

PRESS RELEASE



VACo 2014 Achievement Award Program Descriptions



Visit [VACo's Achievement Award website](#) to view all entries in their complete format.

BEST ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Loudoun County: "You Belong @ Your Library"

To ensure that all members of the community have an equal opportunity to participate, the Loudoun County Public Library (LCPL) has developed a continuum of programs that promotes literacy and social connections for children, teens and adults with intellectual disabilities (ID), sensory integration challenges (SIC) autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and physical disabilities. Open Door Sensory Storytime, Gamers' Union and the Next Chapter Book Club have enabled the Loudoun County Public Library to grow and join with the community in ways not dreamed possible.

The strength of these programs has been realized through trusted partnerships with parents, caregivers and advocates and foundation support. Loudoun County Public Library has embraced these opportunities to connect with the entire community.

Buckingham County: "Digital Justice"

The federal judiciary is constantly updating its courtrooms to reflect technological developments. Achieving the same results at a local government level can be challenging logistically and financially. However, the benefits of a largely electronic courtroom include better information presentation, reduction in cost of trials through the use of teleconferencing, accuracy of court records, and overall expediency of a trial. The goal of the project was to upgrade the Buckingham County Courtroom with digital media that improves the local legal system through innovative approaches that are mindful of taxpayer dollars.

All aspects of this project were designed, constructed/installed, and implemented by in-house County staff. All equipment was off-the-shelf and was adapted for use within the Courtroom to expedite the project and reduce costs that are commonly associated with custom Courtroom technology. Through out-of-the box thinking, Buckingham County has become a leader in the State for Courtroom technology.

Chesterfield County: “County-Wide Inspection Project”

The International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) guidelines recommend that all properties need to be inspected every four to six years. Assuming that most new construction is identified through building permits, a physical re-inspection of the property including an on-site verification of the property characteristics should be conducted in that four to six year period. Periodic field inspections help ensure that property characteristics data, maintained by our office, are complete and accurate.

The Department of Real Estate Assessments has over 120,000 parcels; 107,362 of them improved with residential structures. Due to the large number of properties needing to be inspected and the limited number of staff available to complete those inspections, the department needed to develop a program to accomplish the IAAO recommended six year inspection cycle. Budget constraints prevented the hiring of additional staff to meet the required six year cycle. Therefore, existing technology as well as new technology needed to be explored in order to accomplish the task with existing personnel

The Department of Real Estate Assessments is now on track to achieve the goal of inspecting all improved residential properties in a six year cycle. Our property records are now more up-to-date and thus more accurate, resulting in assessments that reflect 100 percent of fair market value. The implementation of the inspection program has allowed the department to save revenue, increase the accuracy of the property records and equitably assess properties throughout in the county.

Chesterfield County: “Whack-A-Watt”

Buildings don't use energy, people do" that philosophy was the driving force behind the development of a real-time energy monitoring dashboard project. The project identified a software/kiosk dashboard system provided by Lucid Design that was installed in all Chesterfield County middle schools and monitors electric and gas use of those buildings. The installation of the dashboard has enhanced the County's energy management program by increasing awareness and educational opportunities while setting the stage for dollar savings. The project was implemented with County grant funds by a joint energy management team comprised of County and Schools employees.

The dashboard served as the foundation to run energy reduction competitions; the first of which occurred October 2013. The contest was titled "Whack-A-Watt" and results were tracked and displayed live on the energy dashboard. The contest lasted three weeks and reduced electric use; thereby, reducing energy costs and carbon emissions.

Fairfax County: “Project Manager Guide”

Fairfax County Building Design and Construction Division (BDCD) of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services successfully developed an online, local server, Project Manager Guide (PM Guide) for building projects defined in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Due to the population growth Fairfax County has experienced in the last decade, demand for new and renovated public facilities, including fire stations, libraries and human services facilities, BDCD's workload has increased. The creation and implementation of the PM Guide established standard processes and procedures to be used by BDCD staff to ensure a high level of performance, consistency and efficiency in the delivery of a successful building project.

