

PRESS RELEASE



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BEST ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

ALLEGHANY COUNTY | Alleghany/Covington School Consolidation | [Read Submission](#)

Alleghany Highlands Public Schools is Virginia's newest school division as of July 1, 2022. After over a generation of conversations, local and state leaders came together to analyze the need for a jointly-operated school division, pooling the resources of the historic Alleghany County Public Schools and Covington City Public Schools. The Alleghany County Board of Supervisors, the Covington City Council, the Covington City School Board, and the Alleghany County School Board came together to form the Joint School Services Committee (JSSC), a body that followed guidelines for public meetings and met regularly from August 22, 2019, into 2022, to accomplish the planning for the project. This work included rich conversation, surveys of the local community, and other forms of input. A "no-harm" merger was successfully planned in which no employees would involuntarily lose their jobs nor see reduced take-home pay. On July 1, 2022, the central offices and school boards combined their efforts, creating Alleghany Highlands Public Schools. Work continued on additional projects for the new school division ranging from the finalization of refined governance norms for the new board to the welcoming of staff to new buildings. Throughout the 2022-23 school year, the school division relied upon the support of the local community and the governing bodies to execute a variety of projects to enhance opportunities for students and to complete the consolidation of student bodies in 2023-24. The consolidation brought together high school-age students and middle school students from both historic divisions in a newly-configured arrangement of schools creating the Alleghany Cougars, a nod to both prior school divisions.

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

DINWIDDIE COUNTY | City Planning Project | [Read Submission](#)

Dinwiddie County's City Planning Project is a collaborative effort between Dinwiddie County and Dinwiddie County Public Schools' Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program. The year-long project is completed by 8th-grade students enrolled in the GATE program at Dinwiddie County Middle School. The project is completed through project-based, community service learning, and inquiry-based learning. Students work for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex challenge through individual investigation and cooperative learning. The purpose of the project is for students to investigate the careers of city and regional planners as well as anticipated trends in the field. Students will apply this information when designing their own city or region for today's world or the future. Throughout the City Planning Project, students exercise critical and creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship.

BEST LARGE COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Chesterfield Recovery Academy | [Read Submission](#)

Recovery high schools are designed to provide both a supportive academic environment and a purposeful daily structure to guide students who are recovering from substance use disorder with the goal of graduating from high school. Chesterfield Recovery Academy is an in-person program designed to allow students throughout the Region entry no matter where they are in their high school journey. This innovative program was funded through the Virginia State Legislature and grant funding. The learning outcomes are accomplished using online coursework and a Student Support and Academic Facilitator who help students with their work and academic goals while the therapeutic outcomes are supported by multiple clinicians hired through the local community services board.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

ALBEMARLE COUNTY | Let's Talk Albemarle | [Read Submission](#)

Reducing barriers to participation is essential for promoting equity, fostering community engagement, and building a more inclusive and vibrant society. Building relationships with community members is also crucial to foster new collaboration and partnership opportunities. This can lead to a more engaged and active citizenry, which can result in a stronger and more resilient community over time. The Let's Talk Albemarle community engagement field office van seeks to define the Albemarle County approach to community engagement as inclusive, accessible, welcoming, and creative. Hosting "popsup" in locations where people already are, such as gas stations, laundromats, and community festivals, the engagement team designs activities that are intentional and customized to each location and community. Overall, the Let's Talk Albemarle project has successfully held over 50 pop-ups in more than 30 locations and met thousands of community members across Albemarle County since April 2021, demonstrating the desire to listen, collaborate, and trust in the community. Operating on a tight budget of \$100,000, the project has made community engagement accessible and inclusive.

AMHERST COUNTY | Route 29 Business Beautification Committee | [Read Submission](#)

Amherst County's Route 29 Business Beautification Committee was created in 2016 as an advisory committee to the Planning Commission. Prior to the creation of the committee, the business corridor was viewed as unattractive and unmaintained. Therefore, the purpose of the committee was to beautify the roadways of Amherst County to instill pride and appreciation of the citizenry and the attractiveness of their community. Since the creation of the committee, partnerships between numerous organizations have been created to advocate for the revitalization and upkeep of the Route 29 Business corridor. These partnerships have led to supplementary landscaping, blight removal, coordination efforts between local, state, and private entities, and incentive programs for businesses. Through these initiatives, the committee continues to facilitate an attractive and highly functioning corridor.

