

# PRESS RELEASE



## Virginia Counties Recognized for Model Programs



**RICHMOND (August 8, 2025)**—The Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) is pleased to announce the 57 recipients of the 2025 Achievement Awards, which recognize excellence in local government programs. VACo received a record 155 submissions.

Winning entries focused on addressing issues of public safety, community development, and health, as well as finding solutions to challenges that counties encounter daily.

[Winning Achievement Award Submissions](#)

[All 2025 Achievement Awards Entries](#)

“Thank you to all who participated in the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the Achievement Awards,” VACo Executive Director **Dean Lynch** said. “Every year we seem to receive a record number of submissions. The program grows because counties continue to serve their communities well, and these awards are a reflection of the innovative work. Congratulations to county staff and leadership for their continued hard work and good decision making reflected in all 155 entries.”

This year’s judges were **Charles Hartgrove, ICMA-CM**, Managing Director of the Virginia Institute of Government; **Dr. Sheryl Bailey**, Visiting Professor of Practice at Virginia Tech, and former Chesterfield County Deputy County Administrator; and **Penny Gross**, former longtime Fairfax County Supervisor.

**Wythe County** and its **Hitachi Energy Arena Revitalization Program** won this year’s **Best Achievement Award**.

“Sports tourism has made a significant impact on the Commonwealth, and this project by Wythe County is a transformative public-private initiative that should be reviewed by all of Virginia’s localities,” Hartgrove said. “Who would have thought ice hockey in rural Virginia would work? Wythe County did, and now the Hitachi Energy Arena stands as an example that rural communities – when challenged – can accomplish anything with vision, partnership, and fortitude. Congratulations to Wythe County for winning the Best Achievement Award.”

The judges also selected a Best Small County Achievement Award (50,000 or less population) and a Best Large County Achievement Award. **Dinwiddie County** and its **Middle School Mock Trial** program captured the **Best Small County Achievement Award** while **Chesterfield County** and its **Court Navigator** program earned the **Best Large County Achievement Award**.

Bailey said Dinwiddie County’s winning program embodies many of the VACo Achievement Awards principles. “We greatly value collaboration – among counties themselves and among the different departments in counties,” Bailey said. “Dinwiddie’s program was a collaboration between legal professionals, law enforcement, and students. This learning through shared experiences leaves a lasting impression on all involved. The program also fosters civic awareness and engagement, which we believe help enrich communities. Dinwiddie County continues to be a leader in the Achievement Awards program.”

Gross praised Chesterfield County for its program to help families navigate complex court services and obligations when emotions are high. “Court navigation help is needed in every county. Congratulations to Chesterfield County for developing such a service to help youths and their families,” Gross said. “Chesterfield County has seen a marked improvement in compliance and reduction in length of time to complete court-ordered services. This program also makes families feel that the county is invested in them and their children.”

**Chesterfield County** tops the all-time Achievement Awards list with 60. Chesterfield County has won an award in each year of the 23-year history of the program. **Henrico County** is second on the list with 51 Achievement Awards while **Loudoun County** is third with 34.

The VACo Achievement Awards is a competitive program open to local government members of the association.

[Winning Achievement Award Submissions](#) | [Achievement Awards Website](#)  
[2025 Achievement Awards Entries](#) | [Past Winners](#) | [Past Judges](#)

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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