The PM Guide includes design checklists for each project phase. References, sample documents, and lessons learned from completed projects are updated frequently to promote continual improvement in the execution of BDCD project management. A Master Toolbox section is included to provide important information on many building design/construction and project management subjects such as utilities, budget and schedule. Having the steps of building project development clearly defined, enables Project Managers (PM's), both new and experienced, to be proactive, independent, and ultimately prevents costly time delays and reduces possible budget impacts. The PM Guide is an easy to follow resource for the process and paperwork necessary to guide project managers to a successful project completion.

Frederick County: “Creation of the Lake Holiday Sanitary District”

Lake Holiday is large residential community located in the northwestern portion of Frederick County. Surrounding a 245 acre man-made lake, the development contains over 800 homes and is managed by a professionally staffed Property Owners Association (POA) and an elected Board of Directors. In 2008, as a result of modified State regulations, the community found itself facing a State mandated upgrade to their dam's spillway which was projected to cost upwards of \$10 million.

Though financially sound, there was no way the community would be able to assemble the funds needed to complete the required upgrade within the timeframe set out by the legislation. The possible consequences of failure included a forced reduction of the water level within the lake to a point where the community's identifying feature and primary recreational amenity would be decimated. The resulting impact on property values and quality of life within the community would be severe enough to threaten the solvency of the development.

Every conceivable means of securing long term financing had been exhausted when, in 2008, the POA Board of Directors turned to County leaders for assistance. Ultimately, Frederick County agreed to support the establishment of a Sanitary District. Lake Holiday property owners would be assessed a “tax” which would be collected by the County Treasurer with the funds derived being pledged as security to obtain bond financing for the spillway project. The two entities entered into an agreement which set out the purpose of the sanitary district and created a six member advisory committee comprised of three representatives from LHCC and three from the County. The committee was charged with developing a recommended course of action for securing financing and completing the spillway project.

In response to a petition, the Frederick County Circuit Court created the Lake Holiday Sanitary District in the fall of 2009. A November 2010 bond referendum for qualified Lake Holiday voters passed overwhelmingly. The Advisory Committee, working closely with County Staff, obtained financing through the Virginia Resource Authority. County staff bid the project, handled all aspects of construction supervision and financial reporting, and the spillway construction project was completed, under budget, in the Spring of 2013.

Hanover County: “Solid Waste Compactor Stormwater Pollution Prevention”

The Hanover County Department of Public Works is committed to collecting solid waste in a manner that least impacts the environment. Hanover County manages its residential waste stream by operating six solid waste convenience centers that receive over 26,000 tons of municipal solid waste (MSW) per year. In addition, the solid waste convenience centers collect significant amounts of recyclables including containers, paper, yard waste and special wastes.

As is the case with many convenience centers throughout Virginia, Hanover County utilizes stationary compactors to maximize its payloads prior to transport to the central 301 Transfer

Station. Hanover County recognized that the design of the stationary compactors and the standard roll-off compactor container leaked both liquids and solids during the compaction process. Hanover County was determined to design a system that eliminated both types of discharges which threatened to pollute the environment.

To solve the very difficult issues required us to work directly with vendors to develop new designs for the stationary compactors and roll-off containers. In addition, new technology for stormwater prevention needed to be introduced while making changes to operating standards. The result of this undertaking is a system that provides significant protection of the environment during solid waste collection and processing. Other local jurisdictions and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality have visited Hanover County solid waste facilities to observe and better understand the methods and their application.

Henrico County: “ESL Conversation Café”

The ESL (English as a Second Language) Conversation Café is an English language conversation program offered by Henrico County Public Library (HCPL) in which non-native-English-speaking adults can practice speaking English, meet new people, and participate in an American experience.

The program was developed by library staff in response to the growing diversity of the county. Based on data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey (via *gcir.com*), Henrico County had over 29,000 residents that were foreign born, over 10 percent of the county’s total population. Over 22 percent of this population over age 5 speaks English “less than well.” There are a number of traditional instructional ESL classes in the area, but these classes leave little time for participants to practice what they have learned or know. What was missing was a place to practice speaking English, learn about American culture and meet people.