ARLINGTON COUNTY | Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI) | [Read Submission](#)

The Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI), managed by the Arlington Department of Human Services, has played a major role in improving community safety and health in the face of a pandemic-related surge in opioid use, and the threats that accompany the increasing presence of fentanyl in the region. AARI was formed in 2017 and has implemented a well-established Prevention, Treatment, and Supply Reduction plan. This plan has helped thousands of residents throughout the opioid crisis that has hit many communities. The group's response to a surge in opioid overdoses among youth in 2023 has been truly remarkable. This response has included educational events, community town halls, coordination with schools, and widespread training and distribution of Narcan. AARI's efforts have greatly helped Arlington come to grips with this threat to community health and safety.

ARLINGTON COUNTY | Arlington County's Volunteer Guardianship Program | [Read Submission](#)

Arlington County's Guardianship Program connects court appointed guardians of incapacitated adults with a dedicated Guardianship Coordinator to support them in managing the care and needs of their loved ones. The program serves as a landing ground for guardians who may otherwise not know how to access key county services such as Adult Services, Nursing Case Management, Home Delivered Meals, and Medicaid. Additionally, the Coordinator can provide information about the guardianship process, support the proposed guardian along their journey, and explore least restrictive options if available. The program also recruits, trains, and supports court-appointed volunteer guardians for individuals who can no longer make informed decisions for themselves. Created in 1986 to address the growing need for more court appointed fiduciaries for the county's human services clients, Arlington County's Volunteer Guardianship Program is one of a small number of volunteer-based guardianship programs in the entire country and is currently the only one of its kind in the state. Community members in need of this service have been determined by the Circuit Court to be incapacitated and cannot turn to friends, family, or neighbors who are willing and able to be appointed as guardian. Volunteer guardians come from a variety of backgrounds including practicing attorneys, retired federal employees, and social workers. The program provides initial and ongoing training to volunteer guardians and provides support after appointment.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Boots on the Ground | [Read Submission](#)

Chesterfield County's Boots on the Ground program is a collaboration between 49 County staff members representing 13 County departments and the local division of the Virginia Department of Health. Participants include staff from Community Enhancement, the Fire Marshal's office, Building Inspections, Planning, Mental Health, community police officers, and Social Services, among others. Staff from these departments are the County's representatives physically present in the field. They are the County's representatives who most frequently interact with Chesterfield's residents and observe the conditions of residential and commercial properties across the county. BOTG provides an opportunity for Chesterfield's front line staff to regularly address shared problems related to zoning enforcement, housing for vulnerable populations, remediating blighted properties to promote safe neighborhoods, and unique issues that are best solved by a coordinated approach from the County. Boots on the Ground members are supported by the County Attorney's office and the Deputy County Administrator for Community Development. Boots on the Ground is a forum that promotes intragovernmental cooperation and communication by creating a trusted, collegial space for front line staff to share observations and expertise and ask for input from departments who may have different perspectives on the same issue. Boots on the Ground meets quarterly, and communication between staff is encouraged between meetings as issues arise. As a result of Boots on the Ground, relationships between County departments are created and strengthened, communication pathways are established, and issues relating to health, safety, and welfare of County residents are addressed in a timely and holistic manner.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Davis Child Advocacy Multidisciplinary Team | [Read Submission](#)

