social media campaign – “Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece” – targeting teens and parents. The purpose of the YCB is to advise the Board on issues relating to youth and provide opportunities for community input on youth issues in Chesterfield. After more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, the YCB members noticed many of their classmates were struggling with their mental health and wanted to find a way to gain more awareness around the topic. The goal of the campaign was to engage with more Chesterfield residents and talk about the importance of addressing their mental health. The campaign achieved much success and was the first of its kind in the region. It had a profound impact on Chesterfield because it put into perspective the pulse of mental health for local children and parents and allowed YCB members to become mental health advocates for their fellow peers and give the county and region a platform to talk about it.

## **CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | StratIS Population Forecasting | [Read Submission](#)**

The Community Forecasting project blends census demographics with real estate housing trends to predict future service needs for our residents, businesses and visitors. Aligned with the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), the team evaluated forecasts that influence Parks and Recreation (P&R) and Chesterfield County Public Library (CCPL) decision making. The cross functional team included Deputy County Administrators; directors from Budget and Management, Parks and Recreation, and CCPL; subject matter experts; technology leaders and staff; data engineers and data scientists; and help from Catapult Systems, a Microsoft Gold Partner. Previously, the Comprehensive Planning unit had forecasted population at a county-at-large basis. We began with P&R and CCPL data sources. The team quickly realized that the quality and completeness of existing departmental data was not sufficient for machine learning algorithms to predict future outcomes. In addition, the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service Demographics Research Group published quality concerns regarding 2020 census data for census blocks. Since service delivery for both organizations depend on population trends, the team shifted to predicting population by leveraging Chesterfield real estate data assets combined with census demographic data. Our approach employs scientific models that consume custom generated geographical clusters, grounded in number of bedrooms by housing type. This approach was reviewed with the UVA Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service Demographics Research Group for validation.

**CHESTERFIELD COUNTY** | Providing an Opportunity to the Youngest in the Community to Become Future Scholars | [Read Submission](#)

The Chester Early Childhood Learning Academy (CECLA) is a pre-kindergarten site created within a retired elementary school building. Established to support families who meet certain household financial need levels or who have students with disabilities in need of assistance, it provides access and opportunities for their pre-k child to transition into a traditional K-5 elementary school setting upon program completion ready for academic rigor. This new format was developed to build efficiencies within the operational delivery of pre-K programs and facilities while helping foster a community outreach avenue that was in danger of being reduced due to enrollment capacity levels in existing elementary school buildings. Within the first year of opening (8/21), this school is successfully serving approximately 350 pre-k students within a Title I setting where the majority are from households at or below the poverty level or where they are students with disabilities. The programming is unique as it is entirely focused on meeting the needs of pre-k students and has drawn upon community partnerships (like local dentists with student dental visits), mental wellness resources (with the County Mental Health Department) and other charitable partners who assist families to help their children get a great start in school.

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY** | Cumberland County Unified Fire and EMS System | [Read Submission](#)

As rural localities continue to grow and develop, pressure on local governments to provide appropriate and cost-effective services becomes increasingly difficult. Public safety and the protection of life and property is one of the most significant pressures absorbed by a small, rural, or developing locality. Over time volunteer fire fighting departments and rescue squads became the norm in terms of a locality's fire and EMS service, often times serving and focusing on specific areas of the locality. As localities continue to strive to meet the Fire and Rescue needs of its residents, a cohesive and unified approach to Fire and Rescue Administration, EMS services, and Volunteer Fire Fighting Departments is necessary. Cumberland County's efforts to unite its volunteer fire departments, along with paid contracted EMS staff, managed by a County paid professional Fire and EMS Chief is a model that can positively serve other small, rural localities in the Commonwealth.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY, HENRY COUNTY, AND PATRICK COUNTY** | Blue Ridge Fire & EMS Academy | [Read Franklin County Submission](#) and [Read Henry County Submission](#)

The Blue Ridge Fire & EMS Academy (BRFEA) was formed to meet the immediate need for vacancies within the Fire and EMS services. Ironically, the class motto created by the first cohort was 'Bridging the Gap,' as that is precisely what the academy was doing, bridging a significant gap. It was created and launched with multiple jurisdictional partnerships and without a budget. The academy has proven to be a massive success through regional collaboration and still produces qualified employees. Acknowledging career academies is not new; BRFEA is the first known to have been formed in a rural region, utilizing existing resources while not taking away from the existing training available for the volunteer responders. Not only related to Fire and EMS training, but the partnerships have also opened up relationships with the jurisdictions for future partnerships.

