

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!

# 2010 Achievement Awards



Virginia Association of Counties

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Virginia Association of Counties  
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## Call for Entries



## 2010 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 1, 2010

### Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. Deadline: June 1, 2010.

#### Program Information

Locality Henrico County

Program Title Book Talking: Library Services Delivered to the Open University...

Program Category Health/Human Services

Population Category (5) 100,001+

#### Contact Information

Name Gerald McKenna

Title Director

Department Henrico County Public Library

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#### Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name Mr. Leon Johnson

Title Deputy County Manager for Administration

Signature\* 

\*Entries without this signature will not be accepted.

Book Talking: Library Services Delivered  
to the Open University of The Shepherd's Center  
Henrico County, Virginia

**1. Abstract: (200 words or less)**

**Book Talking** is an outreach course developed by librarians from the Henrico County Public Library's Tuckahoe Area Library for the spring 2009 term of the Shepherd's Center of Richmond's Open University. An enthusiastic class of 10 senior citizen students met on eight Tuesday nights between March and May 2009 at a local church hosting the Open University. Class meetings featured two book discussions (Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* and Sara Gruen's *Water for Elephants*); book talks on historical fiction, biography, and "what's hot"; a field trip to the Tuckahoe Library for an orientation to its features and services; and a presentation on online resources for readers.

This partnership with the Shepherd's Center of Richmond, an organization of seniors helping seniors, provided a low-cost, entertaining way for Henrico County librarians to leave the confines of their library to bring library resources to an underserved population.

Book Talking: Library Services Delivered  
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Henrico County, Virginia

## **2. The Problem/Need for the Program**

Services offered by public libraries are all too often limited to those who come to the library buildings. Senior citizens in particular are a portion of the population underserved by public libraries, limited in mobility as many are by transportation, health, and security issues. Although the Henrico County Public Library has an impressive website that can extend some level of service to citizens who don't visit a branch in person, website use depends on internet availability, awareness, knowledge and skills that many seniors don't have. The library promotes its programs and services through traditional outlets, but finding alternative ways of reaching these new potential library users to educate them about the library services and resources available to them was the challenge.

## **3. Description of the Program**

The Shepherd's Center of Richmond ([www.richmondshpecntr.org](http://www.richmondshpecntr.org)), part of a network of interfaith community-based organizations, has been working since 1984 to help seniors attain fuller and more rewarding lives through personal service, education and socialization. The Shepherd's Center of Richmond provides their participants with life-long learning, health enhancement and cultural enrichment opportunities.

In January 2009, at the invitation of Shepherd's Center volunteer Jeannette Glasheen, Steve Carter-Lovejoy worked with Adult Services staff from Henrico County Public Library's Tuckahoe Area Library to develop a course for the spring 2009 session of the Shepherd's Center's Open University, an 8 week program of classes and lectures for Richmond area seniors. The Shepherd's Center of Richmond offers several Open University terms each year, at several

## Book Talking: Library Services Delivered to the Open University of The Shepherd's Center Henrico County, Virginia

locations throughout the Richmond area; we were invited to participate in the session hosted by St. Mary's Catholic Church about two miles from the Tuckahoe Area Library.

The course focused on books and reading with book talks & discussion, included opportunities to discuss the range of library services available to seniors, and provided a variety of activities including a field trip to the Tuckahoe Library for an orientation facilitated by car-pooling, with the cooperation of a senior center van driver, and a demonstration of the library website and online resources for readers' advisory, using internet and a video projector. These activities involved many Tuckahoe Library Adult Services staff, and was promoted through Shepherd Center resources - their newsletter and course catalog.

Ten senior citizens signed up for the course, and attendance and enthusiasm were high throughout the 8-week term. All but two of the class members were able to attend the field trip to the Tuckahoe Library. The wireless Internet signal available through the church was sketchy the night of the class, but we were prepared with screenshots and other handouts to supplement what we were able demonstrate live on the Internet. At the end of the last class, evaluation forms were provided to all the attendees.

### **4. Use of Technology**

Classes themselves were pretty "old-school", with paper handouts – our point was to meet potential library users in a place comfortable to them, and introduce them in a fun, non-threatening way to the library world of their children and grandchildren. But we did make sure to introduce much of the technology that is transforming modern public libraries: electronic catalog, e-books, e-audio books, DVDs, books on CD and tape as well as print books and magazines, self-check circulation, automated check-in machines, and a full-service drive-up

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Henrico County, Virginia**

window, access to computers for the public, availability of wireless Internet access, free computer classes in a dedicated teaching lab.

### **5. The Cost of the Program**

Costs were primarily limited to staff time totaling about 60 hours, and minimal operating costs for printing/photocopying of about \$20. Travel costs were borne by staff (2 miles to Open University site). Costs were not high, but it should be noted that with tightening budgets and growing staff shortages, our opportunity to venture away from the library building may be reduced.

### **6. The Results/Success of the Program**

Feedback from class participants was uniformly enthusiastic. Shepherd's Center staff was also enthusiastic and appreciative. We have a standing invitation to return with another course.

At the end of the last class, evaluation forms were provided to all the attendees; six were completed. Four general statements were assessed, with a 5 point scale. All respondents felt the class was "excellent."

Here are our conclusions about the value of the program:

- This was a valuable outreach to an underserved community.
- It was fun for the library staff to carry out, and provided an out-of-the-library staff activity.
- A worthwhile product for participating senior citizens was created.

**Book Talking: Library Services Delivered  
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Henrico County, Virginia**

- The public library's commitment to serving the Richmond-area community in new ways was demonstrated.
- The library was promoted by an outside community agency.

We will continue to look for ways to improve our outreach to seniors, including better promotion to senior centers and residences of our services, and the ongoing development of a web page focused on seniors.