

# 2015 Achievement Awards Virginia Association of Counties

## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2015.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

Locality: Caroline County

Program Title: Caroline County Recovery Community Program

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Alan Partin

Title: Asst County Administrator

Department: Administration

Complete Mailing Address: P.O. Box 447, Bowling Green, VA 22427

Telephone # (804) 633-5380 Fax # (804) 633-4970

E-mail: apartin@co.caroline.va.us

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Charles M. Culley, Jr.

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

**2015 Achievement Awards**  
**Virginia Association of Counties**  
**Caroline County, Virginia**

**Program:** Caroline County Recovery Community Program

**Category:** Criminal Justice & Public Safety

**Statement of Problem**

Like many localities throughout the nation, Caroline County, Virginia has been forced to commit increasingly scarce fiscal resources to incarcerating adult prisoners, many of whom are repeat offenders. These large expenditures are a drain on the County budget and take funds away from higher priorities such as education, public safety and quality of life initiatives.

According to the Commonwealth's Attorney, about 85% of the people committing crimes in Caroline County have an alcohol or drug problem. Research conducted by the United States Department of Justice indicates that two-thirds of drug offenders will be re-arrested within three years of release. Almost half will go back to prison because of a technical violation of their sentence or a new conviction. Thus, jailing drug offenders often becomes a revolving door that is very costly to local governments. An innovative method of reducing the number of reoffenders was needed.

Approximately six years ago, the Caroline County Board of Supervisors prevailed upon the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney to explore methods of controlling the

increasing costs of incarcerating offenders without a corresponding negative impact on public safety.

### **Innovation**

Commonwealth's Attorney Anthony G. "Tony" Spencer responded to the challenge posed by the Board of Supervisors by partnering with the McShin Foundation of Richmond to create the Caroline County Recovery Community Program (CCRCP). McShin is a national leader in delivering recovery support services. While the average success rate for substance abuse services is 7% nationally, McShin has a success rate approaching 50%. In addition to providing recovery support programs to inmates, McShin established a Resource Recovery Center in Henrico County to support offenders released from jail. The Center is open seven days a week and hosts A.A. and N.A. meetings every day and night. At the Center, McShin offers peer relapse prevention groups, recovery coaches and job placement services. The Center can also provide peer and faith-based contacts, linkage to other agencies and services and housing referrals.

McShin's Recovery Resource Center in Henrico is too far away to serve Caroline's residents effectively. Many drug offenders living in remote parts of Caroline County find themselves unable to reach critically needed services, particularly when their driving privileges have been suspended and there are very limited public transportation options available. For example, imagine a recovering addict who is on parole and living without a driver's license in a remote part of the County.

He would have spent time in prison. He would never have had the opportunity to participate in a Drug Court program. He would be 15 miles from the nearest public transportation, a bus line to localities north of Caroline. Somehow, he would have to travel 40 miles to Ashland to see his probation officer, 20 miles to see his substance abuse counselor, and almost 50 miles to attend any court-ordered programs like anger management or batterer's intervention. He would be about 30 miles away from the County's one N.A. meeting a week and would have to travel hundreds of miles a week to other localities if he wanted to attend 90 meetings in 90 days. All of this without a driver's license while he's supposed to be finding a job.

The chances of success under these circumstances are virtually nil.

For this reason, Commonwealth's Attorney Tony Spencer devised the innovative solution of partnering with the McShin Foundation to open a Caroline County Recovery Community Center (CCRCC) in Bowling Green.

### **Partnering or Collaboration**

The CCRCP is a truly unique and wonderful example of a public/private partnership where everyone benefits. A private organization and the County have come together to implement solutions to a very difficult problem that plagues every community and drains valuable tax dollars desperately needed for core government functions. The program could not achieve success without each partner supporting each other. McShin could not pursue its mission of changing lives without the approval of the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office. Likewise, the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office could not reduce drug and alcohol related recidivism without a partner to provide successful recovery

services. Ultimately, the program cannot be sustained in the long run without the support and financial backing of the Board of Supervisors.

### **Model for Other Localities**

Many other localities throughout the Commonwealth face similar spiraling costs for incarcerating drug offenders and similar challenges in providing services to reduce recidivism. The Caroline County Recovery Community Program offers a template for an innovative path to achieving success in coming to grips with this very complex societal problem. Collaboration between the Commonwealth's Attorney, a treatment partner such as McShin and the Board of Supervisors, combined with a willingness to step out of the traditional comfort zone and try a new approach, can lead to positive results. This program demonstrates how it can be done and replicated.

### **How the Program was Carried Out**

The Caroline County Recovery Community Program (CCRCP) began in February 2011 with the intent of diverting into a long-term recovery program some criminal defendants who would otherwise be sent to jail or prison. The program is made available to offenders in several ways. If the offender has never been in trouble with the law before, he or she may be sentenced to the program by a judge. If the individual successfully completes the program, the judge often drops the pending charge(s) after a year. Participation in the CCRCP may also be a condition of releasing the bond against the offender. Pending successful completion of the program, a plea agreement is often worked out with no jail time served. Other inmates may voluntarily decide to participate in the program based on word of mouth of its success.

