

# 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: Giles County, Virginia

Program Title: The Health of Giles County - A Systemic Approach

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety, Health & Human Services, Regional Development, Community & Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Chris McKlarney

Title: Giles County Administrator & Economic Development Director

Signature: 

Virginia Association of Counties  
2015 - Achievement Awards Submission  
The Health of Giles County, Virginia  
*A Systemic Approach*

**“Families thrive when protective factors are robust in their lives and in their communities.”**

*“Center for the Study of Social Policy”*

**Background Information**

When we consider the health of Giles County, we are not just considering physical health. We are also considering economic and educational “health.” In our view, and that of the research, all these facets of health are inextricably and systemically interrelated and each provides protective assets supporting and enhancing the others. Hence, we are committed to a systemic approach to the health of Giles County.

Giles County, in many ways, is not unlike other rural Virginia counties when it comes to certain demographic indicators/risk factors. Far too many citizens contend with poverty, high unemployment, diminished economic opportunity, transiency, family disruption and dysfunction. From an educational perspective, insufficient utilization of Pre-k education, poor academic performance, low education levels and limited educational opportunity are issues. Other risk factors include generational drug and/or alcohol abuse, generational incarceration,

high rates of smoking – obesity – premature death – teen birth - low birth weight – physical inactivity and self-esteem and self-confidence issues.

Programming focused on the health of Giles County is as a result of a firm belief in the efficacy of a systemic approach to improving our physical, social and economic conditions to the greatest extent possible. To achieve this improvement, we must change our social norms; protective factors must be enhanced through prevention and intervention programming.

Protective factors to be strengthened include: enhanced parental resilience, social connectedness, enhanced education levels and opportunity, increased workforce employability, economic stability, support in times of need, improved knowledge of parenting and child development and social and emotional competence of children.

### **The Foundation of Giles County Programming**

The foundational rationale behind Giles County programming lies in the realization that there is no magic bullet, there is not one problem to address or one solution to fix it. The initial impetus behind many of our programs came as a result of looking at the high economic cost of crime/incarceration, unemployment/underemployment, and educational deficits/lack of education, especially as relates to an individual's potential and, ultimately, the potential of the county as a whole. The Giles County Board of Supervisors, Industrial Development Authority, Giles County School System and the Giles County Administration and staff are firmly committed to this collection of systemic prevention and intervention programs that are and will continue to improve the health of Giles County Citizenry.

Additionally, we emphatically believe that long-range impacts are geometrically enhanced by coordination and collaboration between all complimentary programs and organizations, existing and newly created, internally and externally.

Giles County programs demonstrating this philosophy include the Enhanced Pre-K Education, Summer Youth Work Program, Day Report Center Program, Community Service Program, Access to Community College Education (ACCE) program and Public/Private Sector Collaboration. All the above programs require extensive levels of collaboration in order to maintain their success levels. An additional notable collaboration includes the Department of Social Services/Temporary Aid for Needy Families program (TANF)/CoMPETE collaboration.

#### **Criteria For Selection**

We believe that our systemic approach demonstrates all four VACo “criteria for selection” options. Each individual component of the Giles’ systemic approach is **innovative** in its’ problem solving aspects due to the unique combination(s) of these complimentary programs. Programming relies heavily upon **cooperation** with inter-governmental as well as local, state and federal entities, in addition to the private sector. The model we have developed is **replicable** by other local governments; especially where there are similar sized populations. Lastly, some of the components are **not unique to Giles**; however, its’ the systemic combination(s) of targeted programming that is **innovative and has been customized** to better address our specific conditions in Giles County.

## **Programming Descriptions**

Giles County systemic prevention and intervention programs are as follows: the Enhanced Pre-k Education, Summer Youth Work Program, Day Report Center Program, Community Service Program, Access to Community College Education (ACCE) program and Public/Private Sector Collaboration.