**HANOVER COUNTY** | Hanover County School-Based Mental Health Services | [Read Submission](#)

School-Based Mental Health Services program in Hanover County, Virginia was created to provide students with access to therapeutic supports within a familiar, reassuring setting. This program was made possible through the efforts of Hanover County Community Services Board (HCCSB) and Hanover County Public Schools (HCPS) who, together, responded to the mental health crisis facing many of its high school students. The goal of this partnership was to reduce the barriers preventing students from accessing services, while enhancing their social, emotional, and academic wellbeing by providing behavioral health interventions. A full-time Licensed Clinical Social Worker was fully imbedded in the school environment and worked alongside existing school counselors to address concerns related to the challenges impacting a student's ability to function successfully. The model created allowed for students to receive an assessment, care coordination, brief intervention, outreach, and linkage to additional resources, including an option for long-term outpatient therapy within the school itself. As a result, students reported feeling more open to receiving help when it was offered in this format.

## **HENRICO COUNTY | Embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Employee Conversations and Experiences | [Read Submission](#)**

The global pandemic, civil unrest and social movement of 2020 spurred moments of reflection and desires across Henrico County for candid conversations on topics of race, inclusion, belonging and global events that impacted the workforce. Henrico County's DEI Specialist and Director of Social Services hosted WebEx focus groups, virtual inclusion workshops and panel discussions to offer safe spaces for employees to dialogue and candidly express their thoughts and reflections on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. The DEI Specialist also partnered with the Department of Public Relations (PR) to produce a video series, Voices of the Heart, which highlights the lived experiences and diverse identities of county employees, navigating complex social situations and the world of work. Henrico's efforts to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion has had a positive impact on employees at all levels of the organization. Shortly after launching the program, the County Manager, and employees from all levels of the organization sent notes expressing gratitude for the video series, virtual forums, and workshops. As of January 2022, the Voices of the Heart video series has received 2,320 views and 82 "likes" and the inclusion workshops have received high ratings from class participants. The "Embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" program exceeded expectations and built employees' trust in the organization's commitment to DEI. The County will build upon the success of this program by exploring other avenues to invite diverse perspectives and voices, and we continue to develop a culture of inclusion and belonging at Henrico. With thoughtful intention and purpose, we remained anchored and seized moments to invite voices from employees at all levels to help us think strategically about our future and prioritize the importance work of DEI at Henrico County. Henrico is committed to continuing to build a culture where all individuals can thrive and excel in their roles by providing them with the right resources to support their professional and personal development.

## **HENRICO COUNTY | Kids of Promise | [Read Submission](#)**

The newly launched "Kids of Promise" after-school program at Henrico County Public Schools' (HCPS') Laburnum Elementary School is a pilot talent development enrichment program. The school division's Department of Teaching, Learning and Innovation (TLI), along with the Henrico Education Foundation (HEF), have partnered to provide additional targeted opportunities for the program. The program seeks to increase the identification of historically underrepresented gifted students, including those from poverty environments and culturally diverse families. Kids of Promise creates grade-level student cohorts that participate in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts and

math) and social and emotional education programming. The goals of the Kids of Promise program are to increase the number of students referred and identified as gifted at Laburnum Elementary School and to develop students' potential through enrichment programming. HCPS believes that talented students exist in every school and seeks to increase opportunities for students to ensure equity and access for families. In coordination with new gifted identification tools and efforts, the Kids of Promise program develops student talents and enriches their academic experiences. We anticipate that the program will increase the number of students referred and identified for gifted programming and support academic achievement measures in the general education classroom.