The Multidisciplinary Team at the Davis Child Advocacy Center in Chesterfield County offers new services to County residents, particularly children, enhances the level of citizen understanding of the offerings of the Child Advocacy Center, and promotes coordination to address the community problem of child abuse. The MDT is a service provided by the willingness and dedication of County departments and community partners like the Bon Secours forensic nursing program to work together in recognition that child abuse is best tackled through a multidisciplinary approach. In 2023, the CAC was fully accredited by the National Children's Alliance. As a result, the MDT's policies and procedures

ensure compliance with State and National Accreditation standards for a best practice, collaborative response to child abuse cases. The team's approach encompasses the expertise and dedication of its members – from law enforcement and social services to mental health services and therapy to nursing and attorneys. Every professional on the MDT has valuable insight and expertise that they bring to the team to achieve its goals of maximizing services to families affected by child abuse and exploitation. The process begins with coordinating criminal investigation of child abuse to determine the facts, identifying therapeutic and medical services that can assist the family, scheduling a forensic interview with the child, and working toward successful prosecution of abusers. Each member of the MDT recognizes the value of contributing and takes time away from his/her primary duties to participate in monthly meetings and frequent case-specific communications amongst MDT members. The MDT is not an added cost to the County, but the added benefits of the collaboration between its members for abused children and their families are immeasurable.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | RECON | [Read Submission](#)

Rapid Engagement Correctional Outreach Navigators or RECON is a team of peer recovery specialists that work inside the Chesterfield County Jail. The peer navigators are George Mason University employees hired through the Empowered Community Opioid Project (ECOP) that work in the intake unit of the jail. The project launched in December of 2022. The program follows a Bridge model utilizes principles from care coordination, case management, and population health to maximize health outcomes and resource utilization for populations and the individuals within them, in this case, those high-risk individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD). The Bridge process focuses on coordinating care through cross-sector system collaboration followed by individualization of that care. The special part about the RECON team is that two out of the three peer staff, came through the Jail's own drug treatment program, HARP. Utilizing the jails own program alumni to make a further impact for the OUD community spreads hope to those that are struggling with OUD and incarceration that recovery is possible.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY | Third-Party Notification Program for Chesterfield County Utilities Customers | [Read Submission](#)

At the beginning of 2022, the Chesterfield County Utilities Department improved a Third-Party Notification Program for relatives, friends, or guardians of elderly

and disabled customers to prevent possible service disconnection. The program was called Concern About Relatives and Elders, also known as CARE. Over the last ten years Chesterfield County's population increased 15% and the population of persons 65 years and over increased 19%. It is important we show kindness and concern for our elderly and disabled customers, especially those living alone, to make sure their water and wastewater services are not interrupted. For 2021, the population of persons 65 and up in Chesterfield County was 15.8%. There are 25,899 veterans living in Chesterfield County, and 8.8% of the County's population under the age of 65 are living with a disability. This new brochure was a result of continuous monitoring of our processes and programs, implementing changes through recommendations and needs. We focused on listening to our customers and co-workers through suggestions and other means to improve processes.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY | Parks and Recreation Master Plan **| [Read Submission](#)**

The Cumberland County Parks and Recreation Master Plan was initiated in March of 2022 and ultimately adopted by the Board of Supervisors at their December 2022 meeting. The effort included multiple efforts of community engagement, developing County levels of service standards for Parks and Recreation facilities, and a 5-year plan for facility development to meet the recreational needs for County residents. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed over a 10-month period by County staff, saving the County approximately \$50,000 in consultant fees for the effort. The plan has already yielded fruit in that it has guided the County in making decisions related to the current development of four (4) facilities and improvements to one (1) identified in the plan. The model for the Master Plan is one that is easily followed and can be replicated in other localities of any size or resource level.

FLOYD COUNTY | Floyd Free Fridge | [Read Submission](#)

To address the food insecurity needs in our community and to connect people in the community with food resources, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library staff created the Floyd Free Fridge in the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library in Floyd, Virginia. The Floyd Free Fridge was established in collaboration with our local food pantry, Plenty Farm and Food Bank, and with the generous support of one of our valued library patrons. With the Floyd Free Fridge, the library aims to bridge the gap between the community and

essential food resources, delivering access to fresh produce and other nutritious items.