### **Enhanced Pre-Kindergarten Education (Pre-k)**

According to the Research on Pre-k by the Center for Public Education:

A large and growing body of research shows that investing in high-quality pre-kindergarten education yields benefits for children, schools, and communities

There is strong evidence showing that young children who participate in high-quality Pre-k programs enter school more ready to learn than their peers. The National Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Kindergarten Cohort shows that students who attended a Pre-k program scored higher on reading and math tests than children receiving parental care.

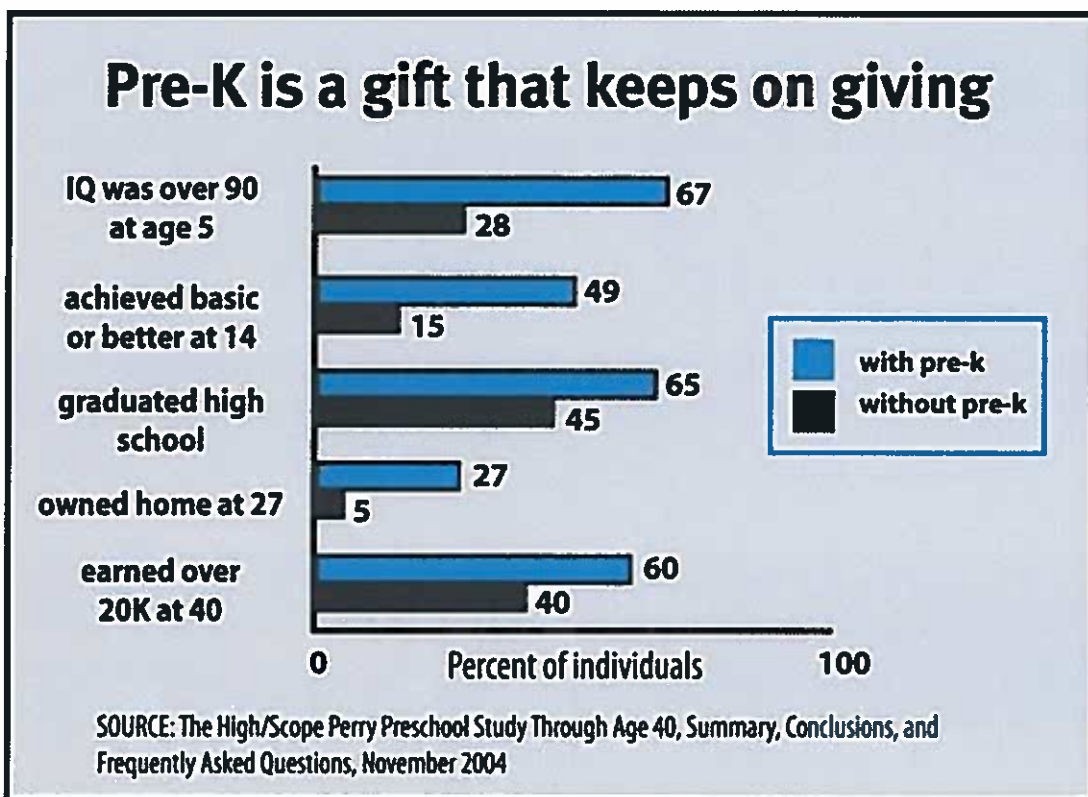
In adulthood, Perry Pre-k participants were less likely to be arrested for violent or drug crimes and had significantly fewer arrests than the comparison group. At age twenty-seven, participants were less likely to drink and smoke than those in the comparison group (Schulman 2005). In addition, 76 percent were employed at age forty—compared with 62 percent of non-participants—and averaged \$5,000 a year more in income. Pre-k participants also were more likely to own their own homes and much more likely to have a savings account. While researchers conducted extensive follow-up with children, there were no additional services

provided to Pre-k participants in later grades. Those in the Pre-k program generally received two years of early childhood services.

