



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Friday, April 3, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Hanover County
Program Title: 9/11 Day of Service
Program Category: Communications & Community Engagement

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Bret Schardein
Title: Deputy County Administrator
Signature: 

Hanover County 9/11 Day of Service



Nomination for the 2026 Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Award | Hanover County
Department of Community Resources | April 3, 2026

Executive Summary:

In 2023, the Hanover County Board of Supervisors reimagined how the county honors September 11th. By adapting the nationally recognized 9/11 Day of Service model and #IWILLFOR911DAY campaign to fit the unique structure and scale of county government, Hanover created a sustainable, high-impact program that other localities can replicate. Now in its fourth year, Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service is led by the Department of Community Resources and is the only program of its kind in the greater Richmond region. This initiative has grown into a tradition that strengthens nonprofit partnership, expands volunteer engagement and honors the sacrifices of America's first responders through the spirit of service.

Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service connects employees and residents with volunteer opportunities through a partnership with the Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond and its CFengage volunteer platform. The CFengage platform provided a centralized hub for Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service projects, offering a standardized process for volunteer recruitment, streamlined participant registration, and a concise method for tracking interest, engagement, and final volunteer hours.



What began as an employee initiative quickly grew through partnerships with local nonprofits and community organizations, including regional groups with local programs such as FeedMore's Meals on Wheels, to host volunteer projects. This collaborative model enabled the program to expand to residents, schools, and other community partnerships. The initiative also included opportunities for flexible participation through the #IWILLFOR911 campaign through Here in Hanover and creative DIY projects, such as assembling puzzle kits for Hanover Safe Place.

As an incentive for engagement, Hanover County allows employees to volunteer for 9/11 Day of Service projects without using personal leave. This process introduces employees to local nonprofits, including

food pantries, housing programs, and organizations serving vulnerable residents, creating connections that encourage ongoing service. Employees may later use the County's eight-hour annual volunteer leave to continue supporting these organizations. Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service initiative has created a sustainable, countywide culture of service that strengthens community partnerships, engages a diverse network of volunteers, and ensures meaningful impact well beyond September 11th.

Challenge:

For years, Hanover County observed September 11th through traditional remembrance ceremonies. While meaningful, these events offered limited opportunities for employees and residents to further the spirit of service honored on September 11th. County leadership recognized a missed opportunity to align local observance with the national 9/11 Day of Service initiative, which transforms reflection into civic action, strengthens nonprofit partnerships and engages communities in measurable, meaningful service. In the program's infancy, several barriers existed. The county lacked formal policy allowing employees to volunteer without using personal leave and a centralized system to coordinate volunteer opportunities from departments and nonprofits. Many of the smaller organizations within Hanover lacked the infrastructure to recruit and manage volunteers online. The challenge was not simply how to commemorate September 11th through service, but also how to do so in a way that effectively mobilized employees and residents, strengthened community partnerships and created lasting benefit across the locality.

Solution:

In 2023, the Hanover County Board of Supervisors formally established Hanover's 9/11 Day of Service and implemented policy allowing employees to volunteer for the initiative's projects without using personal leave. This policy complements the county's broader volunteer program, which provides employees up to eight hours of volunteer leave annually for nonprofit service, in addition to volunteerism completed through 9/11 Day of Service.

The program is administered by the Department of Community Resources and a partnership with the Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond and their CFengage volunteer management platform, which is a dedicated posting board and registration portal that connects individuals with vetted volunteer opportunities across multiple nonprofit partners. From this founding partnership, the program quickly grew to encompass a diverse network of partners, such as FeedMore, The Arc of Hanover, Hanover and King William Habitat for Humanity and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

County departments also host a variety of projects for 9/11 Day of Service, including CPR and First Aid training, park improvements, animal support initiatives and volunteer opportunities in senior living facilities. All projects are hosted during the county workday on September 11th, with outdoor projects available to be rescheduled to the next business day in the case of inclement weather. Additionally, creative DIY projects, such as assembling puzzle kits for Hanover Safe Place, and flexible participation through the #IWILLFOR911 Here in Hanover campaign enable volunteers to contribute in ways that fit their schedules and interests.

The program is supported by regular planning and coordination with county departments, nonprofit partners, and schools to ensure seamless volunteer engagement. Hanover County's Risk Management team works alongside nonprofit hosts to address volunteer safety and compliance with best practices. While county employees' volunteer activities are covered through the county's general liability insurance, all other volunteers must sign a county-issued waiver to participate. Hanover County IT is working to build out a digital waiver process, which will be implemented starting in 2026. Additionally, hosting nonprofits work with volunteers for any of their site-specific volunteer forms.