GREENE COUNTY | Greene County Emergency Medical Services

| [Read Submission](#)

Greene County faced a trio of challenges in 2020, in addition to the Coronavirus Pandemic. First, a decrease in volunteer recruitment over the years caused the county's volunteer rescue squad—which had served the community for more than 50 years—to dissolve, requiring more resources to go toward the county's contracted ambulance provider. Four months later, that provider told the county it would sever its contract within six months. Finally, the Board of Supervisors approved the creation of the Greene County Emergency Medical Services. It usually takes months and sometimes years of planning to launch a career EMS agency, but Greene County had 155 days. And on October 14, 2020, the new squad hit the street at 0600 hours. However, it had to do that without a building of its own and with inherited equipment from the then-volunteer rescue squad, which had done its best to perform proper maintenance but had fallen short. One ambulance was taken out of service immediately due to safety concerns. The building official condemned the volunteer rescue squad building. The county has increased funding year after year for staffing and built a new squad building to the tune of \$2.5 million, but the budget lacks funding for additional capital needs. GCEMS truly comes from humble beginnings starting with 10 EMTs and 12 Paramedics (some full time and some part-time) to 17 EMTs and 20 Paramedics today and a waiting list to join the department when an opening arrives. Since its beginnings, GCEMS has answered more than 6,500 calls for service with the number of calls increasing by 10% from 2020-2022. If the current pace continues for 2023, GCEMS will exceed 3,500 calls for service this calendar year alone. It is expected that by the end of this calendar year, three fully staffed medic units per 24-hour shift will be necessary to meet the needs of the community.

HENRICO COUNTY | Adult Education at Regency Mall: Shopping for Your Future | [Read Submission](#)

Henrico County Public Schools is always looking for a way to enhance its resources related to adult learning and technical education. The Adult Education Program Center at Regency Mall project offered a perfect situation for HCPS to grow this program, with a dedicated space that adults will feel comfortable attending and an instruction element that will allow technical education students

to influence the construction and planning of the project. In its final form, the Adult Education Program Center at Regency Mall will serve as a one-stop shop for many different career-learning disciplines, where adult learners can browse and “shop” for their futures just like they would shop at a mall. The benefit was immediate for the technical-education students involved in the construction process, as they got firsthand experience planning and executing the renovation for this 48,000 square foot space. Working with local businesses and the mall owner, the cost of this massive undertaking was not only viable but efficient. This project has the chance to revolutionize the way Henrico County Public Schools delivers career and technical education into the future, and the results are already experiencing that potential.

HENRICO COUNTY | Local Police Department and Students Build Relationships | [Read Submission](#)

In an effort to alleviate expressed distrust between students and police officers, Henrico County Public Schools utilized a culinary arts program in order to bring both groups together. Students from Varina High School prepared a meal to be shared with police officers and school resource officers, sparking positive and open conversations about each group’s perspectives. The “family meal” provided a key opportunity for students to be able to think and ask questions in an informal setting, while police officers were able to more comfortably speak about the important topics that the students were asking about. This culinary program proved to be instrumental in enhancing the relationship between the community at Varina High School and the county’s police officers.

HENRICO COUNTY | Newcomer Event | [Read Submission](#)

Henrico County is an incredibly diverse place and meeting the needs of a community like this necessitates bringing in different people and giving them a sense of belonging. The language barrier can be difficult when it comes to immigrants and refugees, but the Newcomer Event is designed to connect to any person in Henrico County, regardless of what language they speak or community they’re a part of. The Newcomer Event successfully provides resources so that these families feel comfortable in Henrico County, and the many departments, volunteers and people involved ensured that these families’ feelings and thoughts would be heard – no matter what language they spoke. The Newcomer Event is central to the idea that these families don’t just live in Henrico County and attend HCPS schools, they are invaluable parts of all of it. It’s a collaborative, strategic

effort that benefits all parties involved and gives families a much-needed sense of community.

HENRICO COUNTY | Parsons Community Center | [Read Submission](#)

The redesign of the Orientation Center of Meadow Farm Museum at Crump Park includes exhibitions that focus heavily on the three cultures that have occupied its lands for thousands of years, culminating in a rededication of the building under the name “Parsons Community Center.” The renaming of the building focuses on an enslaved family of Meadow Farm and is now a space to foster conversations about history rather than the interpretation of history. For 40 years, the story of Meadow Farm was told through the lens of the families who owned the property, relegating the other stories and people to the background; stories now shared through the redesign and new exhibits, embracing the full history of Meadow Farm and not shying away from the more difficult aspects that are not as attractive. It presents stories of turmoil, peace, struggle, ease, failure, success, bondage, freedom, and much more. It has become a place for all people.