HCPL’s ESL Conversation Cafes meet each of the criteria listed by filling the community’s need for casual spaces for non-native English speakers to meet, learn about American culture and practice speaking English while staying within the library’s budget and staffing constraints. The program has also encouraged and strengthened relationships with Henrico County Schools Adult Education program, as well as private and governmental immigrant support organizations in the area. Very little funding and minimal staffing is needed to replicate this program in another locality.

Henrico County: “It’s Your Decision: Meals Tax Referendum Public Information Campaign”

Henrico County launched the precedent-setting meals tax referendum public information campaign, “It’s Your Decision,” to inform residents and voters about the county’s proposal for a 4 percent charge on prepared meals and beverages.

The campaign explained Henrico’s reasoning for seeking a new revenue source, highlighted the county’s history of sound fiscal management and financial stewardship, detailed how potential new revenues would be used and demonstrated the significance of the decision facing voters. The campaign invested voters with a personal stake in the referendum’s outcome, linking their vote to maintaining the quality services – notably the county’s premier school system – they expected as county residents.

“It’s Your Decision” employed an array of communication tools to deliver that information, such as a website, social media, television programming, direct-mail brochures and news releases. It also featured an extensive public outreach effort that engaged citizens directly through more than 100 meetings.

The referendum appeared on the county ballot as part of the statewide general election on Nov. 5, 2013. Voters approved the measure, making Henrico the first Virginia county with a population greater than 200,000 to authorize a meals tax by referendum.

Henrico County: “Re-Imagine Training: Learning Through Conversations”

The world of training is changing. Traditional learning conventions are increasingly under pressure. Learners want answers “just in time,” and are accustomed to searching online for information quickly and inexpensively. In contrast, it is costly and time consuming to design classroom training. Additionally, traditional training is frequently “content” driven rather than culture-focused - a concern at the brink of 2012, when Henrico County was experiencing a massive culture shift due to an unprecedented number of long-term, high-level employees retiring, including our County Manager of 20 years.

To meet these challenges, County staff developed an agile, responsive initiative which involved far less development time and created an interactive forum for participants to exchange organizational wisdom. By incorporating panels of experts in our classes, facilitating leadership discussion cohorts, and sponsoring classes and town halls led by our own upper managers, we reached a new audience of learners while sparking powerful conversations about our organizational culture. Over 600 employees participated, and surveys indicated that 81 percent improved in the competency of *Understanding the Business of Henrico County*. Most importantly, this initiative is learner-focused, easily adaptable to future organizational learning needs, and key to engaging the workforce in conversations about our culture as we navigate change.

Loudoun County: “Eastern Loudoun Transportation Study: Keeping Loudoun Moving”

Loudoun County, Virginia is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation; its population has doubled since 2000. The unprecedented growth the county has experienced over the last several decades has resulted in a continued and an ever-increasing strain on its transportation network.

Transportation is one of the most important services provided by government, fulfilling the crucial role of linking people to their jobs, schools, recreation and shopping. Loudoun County adopted its first Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP) in 1995. The CTP was revised in 2001 and again in 2010. The CTP is a planning document that establishes a long-range vision for the county’s transportation network and defines policies that provide for the successful implementation of that network.

The county’s road network is constantly changing. Segments of the network are being designed and constructed by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the county, the private development community through proffers and conditions, and through partnerships amongst those entities. This quilt-like approach to road construction led to a patchwork roads network which resulted in missing segments and bottlenecks.

In January 2012, a new Board of Supervisors took office. Many of the newly-elected Board members made funding an improved transportation network a major priority. They were especially interested in identifying and completing missing links in the county.

Loudoun County: “Loudoun Evening Reporting Center”

The Loudoun Evening Reporting Center (ERC) opened on January 22, 2013. The ERC addresses the need for supervision after school, recreation, appropriate social activities, tutoring and

independent living skills for youths ages 14 to 17 referred by the Court or Probation. The mission of the Evening Reporting Center is to provide a community- based alternative to detention for moderate to high risk teens currently on probation who might otherwise be detained pending further court action.

Program goals of the ERC are to: eliminate the inappropriate or unnecessary use of secure detention; minimize failure to appear in court and minimize the incidence of delinquent behavior; repair harm done to the community with community service opportunities; support pro-social skills and behaviors with highly structured and well- supervised programs and group activities; and provide positive opportunities for youths while holding them accountable for their behavior.