Since its launch, the initiative has evolved from an employee-focused program into a coordinated, countywide effort that fosters a culture of volunteerism and a robust network of community partnerships. Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service is a model program that is easily replicable by other localities

through coordinated volunteer programs, cross-sector collaboration, and thoughtful planning that balances accessibility, safety, and impact.

Innovation:

9/11 Day of Service in Hanover County combines policy change, cross-sector collaboration, nonprofit capacity building and flexible volunteer participation to transform a day of remembrance into an ongoing demonstration of the community's and country's spirit of service. Hanover's partnership with the Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond and use of its CFengage platform is a key innovation, supporting nonprofit partners with virtual information sessions, in-person training in Hanover, and dedicated virtual office hours for assistance with posting projects. Once onboarded, nonprofits can use CFengage year-round to expand their volunteer base and sustain continued volunteer engagement outside of Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service.



Hanover County furthers its partnership with the Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond through the program's Featured DIY Project. This project takes advantage of the Community Foundation's monthly Featured DIY program, which uses the Community Foundation volunteer newsletter to spotlight a regional nonprofit via a project that volunteers

can complete and return on their own time. As part of 9/11 Day of Service, the Featured DIY Project highlights a Hanover nonprofit, with completed projects returned on or before September 11th. In 2025, residents assembled puzzle kits for Hanover Safe Place, supporting children and families in need.

To broaden opportunities for participation, Hanover County introduced the #IWILLFOR911 campaign through Here in Hanover, empowering residents to complete independent acts of service, from preparing meals for first responders to assisting neighbors. Residents are encouraged to share their

contributions through the Engage Hanover platform, which amplifies community participation through its public gallery of photos, stories, and volunteer experiences.

Surveys for volunteers and project hosts ensure continuous improvement, keeping the program responsive to community needs and fostering sustained engagement. This model demonstrates how other Virginia localities can replicate these strategies by partnering with regional volunteer centers to centralize volunteer coordination, strengthen nonprofit capacity, and expand civic engagement.

Partnerships:

Collaboration across local government, nonprofit organizations and community partners is essential to the success of Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service. The Department of Community Resources coordinates planning meetings with key stakeholders, including the Deputy County Administrator for Human Services, the Director of Communications and Community Engagement, the Director of Human Resources and representatives from Parks & Recreation, Risk Management, Hanover County Public Schools and the Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond.

As part of these collaborative efforts, Hanover County Department of Community Resources consulted with Hanover County Communications and Community Engagement in 2024 to design the official 9/11 Day of Service volunteer shirts. Community Resources now manages the ordering, storage, and distribution of shirts each year, ensuring that enough are available for all participants. To maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness, many employees reuse shirts from previous years unless replacement is needed. These shirts foster a sense of unity and shared purpose among volunteers.

Nonprofit partners host volunteer projects and identify community needs, working with the county to offer meaningful volunteer experiences. Local nonprofit service providers such as the Arc of Hanover, Hanover & King William Habitat for Humanity and FeedMore play a central role in making the initiative impactful.



The Hanover County Board of Supervisors and other county and regional leaders, such as previous Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly T. Gee and her staff, actively participate in volunteer projects, modeling civic engagement and inspiring residents and employees to serve. By bringing together government leadership, departments, schools and nonprofit organizations, Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service fosters strong cross-sector partnerships and ensures volunteer opportunities are aligned with community needs.

Program Cost:

Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service is highly cost effective through the utilization of existing resources, partnerships and volunteer participation. Direct expenses are limited to customized shirts for volunteers and refreshments for in-person training. In 2024 and 2025, approximately \$2,500 per year was spent on shirts. The Hanover County Board of Supervisors provides \$3,000 annually to the Department of Community Resources to cover these program costs and other related expenses. In addition, Hanover County contributes the financial value of each employee's volunteered time, a total that amounted to more than \$14,200 in 2025.

Use of the CFengage volunteer platform is provided free of cost to Hanover County and other nonprofit partners in the greater Richmond area, minimizing technology costs. Because volunteer projects are hosted by nonprofit partners and county departments using existing resources, the initiative requires minimal direct financial investment to produce significant community contributions.