Two new Giles classrooms are being built to house 36 additional Pre-k students. The classrooms are located at Eastern Elementary/Middle School and Macy McClagherty Elementary/Middle School. Classrooms will have one teacher, two aides and serve 18 students each. The education received will be comprehensive and include on-going assessments, complete health screenings-including vision and dental, family engagement components, guest speakers, field trips, etc. Start-up is made possible through a 4-year grant of federal funds through the Virginia Department of Education. The funding award was announced in late 2014 when the program became officially operational. Applicants have been accepted since April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. The first day of enhanced Pre-k is August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015. This reflects the Giles school calendar.

Outreach is being conducted through multiple county-wide sources and coordination and collaboration with Head Start, Smart Beginnings, Department of Social Services, etc.

Plans for sustainability beyond the DOE funding period are being developed. Program delivery is provided by school personnel.



### Summer Youth Work Program

According to a study by the Brookings Institute entitled, *The Plummeting Labor Market Fortunes of Teens and Young Adults Teens aged 16-19*; Finding and keeping a job is a key step in a young person's transition to adulthood and economic self-sufficiency. Employment obviously allows young people to cover expenses for themselves and their families, but it also provides valuable opportunities for teens and young adults to apply academic skills and learn occupation-specific and broader employment skills such as teamwork, time management, and problem-solving. Additionally, it provides work experience and contacts to help in future job searches. The study goes on to say, *evidence suggests that teen employment is associated with improved employment and earnings outcomes later in life.*

Now in its' third year, the Summer Youth Work Program places 16-19 year old high school students in 6-week work settings that match their work experience (if any), their interests and their aptitudes. They receive an incentive for the hours that they are in their work experience. This program is funded in full through equal shares between the county and the worksites where the student is placed. County staff manages the project.

### **Giles County Day Report Center**

Giles County is a rural, underserved county combating an ever increasing rate of jail recidivism among its population of less than 17,000 inhabitants. Low self-esteem, fueled by minimal education, drug abuse, and the absence of simple mentoring, have all contributed to our offender's introduction to the court system. They may be first-timers, or they may be repeat offenders, but intervention and treatment assists in breaking this cycle. Work skills, life skills and improved communication skills greatly reduce recidivism. Giles County was anticipating its cost for the incarceration of county residents at the New River Valley Regional Jail to be over \$1,000,000.00 by 2020 without this intervention.

Giles County took a proactive approach to breaking this cycle, by establishing a Day Report Center for non-violent and non-sexual offenders. This program, which is built on voluntary participation by the offenders, provides an alternative sentencing option to the court system and allows those qualifying individuals the opportunity to perform community service in lieu of spending their sentence in jail. The program also provides critical educational opportunity and substance abuse treatment components to the participants.



Clients begin the program by referral from the court. Their next step is participation in a comprehensive needs assessment evaluation. This evaluation consists of the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI), the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) and the Psychiatric Diagnostic Screening Questionnaire (PDSQ). After the assessments are completed, they are scored by a qualified counselor, who prepares a report which includes recommendations as to the level and type of treatment that would provide the client with the greatest opportunity to succeed.

Day Report is county/client funded and managed by county special projects staff.

### **Community Service Program**

In August 2014, the Giles County Community Service Program was established in order to deliver a viable option to the courts for alternative sentencing. This option reduces the number of incarcerants' bed day per diems the county must pay, provides a significant, supplemental labor pool to the county and equally as important, provides those convicted with an opportunity to repay their court costs. (Repayment is often extremely difficult for those who don't have a job, as they don't have a drivers' license to get to work until their court costs are paid.)

Community Service participation helps ex-offenders to gain self-confidence and develop/enhance good work habits. It also provides a positive working experience, improves work skills and establishes good job references. It helps offenders to enter into the workforce as productive citizens. Another benefit, which was not discovered until the program was started, is enhancement of the professional competence of current Giles County staff in their

management and supervisory skills. This has increased staff ownership and pride in the program's success.