## **HENRICO COUNTY** | Parent-Child Computer Work and Play Stations | [Read Submission](#)

When planning the new Fairfield Area Library in Henrico, Virginia, Henrico County Public Library (HCPL) received input from community members of all ages who expressed a desire for the new library to support young people and families learning. At the same time, Library Director Barbara Weedman had seen throughout her career caregivers of small children struggling to use public computers with their little ones in tow. To enhance the family-friendliness of the new library, Ms. Weedman shared her idea for a computer station set next to a comfortable play enclosure with the design team, and worked with designer Shannon Wray from Quinn Evans architects, and then with TMC Furniture, to create a custom solution. The resulting Computer Work + Play Stations are durable, easy to clean, and appropriate for caregivers and their infants and toddlers. The design went viral on social media in October 2019 after the Fairfield Library opened to the public, and then again on national and international news media in January 2022 as the design struck a chord with parents struggling to balance work with childcare during the pandemic. Computer Work and Play Stations make the library more accessible for caregivers of small children.

## **HENRICO COUNTY** | Safety Around the Water: Learn2Swim Program | [Read Submission](#)

Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) implemented a new program during the 2021-22 school year, Safety around the Water - Learn2Swim Program. The Learn2Swim program has been made possible through a partnership between Henrico County Public Schools, YMCA of Greater Richmond, and NOVA of Virginia Aquatics and through the fundraising efforts of our aquatic facilities and local communities. The goal of the program is saving lives through water safety education and swimming instruction. Drowning poses a considerable risk for

youth and adults, especially in areas where access to swim instruction is limited. Many accidental deaths by drowning are preventable. These lessons are designed to help all HCPS second graders learn water safety skills such as asking permission to enter the water, “swim-float-swim,” and “jump-push-turn-grab.” Our aim is to build confidence and character while achieving fundamental swimming and water safety skills in a safe and friendly environment. The Learn2Swim program has resulted in 98% of our students demonstrating improvement in benchmark psychomotor skills and water safety learning outcomes.

## **LOUDOUN COUNTY** | Presenting the People’s Records: Building Community Awareness of Historic Legacy | [Read Submission](#)

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Gary M. Clemens, Clerk of the Circuit Court and his dedicated Historic Records Division developed virtual and novel approaches to share information related to the valuable historic artifacts in the Clerk’s Office. When large gatherings of people were ill-advised or simply not feasible, the Clerk’s Office developed a series of virtual education programs. To broaden the educational value of the virtual programs, the Clerk’s Office developed public and private partnerships with several Loudoun-based organizations involved in local historic preservation and interpretation. These partnerships resulted in the presentation of four virtual programs. As professional baseball games resumed with spectators permitted back in the stadiums, the Clerk’s Office decided to capture the enthusiasm for the return of baseball by creating a series of local history trading cards, reminiscent of baseball trading cards. The Clerk’s Office created twelve (12) unique trading cards that reflect interesting local history based upon actual court records retained in the Clerk’s Office. These trading cards provide information on records, people and events that reflect key aspects of Loudoun County’s 260-year history.

## **LOUDOUN COUNTY** | Teen Micro Art Gallery at Loudoun County Public Library | [Read Submission](#)

To supply a need for fine art opportunities for teens, a library assistant created a Teen Micro Art Gallery where young artists can create, curate, and display original “micro” artwork. Besides creating an artistic and innovative outlet for local youth, partnerships and collaborations with schools, nonprofits, artists have provided teen artists with career advice and mentorship.

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY** | Return to Home Program | [Read Submission](#)

Dealing with a lost pet is a challenging situation from every angle. The pet is scared, the owners are worried and scared, and the individual who encounters the unknown pet is often uncertain of the best way to approach or help the animal. Many times, the lost pets find their way to the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center. At that point, efforts are made to reunite the lost pet with their owner. Realizing there had to be a better way, the staff at the Animal Care and Adoption Center decided to implement something new – a Return to Home Program. The new program, which relies heavily on collaboration with the Animal and Control Officers, an online form, and a social media campaign, resulted in an 88 percent return rate over the last year, a significant increase from the 70 percent return rate experienced in when the Animal Care and Adoption Center first opened in April of 2017.