HENRY COUNTY | Henry County Fair | [Read Submission](#)

The Board of Supervisors for Henry County was interested in reviving the Henry County Fair, which had not been held for over 60 years. They tasked Henry County Parks and Recreation with the job of investigating if this was possible and how to make it happen. Parks and Recreation decided to embark on the journey of making the fair a reality again. Staff visited numerous other fairs in the state to gather ideas and information and put in place a year and a half planning process. The Martinsville Speedway volunteered space to have the fair, and Parks and Recreation partnered with them to make this happen the same week as the speedway was holding its late-model race. After much hard work and a lot of staff hours, the fair was a smashing success the first two years having about 8,000 people in attendance each of the first two years.

LOUDOUN COUNTY | LCPL Fights Food Insecurity | [Read Submission](#)

Loudoun County, Virginia is one of the wealthiest areas in the nation, yet hidden in this number are the 16,800 Loudoun residents who are food insecure. Of those, 55% are ineligible for the government’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program. For LCPL, this has been, and continues to be, an issue worth addressing. To help the residents struggling in our community, Loudoun County Public Library has developed several innovative food drives, programs, and special projects. Many of these have been in partnership with Loudoun Hunger, the largest food pantry in the County. Others were planned with individual library branch staff and other nonprofits, or with library staff offering food and resources directly to our community. Each of the programs are easily replicable by any library system in the country, simply by embracing the cause of food insecurity, making efforts to share information from local experts, bringing in available community resources, and offering to collect food. Through LCPL's initiatives since 2018, they have directly served nearly 6,700 patrons and collected over 30,600 pounds of food.

LOUDOUN COUNTY | Loudoun Innovation Challenge | [Read Submission](#)

Access to capital is always a factor in entrepreneurial success and Loudoun County Economic Development, along with the Loudoun Economic Development Authority, recognized the need to cultivate small businesses with big ideas to help diversify and stimulate the local economy. The Loudoun Innovation Challenge is an annual pitch competition that offers \$150,000 in total prize money for entrepreneurs to take their business to the next level. To date, nearly \$500,000 has been invested directly into Loudoun County's small business community through the Innovation Challenge program, resulting in millions of dollars of economic development from the business growth of program finalists and winners.

LOUDOUN COUNTY | Sidewalk and Trails Program – Equity Lens | [Read Submission](#)

Loudoun County's significant population growth and corresponding development has resulted in implementation of much of the County's planned network of walkways and bikeways. To address gaps in the existing network, the Sidewalk and Trail Program was initiated in the County's Capital Improvement Program, with funding available to plan, design and implement 3 to 5 miles of sidewalk, shared use path or regional trail per year over the next six years. To determine which missing bicycle and pedestrian links to address first, the project team, with input from representatives of various county departments, advocacy groups, and partner agencies, developed a data-driven method to evaluate all missing

sidewalk and trail links based mostly on demand and safety. The highest scoring missing segments are used to identify sidewalk and shared use path projects for feasibility assessments, development of concept drawings, and planning level cost estimates. These items support grant funding applications, and the identified sidewalk and trail projects are proposed for inclusion in Loudoun County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in ascending priority order. In the County's FY 2024 Adopted Budget, 23 identified Sidewalk and Trail Projects have been included. An innovative framework using available public health indexes and the average percent of sidewalk and trail network completion was then developed to analyze the County's Sidewalk and Trail network and the Sidewalk and Trail Program's priority list of segments through an equity lens. This innovative framework establishes a set of objective standards, analyzes missing sidewalk and trail links in the County against those standards, and implements an outcome-based corrective action plan to modify the program's priority list of segments, which in turn adjusts future project priorities. This framework and approach provide a model for other programs and localities to perform equity analysis when planning their future projects.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY | Employee Engagement Committee **| [Read Submission](#)**

