

2005 Achievement Awards

Congratulations to the recipients of the Virginia Association of Counties' 2005 Achievement Awards!

VACo received 43 entries from 18 counties in the Association's third annual statewide competition honoring county programs. Ten entries were selected to receive an award.

An independent panel of judges with expertise in county programs and challenges had the monumental task of reviewing the entries, all of which exemplify that Virginia counties are striving to provide citizens with innovative and cost-efficient services. This year's judging panel included former Prince William County Attorney Sharon Pandak, Former Brunswick County Supervisor Grady Martin and Virginia Institute of Government Associate Director Tedd Povar. VACo sincerely thanks our judges for their time, dedication and enthusiasm.

The difficult selection of winning programs was based on innovation and collaboration, as well as the potential for the program to provide a model that other local governments may learn from or implement in their own localities. This brochure highlights the award winning programs and may be used as a resource by other counties that want to implement similar ideas.

Award recipients will be recognized at VACo's Annual Conference after the General Session on Tuesday, Nov. 15. A display featuring the Achievement Award submissions will be available during the conference.

Look for the 2006 award application in early Spring. VACo encourages all counties to participate!

2005 Achievement Awards

Albemarle County

*Health/Human
Services*

Family Support Program

The Family Support Program is a collaboration among social services, county schools and community partners. This prevention and early intervention program supports children's growth and development, strengthens family's resources, and promotes school success through home, school and community collaboration. Family Support strives to keep children safe and secure in their own homes by assisting families in accessing needed community services, while encouraging family literacy and increasing parent participation in their child's education.

Currently, 13 social services staff members are based in elementary schools and one middle school based on school population, poverty in the population, social services needs and school performance needs. Line staff provide case management services organized around four core functions: 1) assessment of the family's and children's risks for abuse and neglect and out of home placement, their strengths, interests, academic and social progress, health and social services needs; 2) development of a service plan that meets the specific needs of each family; 3) arrangement and coordination of services to carry out the service plan; 4) regular contacts to ensure that both the client and the provider have fulfilled their roles. In addition, Family Support Workers plan and implement a process for parent and family involvement with the schools, act as a liaison with community agencies and facilitate the provision of home or school-based parent education.

Outcome data supports the conclusion that the program is successful in preventing out-of-home placement, avoiding incidents of child abuse and neglect, and supporting improved school-related behaviors in the target population.

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2005 Achievement Awards

Stafford County

Transportation

Youth Driver Taskforce

In 2003, there were 144 fatal car crashes involving teenagers in Virginia. A total of 163 teens--an average of more than three per week--died on Virginia roads. Stafford County's rapid growth increasingly directs traffic onto roads designed for much lower levels of traffic. Rapid population growth means large construction trucks frequently use the narrow rural roads that often have no shoulder and are filled with hairpin turns. In 2003, 19 percent of Stafford drivers killed or injured in speed-related crashes were between 16 and 20 years old.

The Stafford Board of Supervisors established the Youth Driver Taskforce on March 2, 2004. It was comprised of eight members that included two citizens, a member of Stafford's Transportation Safety Commission, the Sheriff's Office, VDOT, a representative from the school system, a member of the board, a member from the fire and rescue community, and a member from the schools' driver education program. After a seven-month review, the taskforce produced a final report that covered infrastructure, awareness and coordination, driver's education enhancements, law enforcement and judicial issues, and Stafford Public School policies.

The findings and recommendations for each area include a subjective assessment concerning how much time it will take to implement, cost estimates, and whether the actions are under local control or must be acted on by an outside agency. Results of the Taskforce's review are already being seen throughout Stafford. Several actions to improve teenage drivers' safety have already been completed and more long-term systemic improvements are under consideration.

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2005 Achievement Awards

Montgomery County Communications

Comprehensive Plan Participatory Planning Initiative

In 1990, 234 out of 73,913 citizens participated in the county's comprehensive planning process. In 2000, in response to low participation rates in the past, Montgomery County designed a six-phase comprehensive plan input program that encouraged active participation in the comprehensive planning process by creating an equal planning partnership with citizens.