**NORTHERN VIRGINIA PARTNERSHIP (SUBMITTED BY PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY)** | Northern Virginia Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) | [Read Submission](#)

The purpose of the Northern Virginia Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) is to investigate critical incidents involving law enforcement officers within the cooperating jurisdictions. The team is comprised of seasoned criminal detectives, crime scene technicians, and commanders from the 11 participating agencies. The Chief Executive Officer of each participating agency in Northern Virginia will have the option of calling upon this multi-jurisdictional team to investigate incidents within their localities. These incidents include but are not limited to; law enforcement involved shootings, any action taken by law enforcement which results in the death or a life-threatening injury of a person in the performance of an officer/deputy's duties, in-custody deaths, and law enforcement officer suicides. At the completion of a comprehensive, thorough, and impartial investigation, the Critical Incident Response Team will present the facts and evidence of the investigation to the local Commonwealth Attorney's Office or designated prosecuting authority. The agency where the incident occurred will continue to conduct their own separate administrative investigation. The creation of this multi-jurisdictional team will provide efficient, effective, and a standardized investigation for these high-profile events. The multi-jurisdictional team of tenured detectives also provides a higher degree of impartiality in these type of investigations as the team members are not solely reviewing their own peer officers' actions; the mere make-up of the team ensures checks and balances throughout the entire investigative process. As Police Chiefs and Sheriffs, it is

imperative that we serve our communities with the highest standards of professionalism, openness, and always seek justice for all people under any circumstances.

**PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY** | Northern Virginia Bioscience Center  
| [Read Submission](#)

With easy access to Washington, D.C., and the Maryland I-270 Biotech Corridor, the new 30,000 square foot Northern Virginia (NOVA) Bioscience Center commercial wet lab space reflects more than \$17.3 million in capital investment and opened in early 2022 in Prince William County, one the fastest-growing biotechnology clusters in the Greater Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area. Laboratory space is often too expensive for companies that are just starting up or are mid-size, and the cost per square foot for BSL-2 space can be difficult for smaller companies to build and maintain. The timing and the tenacity of the partnership between Prince William County Department of Economic Development (PWCDED) and commercial real estate developer and property management company Holladay Properties was tested by the pandemic multiple times. Prince William County officials did not waver in the support, including signing our government's name on an 8,000-square foot master lease to secure the financing for the entire project.

**PULASKI COUNTY** | Innovative Solution to Human Capital Shortage  
| [Read Submission](#)

Pulaski County like most of the nation in both the private and public sectors, faced an employment crisis in critical departments: PSA, Emergency Services, Waste and Water Management, and Maintenance Management. These vacancies affected the functionality of the departments, compounded the workload of existing staff and created a decline in team morale. To remedy this issue, Pulaski County implemented a strategy to address the vacancies and low morale among existing employees. By identifying Pulaski County ambassadors in each of the critical departments, Pulaski County utilized employee testimonials via a mixed-media campaign. The heartfelt testimonies of the employees resonated with the target audience and served as the inspiration for the campaign tagline – “Work Where Your Job Makes a Real Difference.” Alongside the mixedmedia communications and marketing efforts, Pulaski County created an appreciation event and referral program for all current and new employees. As a result of these efforts, all positions in the selected, critical departments were filled and a tangible increase in positive employee morale was achieved. Pulaski County

continues to host appreciation events and utilizes the same branding and campaign strategies in their hiring efforts.

## **RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY** | Growing Rappahannock's Future with FamilyFutures | [Read Submission](#)

In 2019, Rappahannock County, Rappahannock County Public Schools (RCPS), and FamilyFutures, a 501c3 nonprofit, joined in a unique partnership to implement the first program in Virginia that combines financial education and savings accounts for young students. Each new public school kindergartener receives a personal, interest-bearing savings account seeded with \$100. Every year through graduation, the students can earn up to \$100 more by completing tasks that develop financial knowledge and personal skills essential to life-long success. Activities are aligned with state mandates for preparing life-ready graduates and with standards of learning in math and social studies. Parents and other adults are included through at-home activities, workshops, and free, confidential financial coaching. The use of savings accounts gives each student a very personal and practical ongoing lesson -- and a concrete experience -- in the value of saving, earning, interest accumulation, and goal-setting for future use of the funds. Financial capability means the ability to act positively on knowledge. The goal is to give children and adults tools to make good decisions, not only in finances but in all aspects of life. In the schools FamilyFutures activities are referred to collectively as the MyFuture program, including naming the savings accounts MyFuture Accounts. Three student cohorts, totaling 190 individuals, now have more than \$51,200 in their MyFuture accounts. Parents and teachers cite even these very young students' application of what they have learned. Dozens of county residents have participated in workshops or financial coaching. FamilyFutures has provided resources on financial issues and staff training to several public and nonprofit entities in the county. In the coming year, the program will implement additional curricula components developed with teachers that more tightly integrate financial education into elementary classrooms. FamilyFutures will also continue to add financial learning opportunities to existing activities for elementary and high school students.