While direct costs are minimal, the value of Hanover County employees and residents giving back to nonprofits, many of which support county programs and provide direct service to residents in need, is priceless. This efficient, low-cost model is highly sustainable and easily replicable, providing a framework that other localities can adopt to build meaningful volunteer programs.

Providing a Model for other Local Governments:

Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service offers a scalable and replicable model for other local governments seeking to strengthen civic engagement while honoring a nationally significant day. The program's success is built on several elements that can be adopted by other localities:

- **Leadership commitment to service** through policies that allow employees to volunteer during work hours without using dedicated personal leave or individual volunteer leave
- **Centralized coordination of volunteer opportunities**, ensuring that projects align with community needs and provide measurable impact
- **Use of volunteer management tools**, allowing localities without dedicated software to collaborate with regional volunteer centers or nonprofit networks to efficiently organize and track volunteer engagement
- **Strategic partnership with nonprofit organizations, schools and community groups**, expanding volunteer reach and strengthening local capacity
- **Cross-department collaboration within government**, leveraging existing staff and expertise
- **Flexible participation options for employees and residents**, including onsite service, independent projects, DIY initiatives, and engagement through campaigns such as #IWILLFOR911

This program demonstrates how local governments can strengthen nonprofit capacity through expanding volunteer engagement. Because the initiative relies primarily on partnerships, coordination and existing resources rather than significant financial investments, it can be adapted by communities of varying sizes and capacities. By providing nonprofits with training on volunteer management systems, Hanover County created lasting infrastructure that supports volunteer recruitment year-round. Other localities can replicate this model by participating with regional volunteer centers or existing nonprofit networks to coordinate service projects and recruit volunteers. Hanover County is currently the only locality in the

greater Richmond region with a formalized 9/11 Day of Service initiative, providing a strong example for other jurisdictions seeking to transform remembrance into meaningful community action.

Results:

Since its launch in 2023, Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service has grown into a high impact, countywide program. In its inaugural year, 96 volunteers contributed 319.5 verified service hours across 26 projects. By 2025, participation has more than doubled, with 227 volunteers completing 626 service hours across 27 projects, demonstrating steady growth among county employees, residents and nonprofit partners.

The program serves for many participants as an introduction to local nonprofits and their missions. After 9/11 Day of Service, many participants, including employees using their annual volunteer leave benefit, continue volunteering with and supporting the organizations they meet. Notably, three employees adopted dogs they met while volunteering with Animal Protection in 2025, highlighting personal connections fostered through service.



Flexible participation options, including DIY projects and the #IWILLFOR911 campaign, empower residents and employees to contribute on their own schedule while sharing their volunteer experiences via the Engage Hanover platform. These efforts have strengthened connections between residents, county departments, and nonprofits partners, cultivating a sustained culture of volunteerism. By aligning with the national 9/11 Day of Service and #IWILLFOR911Day campaign and emerging as the only formalized program of its kind in the greater Richmond region, Hanover County has transformed a day of remembrance into a high-impact, sustainable model of civic engagement. Hanover County's 9/11 Day of Service demonstrates measurable results, strengthens community partnerships, and provides a clear, replicable framework for local governments seeking to turn shared values into meaningful community action.

Supplemental Information:

Feedback from Volunteers and Nonprofit Partners:

- “I appreciated that both times I volunteered the County Administrator came out. It felt like the work we were doing was meaningful to the county as a whole.”
- “I appreciate that the date of 9/11 has now become a National Day of Service and that Hanover County has embraced this too. It makes a positive impact in our community and at each nonprofit location we volunteer at.”
- “Partnering with the county and community is a rewarding experience. It is a great way to showcase Master Gardeners and our mission.”
- “CFengage and county collaboration in getting projects set up, as well as training provided to nonprofits, help immensely.”

Links to the Engage Hanover Campaign and Promotional Videos:

- #IWILLFOR911 Campaign on Engage Hanover: <https://engage.hanovercounty.gov/x18726>
- 2023 Hanover 9/11 Day of Service Recap: <https://youtu.be/OIM-BZkLv0Q?si=TXwBPogF1ReN-MXe>
- 2024 Hanover 9/11 Day of Service Recap: <https://youtu.be/NNRZ6FHVpXQ?si=D8smalfsMes8vKY9>
- Arc of Hanover Spotlight: <https://youtu.be/qKie5Z4kU00?si=tP7MjVmlPUoTzMH1>
- Habitat for Humanity Spotlight: https://youtu.be/XyTtdSll7Nk?si=rv4WzC2mobUU_Idd