While Montgomery County, is a great place to live and to work, the leadership realized more could be done to facilitate an organizational culture that supported and elevated the County's values, all while providing engaging opportunities for employees. As a result, the Employee Engagement Committee (EEC) was formed and began planning activities for 2022. The purpose of the EEC is to provide opportunities for all Montgomery County employees, regardless of their physical location, to have fun and engaging opportunities with zero strings attached. Employees from various offices and departments are represented on the committee. The EEC plans and coordinates activities, programs, and events for all Montgomery County employees. Fostering an organizational culture of teamwork through workplace engagement opportunities motivates employees and creates an unparalleled sense of comradery. In 2022, the EEC planned 18 activities and events for employees. Anecdotally, employees have shared how much they appreciate the working environment at Montgomery County. A testament to this is the fact that employees from offices and departments who previously did not participate in the few sporadic County-planned events prior to the creation of the EEC now participate and even provided good feedback on ideas for future engagement activities.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY | Wetland Mitigation Project – Crab Creek | [Read Submission](#)

In 2021, Montgomery County was approached with a proposal to create a wetland mitigation bank project. This mitigation bank would be the first such project in the New River Watershed. Unfortunately, this use was not defined in the County’s Zoning Ordinance. Staff began to perform substantial research on how other localities throughout Virginia regulated wetland mitigation bank projects. Eventually, an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance allowing mitigation bank use in the County was presented to the local governing body. Following the amendment approval in the spring of 2021, staff began working with an applicant on a wetland mitigation project in 2022. The request was to expand an existing mitigation bank to include an additional five acres and to restore 4,000 linear feet of Crab Creek. In doing so, an increased number of tax credits would be available for sale throughout the watershed and the area would be protected in perpetuity. Not only did this particular applicant benefit from an approved application, future developers and businesses have the potential to also benefit from available tax credits should their application be approved. These credits are vital to area developers as Montgomery County is one of the fastest growing localities in Virginia. The benefits to Crab Creek were substantial. Natural habitats were restored; flood hazards were mitigated; and there is now a guaranteed preserved open space in the community through Deed of Restrictions – all without providing additional traffic, noise, lighting, or safety impacts to surrounding properties. Without the combined efforts of everyone involved this restoration would not have become a reality. This is an illustration of how a well-planned and guided project can benefit an entire community while protecting/enhancing an area’s natural resources.

ORANGE COUNTY | Edna Lewis Menu Trail | [Read Submission](#)

In the Winter of 2022, staff from the Department and Economic Development and Tourism in Orange County were considering storytelling opportunities and brand awareness efforts that could be used to tell a more diverse story about Orange County and potentially peak interest in the area as a travel destination for all travelers. They wanted stories that hadn’t been told and ones that represented a wide range of people and topics. When Edna Lewis’s name came up staff knew immediately that this was an important story to tell and that it was of National significance. The problem addressed by the Edna Lewis Media Event and Menu Trail is one of awareness and under representation. Chef Edna Lewis was from the era of James Beard and Julia Child and is well-respected among culinary

professionals around the world. Lewis was equally influential and groundbreaking as Beard and Child however, she does not share the same type of household name recognition or celebrity status. Her contributions are just as significant as those of her contemporaries – maybe more so, and her story deserves to be told. By inviting media to Virginia to taste, visit and experience some of Edna Lewis’s heritage, Orange County is working to bring overdue awareness to Lewis and preserve her story for future generations. It’s important that young, aspiring black chefs see themselves (and their communities) represented in America’s culinary history and more National focus on Edna Lewis’s story accomplishes that goal.

ORANGE COUNTY | Firefighter/EMT Education & Workforce Partnership Initiative | [Read Submission](#)

The recruitment and retention of emergency medical technician and firefighter personnel has plagued every corner of the commonwealth. The demands of the job take a mental, emotional, and physical toll on those who undertake the challenges of the professions. Tackling the issue is multifaceted. To start, the community and workforce pool must be educated on the professions and a qualified talent pool must be developed to help fill the workforce pipeline and ensure room for growth and turnover. The County of Orange Fire and EMS Department (COFEMS) initiated a creative program to combat this challenge in conjunction with the Orange County Public School System (OCPS) and the community. As a first in the state, COFEMS and OCPS train the EMS and Firefighter leaders of tomorrow in active stations, *not classrooms*, for Firefighter 1 and EMS courses. As a result, industry interested participants completed the program which has translated into new hires and internships in our community. COFEMS’s goal as a regional and state leader in modern technology and the implementation of programs and medical protocols is to train future leaders, tackle the recruiting hurdle faced across the nation, and establish an ongoing relationship with students that doesn’t end at graduation. Seeing “beyond” the grade has not only empowered our youth but allowed our first responders to engage in a meaningful across the community.