## **RICHMOND COUNTY** | County Bucks | [Read Submission](#)

Through the implementation of the Richmond County "County Bucks" program, Richmond County was able to offer an incredible program to residents and locally owned businesses of Richmond County and the Town of Warsaw, which has to date placed over \$150,000 into our local economy through spending of "County Bucks" by our local citizens. With the forward-thinking vision of the Richmond

County Board of Supervisors, and the available CARES Act funding made available to the County, the County wanted to create an impactful program that would benefit both the citizens and business owners of the County, to help our local economy through the impacts of COVID-19. This program has now been organized for two years, and through it, the County has distributed just under 4,000 County Bucks booklets to our residents, that have produced over \$150,000 in local spending within our economy. This program has been a huge success for Richmond County and the Town of Warsaw, and has received much support from our local businesses and residents. The County intends to operate this program again in 2022.

### **STAFFORD COUNTY | “Stafford Cares” Program Becomes Vehicle for County to Support the Community | [Read Submission](#)**

Local governments participate in "table-top" exercises or drills to keep skills sharp and prepare for emergencies. No training or experience up to this point could prepare anyone for a worldwide pandemic like the Coronavirus. The Coronavirus pandemic impacted literally every one of Stafford County, Virginia's 156,000 residents. Recognizing the virus may be present in the indeterminate future, Stafford established the "Stafford Cares" program to continue meeting the community's needs. The new program began with a desire to disseminate CARES Act funding. Initially, the County worked with restaurants hurting because of lockdowns to buy gift cards to give to lower-income families who needed supplemental food. As time passed, professionals started to note the mental toll on residents. The County expanded the program to partner with a mental health organization to post signs on county property and businesses to advertise a helpline phone number. Plans are in the works for using the Stafford Cares brand and program to call for residents to be "good neighbors" and reach out to family, friends and neighbors to ensure they are okay. The brand is recognizable, and residents will know Stafford is continuing its efforts to support and care for the community every time it is used.

### **SUSSEX COUNTY AND SURRY COUNTY | Shared Building Services Program | [Read Submission](#)**

In August 2021 the Sussex County Board of Supervisors and Surry County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted a memorandum of agreement for shared building official and inspection services, creating what is considered to be the first shared building services program between two counties in Virginia. This shared program offers an innovative solution to the delivery of services, promotes intergovernmental cooperation, and provides a model for other local

governments to consider in the provision of building services. The goal of developing a shared building services program was to: 1) combine the resources of both counties in order to offer increased compensation to attract experienced, qualified candidates; 2) share staffing in order to more flexibly meet building review and inspection needs; 3) reduce the building services operating expenses of each jurisdiction by sharing resources that would otherwise be duplicated in each jurisdiction; and 4) maintain a strong customer service presence in each jurisdiction's administrative office. With Surry County serving as the fiscal agent, the counties share all program costs on a 50/50 basis, and the county administrators of both counties jointly supervise the shared building official position that oversees the program and administrative operations in both counties. By combining resources to offer more compensation than could be offered individually by one county, the two counties were able to hire Matt Westheimer, the City of Williamsburg Building Official and President of the Virginia Building & Code Officials Association, as the first building official for the shared building services program. The new building official was provided the flexibility to develop this new program, which was designed to provide for two shared building inspectors and administrative staff in both counties' administrative offices to process permit applications and complete necessary administrative functions (the Boards of Supervisors have adopted identical building services fee schedules). The shared building services program has been very well received by developers, contractors, residents, and government officials in both counties, and has sparked discussion of other shared services in the region.

## **WYTHE COUNTY | Lot 24: Blue Star NBR & Blue Star Manufacturing** [| Read Submission](#)

Blue Star NBR and Blue Star Manufacturing in Progress Park has been characterized as “generational” and “a game-changer.” Economic developers know these projects only come along once in a generation, especially in rural Virginia. This achievement could not have been brought to fruition without the process and vision that created the industrial park, grew an appropriate major development site, stuck with its potential and realized a dream with significant regional and national impacts. This process serves as a model that other local governments may use, saying “Wythe County did it and so can we.”

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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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