This program was a collaborative effort with representatives from the Departments of Family Services; Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Services; the Public School System; Parks Recreation and Community Services; the Juvenile Court Services Unit; County Administration and a Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge. Each agency has donated money, time, or other resources that have contributed to the success of the program. The ERC was developed with no new local tax dollars. The ongoing budget is approximately \$5,000 per year provided from existing agency budgets. Currently, the Loudoun ERC costs \$40 per day per youth while the daily cost for detention is \$220/day per youth.

Although the program has only been opened for a short time, the preliminary data has been positive with very low recidivism for new offenses.

Pittsylvania County: “Tobacco Barns Preservation Project”

In an attempt to help protect Pittsylvania County and Virginia's tobacco barns, and likewise, Virginia's tobacco heritage, Preservation Virginia, in conjunction with Pittsylvania County, began the Tobacco Barns Preservation Project in 2012. The project has been very successful and may prove to have further benefits by encouraging heritage tourism initiatives for the region.

The tobacco barns project has incorporated six elements: workshops on how to repair tobacco barns; a poster contest, *Save Our Barns So They Are More Than A Memory*, for local middle school students; an architectural survey of tobacco barns in Pittsylvania County; an oral history project to interview local tobacco farmers; a project to repair a well-known and visible tobacco barn on Route 29 in Pittsylvania County; and a mini-grants project to provide small funds to repair tobacco barns.

As a testament of the importance of tobacco heritage and its physical forms, the Tobacco Barns Preservation Project has expanded far beyond our expectations and has taken on a life itself, all because of the enthusiasm and support shown by Pittsylvania County residents.

After bright leaf tobacco was discovered, tobacco curing barns and pack houses became widespread across Pittsylvania County's landscape. Most of the tobacco barns that can be seen as you travel Pittsylvania County's countryside were built by farmers, their families and friends as practical structures that served one important purpose- curing tobacco leaves. Not only were they built by the farmers themselves, they were also built from trees and clay straight from the farm. In this sense, tobacco barns are utterly "home-grown."

Thousands of tobacco barns existed in Pittsylvania County during the height of tobacco production but due to the development of more efficient barns in the 1980s and the general decrease in tobacco farming, older log barns became practically useless and only a portion remain standing today. Tobacco heritage; however, remains firmly set at the center of

Pittsylvania County's and Southside Virginia's heritage, and tobacco barns have come to symbolize not only Virginia's rural landscape, but also a way of life that incorporates rural Virginia's principles of farming and family.

Prince William County: "Veterans Enhanced Transportation Service"

The Veteran Enhanced Transportation Service (V.E.T.S.) is a volunteer transportation program for veterans and their spouses. This program is administered through a community partnership between the Prince William Area Agency on Aging (Agency) and Volunteer Prince William's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The purpose of V.E.T.S. is to offer safe and reliable transportation to veterans and their spouses who are unable to transport themselves to doctors' offices or pharmacies. V.E.T.S. gives Older American Veterans, age 55 or older, the opportunity to volunteer in their community for a great cause. Since April 23, 2013, the V.E.T.S. program has assisted in serving over 25 veterans and/or their spouses, and logged 221 trips.

Pulaski County: "Emergency Management Deputy Coordinators"

Like most localities, Pulaski County had one emergency management coordinator who felt responsible for responding to emergency situations on a 24/7 basis. While, the County provides compensatory time and support from other departments, our emergency management coordinators were getting burned out and Pulaski County experienced the back-to-back loss of emergency management coordinators due to the hiring of regional staff by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. In addition, we did not have anyone ready to step into the emergency management position when these vacancies occurred.

It was determined that hiring of three part-time deputy emergency management coordinators would provide the full-time coordinator with the ability to only be on call every fourth weekend. Applications were solicited for deputy coordinators with applications primarily coming from volunteer fire departments. The cost to the County consisted of paying training costs for the three deputies, paying an on-call stipend and paying deputies when they were called out. This solution provided the County with the following major improvements:

1. The ability to rotate on-call weekends such that coordinators only have to be on-call one weekend per month;
2. The ability to maintain the coordination of emergency responses when the Emergency Management Coordinator was out of town attending training or providing mutual aid assistance to other localities;
3. The capability to easily rotate coordinators during emergency situations in order to provide sustained 24-hour coordination; and
4. The opportunity to select from at least three qualified applicants should a vacancy occur in the employment of an Emergency Management Coordinator.