The six phases included: 1) defining the issues, 2) public information and education, 3) community facilitators project, 4) comprehensive plan work groups, 5) community indicators and chapter introductions, 6) map/land use description development and chapter reviews.

By the end of the input process for Montgomery County, almost 1,400 residents had participated in at least one comprehensive planning activity. Excluding salaries, the county's input process cost under \$13,000 over four years. The project required one full-time planner to work as the comprehensive plan coordinator, the remaining three planners chipped in when needed. The plan was adopted by the board on Oct. 12, 2004 on the strength of the grassroots nature of the plan and on the level of active citizen participation.

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2005 Achievement Awards

Augusta County Parks & Recreation

Stuarts Draft Park

What does a county do with additional land after building a safer entrance road to one of its elementary schools? Options include reselling the land to a developer for residential or commercial development, renting the land for agricultural purposes, or do nothing with it. In Augusta County, the question was forwarded to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and recommendations. After a number of public meetings with citizen groups and sports associations in the Stuarts Draft community, the recommendation to build a park was forwarded to the board of supervisors.

In the spring of 2000, the board authorized the expenditure of public funds for the plan. The Parks and Recreation Department completed the request for proposal and selected a firm to complete the plan.

With public input from a number of sports associations and citizens, the park design incorporated a number of amenities to serve all age populations. The focus of the park is a 25 meter leisure and competition pool. Two youth baseball fields and three multipurpose fields form the nucleus of athletic facilities that were much needed. A walking trail provides fitness opportunities for all ages and two group picnic shelters add leisure opportunities for churches, businesses or other groups to enjoy a meal and the outdoors.

Construction began in the fall of 2003 and was completed in just under one year. The pool opened during Memorial Day weekend 2005 and is the first public pool in the county.

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2005 Achievement Awards

Chesterfield County

*Organizational
Development*

Talent Management: Building Bench Strength for the Future

Like many local governments, Chesterfield County anticipates the departure of tenured employees within the next few years because of increased retirements. To accommodate this workforce change, Chesterfield County introduced a Talent Management program in 2003 as a way to enhance its human resource planning and succession management strategies.

Talent Management incorporates an annual process of assessing the talent of middle-to-upper-level managers by creating a skills inventory for current and future talent needs as well as providing ongoing coaching and employee development planning. Following each assessment, managers and employees work together to create development plans to address needs and experiences desired for career advancement.

Talent Assessment 2003 was the first step in the comprehensive Talent Management program that is intended to help county leaders become better “talent managers” by offering strategic development opportunities to employees and ultimately strengthening and retaining the county’s bench strength of future leaders.

During the past few years, Chesterfield County has been asked to share the success of this program with many other localities. The program can easily be created at minimal costs.

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2005 Achievement Awards

James City County

*Health/Human
Services*

School Mediation Actively Reduces Truancy (SMART)

In 2001, a committee composed of a broad segment of agencies that work with youth began to look for a more effective way to address the truancy problem in James City County. When a child is truant, he/she and the parents/guardians are summoned to court for a group meeting. A judge briefs the parents/guardians and they decide whether to choose mediation or a court hearing to resolve the truancy.

The mediator meets with the parents/guardians and the juvenile. This orientation session replaces the preliminary court hearing, and the first mediation session takes place within ten days of the orientation/screening session. A school social worker attends the mediation session. There, everyone works to uncover the underlying reason for the truancy and address the needs of the family on an individual basis.

If the session is successful, all parties sign a contract that outlines strategies to improve the child’s attendance. The coordinator refers the case to the appropriate court hearing if no mediation agreement results.

The program has allowed the mediator to look for individualized solutions to each family’s situation and make referrals to services that may be needed by the family. The funding to pay for the mediation services is received through the Supreme Court of Virginia Dispute Resolution Services Office.

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2005 Achievement Awards

James City County *Customer Service*

Looking to Learn

Looking to Learn was developed by the Williamsburg Regional Library Youth Services Department in partnership with the Williamsburg-James City County Public School System. The program evolved from a need to promote reading among older children with poor reading skills, the goal to improve visual literacy skills among students, and a desire to design a program that was grounded in the latest research about reading remediation and older children.

