



2014 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 2, 2014

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2014.**

Program Information

Locality Roanoke County

Program Title The World is Not your Ashtray

Program Category Communications (Public Relations

Contact Information

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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name B. Clayton Goodman III

Title County Administrator

Signature _____

SHORT OVERVIEW

Last fall, Roanoke County kicked off a new effort to raise awareness about cigarette butt litter along County roadways. This project combined the efforts of many County departments, including public information, parks and recreation, police department, community development and general services – creating a large community public awareness effort. Staff created a logo and brand for the campaign, entitled “The World Is Not Your Ashtray.” In-kind billboard advertising was donated by Lamar Companies, and partnerships were also made with local environmental advocacy groups to get the word out. Local and state political officials joined in at a press conference in January which resulted in tremendous coverage on broadcast television and local newspapers. The result was a tremendous amount of citizen engagement, a new law enforcement effort and citizen reporting mechanism, new County ordinance aimed at the problem, and significant public awareness at a low cost.

THE SPARK OF AN IDEA

Charlotte Moore from Roanoke County’s Board of Supervisors has long been an advocate for good environmental stewardship. Last fall, after seeing a driver flick a cigarette butt out their car window while stopped at a County intersection, Moore decided that something needed to be done about roadway littering. A series of meetings were called with several diverse members of Roanoke County staff, including representatives from the Police Department, Community Development, General Services, Public Information and Parks, Recreation and Tourism. Also in attendance was the president of the Clean Valley Council, a local non-profit dedicated to public education about a healthy environment. The committee members discussed various methods of getting the message out, as well as means of enforcement to deter would-be roadway litterers. While littering has long been a crime subject to Virginia code, there were no regulations in Roanoke County to deal with the issue. Complicating the matter, the Police Department lacked the time or resources to actively patrol County intersections in search of violators. The committee came up with a unique solution, providing citizens with a way to report violators online. This effort would be paired with a marketing slogan suggested by Assistant County Administrator, Richard Caywood. According to Caywood, whenever his wife sees someone throwing a cigarette butt out a car window she proclaims to other passengers, “the world is not your ashtray.” The name stuck, and members were assigned various tasks to help put together a comprehensive plan. Funding for the project was brought before the Board of Supervisors and approved on November 12, 2013 in the amount of \$7,676 (APPENDIX A: FUNDING).

CAMPAIGN ELEMENTS

Roanoke County staff members worked hard to minimize investment and maximize audience reach in a targeted five month public relations strategy. The campaign was brought together by memorable graphics created in-house by a Parks, Recreation and Tourism staff member (APPENDIX B: ASHTRAY LOGO). The new “World is Not Your Ashtray” logo featured easy to read text and easily recognizable icons, while matching the overall colors and graphic look of the Roanoke County website. The primary message was a reminder not to throw cigarette butts, and the secondary message was a reporting mechanism for violators – “Report at RoanokeCountyVA.gov/Litter.” Elements of campaign included:

- **Roadside Banners** – Thirty (30) vinyl banners were printed and placed around the County as part of this project, each one 7’ wide by 3’ high. Permission was obtained from the Virginia Department of Transportation to place several of the banners at key intersections during the month of January (APPENDIX C: VDOT). The other banners were placed on Roanoke County property such as police and fire stations, libraries, administration buildings and recreation centers. Care was taken to ensure each placement faced roads with high traffic counts. The banners were erected in January, and will remain in place through the end of the summer.
- **Billboard Advertising** – Early in the project, Roanoke County staff reached out to Lamar Advertising, the area’s largest billboard company. Lamar agreed to provide open posters and digital sign inventory throughout the County over the next eight months as inventory allowed. The County only had to pay for the vinyl print, which amounted

\$2,000 for 10 billboards. Between January and May 2014, Lamar put up eight vinyl billboards and two digital billboards. A second phase of this campaign continues with 10 additional billboards between May and August. The in-kind value from Lamar Advertising was approximately \$9,000 (APPENDIX D: LAMAR).

- **Bumper Stickers & Magnets** – For a campaign targeting drivers, one of the most effective methods of communication is a bumper sticker. Roanoke County has a large fleet of several hundred vehicles that are highly visible on our roadways every day. For this campaign, 200 of these vehicles received magnetic bumper stickers (APPENDIX E: MAGNET) with the “World is Not Your Ashtray Logo.” Additionally, 12 of the County’s garbage trucks received large vinyl stickers measuring over four feet wide (APPENDIX F: GARBAGE TRUCKS). Finally, several hundred small magnets were ordered for giveaways at County functions.
- **Ordinance Changes** – Prior to the litter campaign being implemented, Roanoke County did not have any littering regulations on the books. While littering was still illegal under state code, there was no means to prosecute violators in local civil court. That left Roanoke County unable to impose or change fines on a local level, or to receive those fines to reinvest in the community. As part of this project, Roanoke County officials asked the Virginia General Assembly to increase the local authority to impose civil penalties for litter violators (APPENDIX G: GENERAL ASSEMBLY) at a fine of \$50 for first violation and \$200 for subsequent violations. A new County ordinance was also adopted making it unlawful to litter (APPENDIX H: COUNTY RESOLUTION).

- **Online Reporting** – For the online piece of this project, a special web form was set up on the County website (APPENDIX I: WEB FORM). The form can be easily accessed either by URL www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/Litter, or by clicking on a button added to the County’s home page. Reporters are required to submit their contact information, and a description of the alleged littering incident. Once received, the forms are routed directly to the Police Department. A police representative will call the complainant for verification purposes, and if a license plate number is provided run the plates. The owner of the car witnessed is mailed a warning letter (APPENDIX J: POLICE LETTER), notifying them that a concerned citizen observed their vehicle discarding litter onto the highway. The letter goes on to warn the vehicle owner about fines they may be subject to if the action had been observed by an officer. From January to April, Roanoke County received and processed 165 individual complaints (APPENDIX I: SUBMISSIONS).

PRESS CONFERENCE AND MEDIA COVERAGE

On January 3, 2014, Roanoke County officials held a press conference announcing the new anti-litter campaign (APPENDIX K: MEDIA RELEASE). At this event, presentations were made by Senator Ralph Smith from the Senate of Virginia, 19th District, and Charlotte Moore from the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors. A media packet was created with details of the project as outlined above, and photo opportunities were available on site, as demonstrations of the banner and garbage truck stickers were on display (APPENDIX L: PRESS CONFERENCE PHOTOS). The event resulted in a tremendous amount of coverage in local newspapers and broadcast

television stations. The news was even picked up by television stations as far away as Louisville, Kentucky and Albany, New York (APPENDIX M: MEDIA COVERAGE).

CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

“The World Is Not Your Ashtray” was a groundbreaking initiative combining the efforts of elected officials on the state and local level with a wide variety of County staff members. Cost for the project was kept low through partnership with a local business, and the utilization of in-house graphic design resources. The majority of the appropriated cost for the project went to banner printing and installation. This small investment resulted in a large amount of public awareness and citizen engagement. The law enforcement part of the project has resulted in 163 online reports today, 44 letters submitted. So far this year 6 littering charges have been made, which is twice the typical average from a full year. Roanoke County has left open the possibility of continuing the campaign in the future, targeting other methods of littering the same way.