The above described system was put together approximately 5 years ago. Since then, the County faced a moderate flood in 2010 and twin tornados of 2011 as well as other, less complicated, situations. Emergency response to several situations was successfully handled by the deputy coordinators (once due to the Coordinator being out of town at a training function, once due to being on a response to a mutual aid need by another locality, and once due to disability retirement of the coordinator).

Furthermore, emergency management coordinators have built a level of trust such that coordination duties were readily handed off other allowing for a prolonged and sustainable response. And finally, the hiring of part-time deputy coordinators allowed the County to

quickly fill this most recent vacancy by promoting a part-time deputy coordinator into the full-time emergency coordinator position.

Roanoke County: “GIS Maps and Apps Gallery”

Roanoke County launched a new Geographical Information System (GIS) website that contains a new generation of applications that allow greater and easier access to the County’s mapping, tax parcel, zoning, and government services data. The website is powered by geo-location technology to facilitate streamlined access to data within a familiar context. The applications were developed with an emphasis on being user-friendly, intuitive and conveniently accessible to promote citizen engagement, increasing transparency and helps foster informed decision making. The applications were intentionally designed and developed to be able to access the information from any device at any location at any time. The applications are largely designed with a single focus and common interface, which creates a comfortable environment that doesn’t require instruction or training.

We developed a solution that is easily maintained in-house while taking advantage of other commercial technologies. As a result, the new apps allow users to explore the County from every angle using Esri’s ArcGIS for Server and ArcGIS Online features, combined with Google StreetView and Pictometry. Already this suite of applications has been used by Fire & Rescue to help save the lives of stranded hikers, produced a net positive gain of \$65,618 for the Real Estate Valuation Department, and has triggered interest in Economic Development throughout the County. Additionally, the Stormwater Department has saved 350+ personnel hours by collecting field data with mobile GIS apps that offer convenient access to data that has historically been available only to a subset of users via desktop solutions.

York County: “Expanding the Use of the Knox Box Entry System”

The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety consistently strives to provide efficient and effective fire and rescue response in order to minimize property damage and loss, as well as minimize pain and suffering from injuries and illnesses that affect our community members. In an effort to provide additional support to those affected by fire in their home or business and/or sudden illness/injury, the department has adapted the KNOX-BOX® Rapid Entry System to provide a value added service to both our community and department personnel in a manner that streamlines operational effectiveness while minimizing the after effects for residents and/or business owners following a fire loss. This concept also provides critical unimpeded access to someone suffering from injury/illness without a friend or loved one close enough to provide access to the patient. Additionally, through the use of a master key retention system to control the KNOX-BOX® Master Key, accountability is provided which includes an audit trail for each key release.

York County: “Marking Vehicles to Reduce Repeated Responses”

The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety responds (fire/rescue/EMS) to many reports of vehicle accidents that occur on all types of roads. The number of accidents and responses multiplies during inclement weather, especially winter weather conditions. The need for emergency vehicles to leave stabilized/mitigated incidents to respond to others and/or return to service for other responses often requires that vehicles that are not a hazard be left off the side of the road until they can be removed by towing/recovery services. Passersby are often unaware that the accident has previously been reported and responded to, so they vigilantly report the accident again. If dispatchers are unable to get “verifiable”

information or distinct identifier; to determine that a response has already been conducted, they must respond fire and rescue personnel to verify that the response is now a duplicate. In an attempt to reduce and potentially eliminate repeated responses to the same accident scene and provide a more efficient operational response model, reduce unnecessary apparatus travel and response on dangerous roads and provide for the safety of department personnel, the department developed a low cost, easily identifiable and highly visible marking system so that dispatchers could ask the caller if they were able to identify the marker(s).

VACo exists to support county officials and to effectively represent, promote and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia.

###

For more information

Gage Harter
804.343.2502
gharter@vaco.org

Virginia Association of Counties

1207 East Main Street
Richmond, Va. 23219
www.vaco.org