Looking to Learn uses picture books that are visually complex and thematically sophisticated but literarily simple to help children make connections between vocabulary and mental pictures. Books written and illustrated by Peter Catalanotto met the criteria of the program. His books have simple language with complex themes. Much of the story is told visually, often expanding a minimalist text. The author's entire body of work also easily tied to the Virginia Standards of Learning. Librarians used PowerPoint and GameShowPro to increase the students' comprehension of the material and to reinforce certain Virginia SOLs.

After the first year, teachers observed increases in test scores and special education students showed an increased interest in picture books and reading. In 2004, Looking to Learn was awarded the Giant Step Award by School Library Journal and Gale Publishing. This resulted in a flood of requests for more information from community agencies and school media centers across the United States and Canada.

The total cost of the program was approximately \$15,388, or \$28.50 per child.

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2005 Achievement Awards

Chesterfield County *Criminal Justice &
Public Safety*

Rapid Sequence Intubation Program

After encountering multiple critical patients whose airway could not be secured, a team of Chesterfield Fire and EMS providers investigated the pre-hospital use of Rapid Sequence Intubation (RSI) to assist field providers with endotracheal intubation.

RSI involves administration of several drugs to sedate and relax the patient, allowing an advanced airway device to be obtained more readily. Physicians who oversee emergency medical services (EMS) systems historically have been reluctant to allow use of RSI, and its use by EMS is rare.

After extensive research, the team recommended an innovative program involving local medical experts that offered clinical, educational and political support from the local medical community. The program included detailed manuals, selected participants with incremental expansion, intensive training, strict quality management, a sophisticated clinical protocol and security procedures for drug handling.

During its first year of implementation in 2001, patients receiving RSI had their airways secured at a rate 13 percent higher than those without it. Despite being critically injured, all patients receiving RSI arrived at the hospital alive. No complications related to RSI were identified. Hundreds of patients are expected to benefit in the years to come.

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2005 Achievement Awards

Dickenson County Information Technology

Dickenson County Wireless Integrated Network

The Dickenson County Wireless Project is implementing one of the most technologically advanced digital networks of its kind. This network will enable the residents, businesses, future businesses and education facilities to engage in electronic commerce and computer networking that was not possible for Dickenson County in the past.

This capability will create new businesses and new jobs, resulting in better career opportunities, higher incomes and a more stable population. Ultimately, the project will help rural Dickenson County make the transition from a strictly natural resource-based economy to a more diversified economy including small and larger technology based businesses. This will ensure the livelihood of county residents and the continued viability of the area's economy.

The Dickenson County Wireless Project proposes a very innovative solution to two of the most critical issues preventing rural communities around the nation from realizing the benefits of high speed broadband for rural economic sustainability. The first is a lack of physical infrastructure and the second is the lack of intellectual infrastructure. The innovation of the project lies not so much in the technology itself but in its creative application to meet the needed services identified by the county as critical to its future.

This project is not only capable of replication, but also cost effective and relevant to the community.

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2005 Achievement Awards

Fauquier County Community/Economic Development

"Buy Local" Campaign Initiative

The Fauquier County Board of Supervisors adopted a priority to create and implement an aggressive buy local campaign in 2004. The focus of the campaign is to encourage local spending among residents, businesses and government and to stress the importance of purchasing goods and services locally.

To implement the goals, strategic community partnerships were developed. A "Shop Here Fauquier" brand and logo were developed to market the initiative. Key websites were linked to enhance the effectiveness of information to residents and businesses. A shopping survey was conducted in partnership with a local newspaper and the results analyzed.

The campaign resulted in a better understanding of resident needs and buying patterns. It also created strong partnerships that encourage local purchasing. The website links provide easy access to local products and services. The initiative created an economic process understood by residents, businesses and local governments. There's a clear understanding of local and state procurement policies and laws.

This user-friendly marketing/promotion campaign can be used by any community to educate residents on why buying locally helps businesses and the entire community.

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