The McShin Foundation believes strongly in the Peer-to-Peer Recovery Support Services method, which utilizes recovering addicts and alcoholics to educate, mentor and spread the message of recovery to individuals new to sobriety.

A peer-based model is utilized so that someone who has lived the experience of incarceration and recovery is in charge of administering the program. The ex-addict is much more creditable and able to instill a sense of hope and motivation. After all, they are living testimony that recovery is possible.

Participants can avoid incarceration if they successfully participate in the program for 12 months. They must abide by a strict contract and are subjected to random drug tests. If they test positive for drugs, they are placed in jail for a week and must begin the 12 month program again.

The CCRCP is a day reporting program that requires participants to not only report to the center daily, but also participate in multiple meetings throughout the week such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous as well as educational programming focusing on life skills, job preparation, etc. Each participant must have a sponsor and is also provided with a recovery coach mentor from the McShin Foundation. Although the CCRCP does not have a residential component, rules must be followed when not in the center (such as a daily curfew). The program has four phases, each lasting 90 days. In order to complete and graduate from the program, the individual must have a full year of sobriety.

The annual budget for the Caroline County Recovery Community Program is approximately \$63,000. The budget funds a facility in the County to house the CCRCP,

staff, drug tests, supplies, event planning and graduation and other related costs. On average, 25 individuals graduate from the program each year. This translates to a \$2,520 cost to serve one person per year.

From its beginning in 2011, the CCRCP was fully funded by the McShin Foundation. In FY 2015, the Caroline County Board of Supervisors became convinced of the positive results of the program and agreed to contribute \$30,000 in County funds. This support of the program has become an ongoing commitment with an additional \$30,000 included in the adopted FY 2016 budget.

### **Results of Program**

Offenders sentenced to serve jail time by Caroline County courts are housed at Pamunkey Regional Jail in Hanover County at a daily cost of approximately \$47.50 (or \$17,337 per year). If the offender receives a sentence of less than two years, he or she will typically spend their entire sentence at Pamunkey. If the sentence is more than two years, the offender will typically transfer to the Virginia Department of Corrections after approximately seven months at Pamunkey Regional Jail.

Spending to incarcerate these individuals has mounted quickly for Caroline County as evidenced below:

- ✓ FY 2012 - \$1,707,695
- ✓ FY 2013 - \$2,041,742
- ✓ FY 2014 - \$1,915,529

According to a March 2014 study by Sarah Scarbrough, PhD, of the 44 individuals who graduated from CCRCP in the past two and a half years, only two have returned to jail. This reflects a success rate of over 95%, meaning that over 95% of the individuals who participate in the program do not go back to jail. This 4.5% recidivism rate is extremely low (25% lower than the statewide prison average at a bare minimum) and translates into tremendous monetary savings for Caroline County and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Based on the study by Dr. Scarbrough, Caroline County experienced \$221,053 of direct cost savings just from the 21 participants in the program at the time the study was conducted. By participating in the program, these 21 offenders avoided approximately 4,653 total days in jail at a cost of \$47.50 a day to the County.

Factoring in all the individuals who have graduated since the inception of the program in 2011, the study estimates that Caroline County has saved nearly a million dollars in jail costs.

In addition, it is estimated that two of the 21 participants in the program at the time of the study would have received over two years of time (one likely would have been sentenced to 4 ½ years and the other 4 years) in a state prison. Dr. Scarbrough's study estimates that the participation of these two offenders in the CCRCP program saved the Commonwealth of Virginia at least \$112,500 (because it costs approximately \$25,000 per year to house an offender in a Virginia prison).

Not reflected in the avoided jail per diems are the savings and additional revenues from having the program's participants work, pay taxes and support children who might



otherwise receive public assistance. Perhaps the most important achievement is the long-term societal benefits of reducing recidivism and promoting healthier families.

Since its inception in 2011, the CCRCP has had tremendous success in keeping drug offenders out of prison and breaking the cycle of dependency. This, in turn, has saved Caroline County and the Commonwealth of Virginia hundreds of thousands of dollars in direct jail costs. The Caroline County Board of Supervisors authenticated the results of the program by agreeing to contribute \$30,000 in County funds toward its operation in FY 2015 and beyond.

Dollars are much more wisely spent as a result of the program. Incarceration fails to address the core problem and therefore amounts to an expensive and unproductive revolving door of relapse and recidivism. Rather than trying to “arrest away” the problem, the CCRCP gives drug offenders an opportunity to put their lives back together, avoid jail time and become productive members of society again. It is not an exaggeration to say that the program truly saves lives.

The benefits to Caroline County are enormous and extend well beyond the significant dollars saved from sending fewer inmates to the Pamunkey Regional Jail. Those who successfully complete the program are able to go from being a burden on society to a productive member of society. They are able to work, pay taxes and potentially keep their children off public assistance. The benefits to the community cannot be overstated. Perhaps most important is the example they set for their children, thereby lessening the chance that the cycle will repeat itself in future generations.