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY | Prince Edward Cannery Partnership: Our Recipe for Success | [Read Submission](#)

The success of the Prince Edward County Cannery has largely been due to the collaboration between the County government and the non-profit entity,

Virginia Food Works, which operates a commercial contract packing service out of the cannery for farmers and food businesses creating products for retail sale. This partnership was formed in 2010, and has allowed for a unique and creative solution for preserving local produce, and for serving both home canners and local farmers and entrepreneurs, creating additional value to support the County's Cannery. The partnership between the County of Prince Edward and Virginia Food Works has reaped a decade of benefits and economic impact for Prince Edward County residents, farmers and food entrepreneurs by: (1) facilitating access to the VDACS-certified commercial kitchen at the Prince Edward Cannery; (2) creating a program whereby VFW's staff provides hands-on assistance to take food product ideas from "recipe to retail;" and (3) VFW staff recruit and work individually with each commercial client and help navigate both food production and food laws. With Virginia's favorable climate and ability to grow diverse crops, combined with a strong demand for purchasing local foods, Virginia Food Works helps "connect the dots" in our food system. The venture is a public/private partnership where the processing facility and equipment are owned and maintained by the government of Prince Edward County with the staff and expertise shared by VFW. The facility is located in the "heartland" of Virginia, allowing easy access for farmers and food entrepreneurs from across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY | Gun Safety Program | [Read Submission](#)

The Prince William County Sheriff's Office created the Gun Safety program in 2016 in collaboration with Project Child Safe and the Virginia Cooperative Extension. In Prince William County, this program is provided as an additional component of the "Safe at Home, Safe Alone" program that is taught to fourth-grade students across the Commonwealth. The purpose of the program is to teach children what to do if they find a gun. The program teaches children, through repetition and by signing a Firearms Responsibility Contract, the appropriate steps to take if they find a gun and ways to keep themselves and others safe. The Gun Safety program was initially only taught in our public school system; however, the program was so well-received, that it is now offered to private schools and traditional schools within the county. We are very proud of this program and the tremendous benefit it provides to the families in our community.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY | Prince William County Child Advocacy Center | [Read Submission](#)

According to the July 2022 census population estimate, the county contained approximately 486,943 residents with 26.7% (approximately 130,000) of those residents being under the age of eighteen. After a directive from the PWC Board of Supervisors, the PWC Department of Social Services (DSS) leadership, in collaboration with the public, Police, Community Services, Commonwealth Attorney, County Attorney, and Victim Advocacy Services set up a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Committee (Committee) to enhance their already strong investigative response to the abuse and/or neglect of children. The Committee's research found that when the more traditional approaches to child abuse investigations were utilized, numerous agencies and investigators could be involved, and the response could become fragmented. Various methodologies were researched and PWC, with the support of the Board of County Supervisors, decided to implement the CAC model to DSS' already robust array of services. The nationally recognized Child Advocacy Center (CAC) model supports a seamless, effective, trauma-informed response to child abuse allegations, investigations, and prosecutions. The model emphasizes coordination and collaboration with the partner agencies with a goal of avoiding re-traumatization of children during the investigative process. Through research, leadership noted that the CAC model allowed for services to be more efficient, victim access to services occurred quicker, and \$1,000 is an estimated tax savings per investigation. What stands out about the PWC CAC is that it is located within the local government's DSS, on government property, and has state-of-the-art technology that connects law enforcement and the Commonwealth Attorney in real time during forensic interviews with child survivors of abuse and/or neglect to gather evidence for prosecutions. It is the only CAC in Virginia with Axion interview and video rooms. In less than 18 months, April 2022 to June 2023, 388 forensic interviews have been conducted, 401 cases have been reviewed by the Multidisciplinary Team, 1,921 advocacy related appointments and services have been secured, and 420 mental health sessions have been conducted. Additionally, CAC staff found food and lodging for the families so that all were safe from abuse while making sure referrals were in place for continual counseling.

PULASKI COUNTY | One Bag Challenge | [Read Submission](#)

In an effort to combat the growing problem of roadside trash/litter in Pulaski County, the Board of Supervisors in cooperation with county staff and other litter prevention agencies have implemented a "One Bag Challenge" program.

Businesses, agencies and citizens are encouraged to pick up at least one full bag of trash along a littered roadway. Incentives are given to citizens in the form of \$100 gift card drawings at monthly Board of Supervisors meetings. Since implementation of the program, participation has increased and litter and trash along county roadways has dramatically decreased. Pulaski County has enjoyed having very clean roadways ways throughout the county and instilled the Pride, Vision and Excellence as set forth on the County Seal.

ROANOKE COUNTY | Inside-Out | [Read Submission](#)

The Roanoke County Sheriff's Office partnered with Roanoke College to provide an Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program for inmates and college students. This program attempts to reduce recidivism by inmates as well as educate college students on the realities of incarceration. The Inside-Out program provides inmates an opportunity to further their education and receive free-of-charge college credits if they complete the course. Theoretically, this will also offer inmates a head start with employment once released and discourage them from reoffending. The mission of the program is to create an environment where respectful dialogue surrounding justice can occur allowing everyone involved to see we are more than our worst mistakes. Also important is providing an opportunity for students on the "outside" to come inside the facility and see what life is like. These students can then share with their communities what they have learned, which hopefully reduces the assumptions and misconceptions that exist about those incarcerated. It is the hope that the Inside-Out program will reduce re-offenses, create opportunities for inmates once released into the community, and promote a positive relationship with the public.

STAFFORD COUNTY | Internship Partnership with Utilities Department and Public Schools Creates a Pipeline from High School to Full-Time Employment | [Read Submission](#)

Stafford County's Department of Utilities identified a way to promote career opportunities to today's youth in high school and recruit new employees. To help grow industry awareness and promote fulfilling career opportunities, the Utilities Department partnered with Stafford County High Schools to recruit and mentor students enrolled in the Schools' year-long Work Based Learning Program. This program is a paid internship experience that helps prepare students for the different careers within Stafford County's two water treatment facilities, Lake Mooney and Smith Lake. This internship program benefits the Water Treatment

Facilities and the students looking for a profession to enter after graduation. By recruiting future employees through the school system, Stafford County Utilities is further demonstrating its commitment to the community. New employees can be difficult to find, and Stafford County is always looking for new ways to recruit employees. Looking from within Stafford's high school population is a win-win for Stafford, the School and the student. This program is one that other localities could easily replicate.

TAZEWELL COUNTY | Law Enforcement EMT Program (LEEMT) [| Read Submission](#)

When faced with understaffing and terrain obstacles in responding to medical emergencies, Tazewell County was able to develop and implement an innovative program not seen in Southwest Virginia, that has involved different levels of our county government, multiple municipalities, as well as state agencies. With the development of the new Law Enforcement Emergency Medical Technician Program (LEEMT), Deputy Sheriffs have been able to receive important medical training and become certified EMTs. This new cross training has greatly enhanced our overall ability to respond to medical emergencies. Our Deputy/EMTs have been able to provide quick response to 911 medical calls and start important life-saving care until actual rescue units arrive to take over. This program is not intended to take the place of a full rescue crew, but having Deputy Sheriffs trained and equipped as EMTs allows our 911 Center to send them to a medical emergency, if they are not on a criminal matter, to fill in the response-time gap. It has also helped increase needed staffing to some of our municipal rescue agencies located in Tazewell County, with several of our Deputies joining local rescue agencies on a part-time basis. When we look at all the Patrol Units, School Resource Officers, and Courthouse Deputies that are prepared to render aid as an EMT, we feel that the minimal cost that has been put into this new and exciting program has been greatly outweighed by the many benefits we have seen.

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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