The program works closely with, and accepts referrals from, New River Community Corrections, Virginia Alcohol Safety Action Program, Court Service Unit, Department of Social Services and Adult Probation and Parole. The program has also been used by local high schools as a way of dealing with student suspensions or sanctions created by minor offenses.

The program currently averages in excess of 200 hours of work performed weekly. A few examples of where this work is performed include the Giles Public Service Authority garbage trucks, turf management on the county owned golf course, the county animal shelter and our public school system. Successful work experience has led to ex-offenders obtaining full-time positions with the private sector. Additionally, three individuals, who have each completed over 700 hours of community service, have been hired as full-time employees with the county, in the roles they had previously filled during their community service experience. Community service is funded by the county and county staff provides program delivery.

#### **ACCE – Access to Community College Education**

The ACCE Program is a partnership between Giles County and New River Community College (NRCC). It enables a graduating Giles County School student to achieve an Associate Degree or certificate at no-cost to them. The applicant student must complete their FAFSA, maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA, take the NRCC placement test, submit SAT or ACT documentation and

provide 80 volunteer hours of service to the community each of their two years they are in the program.

This is the first program year of ACCE and 62 high school graduates applied for and were determined eligible for ACCE funding. Upon processing these applications for student aide, NRCC determined that 28 applicants would receive aide to cover their full tuition costs. Thirty-four students will utilize ACCE funding.

ACCE programming will immediately elevate the educational, physical and economic “health” levels of the Giles workforce. The impacts are multi-faceted and well documented as represented below.

- The increased earning power of a college education is worth about \$450,000 in today’s dollars. (Baum and Ma, 2007)
- If the approximately 1.2 million high school dropouts from the class of 2008 had earned diplomas along with their classmates, the nation’s economy could have benefited from an additional \$319 billion in income over their lifetimes. (Alliance for Excellent Education. 2008)
- Educated individuals are also more likely to volunteer, vote and raise healthier, better educated children. (Baum and Ma. 2007; Wolfe and Haveman. 2002)
- A 2009 study reported by “U.S. News and World Report” indicated that college graduates were two times more likely to be in better health than high school degree holders.

- A 2011 study by BioMed Central Public Health took the health connection a step further by stating that college degree holders have healthier habits that reduce their risk of heart disease
- The 2007 "College Board: Education Pays" report found that college graduates enjoy better health than those who are less educated. They are ill less often because they are more likely to be nonsmokers and generally make better and healthier lifestyle choices.
- The 1992 Cohn and Geske Report states that children of college graduates are better prepared by their more educated mothers to start school at a young age and are more likely to attend college after high school graduation.
- According to the Census Bureau, over an adult's working life, high school graduates earn an average of \$1.2 million; associate's degree holders earn about \$1.6 million; and bachelor's degree holders earn about \$2.1 million (Day and Newburger, 2002) likely to attend college after high school graduation..

The ACCE Program will clearly have an immediate as well as multi-generational impact on the health of Giles County. It will also elevate the level of interest in and utilization of the Giles workforce for present and future industry.

ACCE is funded through collaboration between the county, Giles County citizens and Giles County business.

## **Public/Private Sector Collaboration**

Giles County is fortunate to be the home of NanoSonic, a nanotechnology firm ranked as the overall leader in a 13-state, 2006 study of the nanotechnology industry. Their clients include the National Aeronautic and Space Administration, US Department of Defense and the US Department of Transportation. They have been named to NASA's Nano50 list. NanoSonic is also committed to and involved in encouraging Giles School students to become excited about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

They have provided in-class education to many Giles students over the past several years on STEM topics. Most recently, in collaboration with the Giles County School System, NanoSonic and Leidos Corporation, a STEM grant was applied for (and awarded) from the US Department of Transportation. It was the only one of its type that was awarded in the US. This funding was used to develop science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) lesson plans related to transportation engineering issues (Intelligent Transportation). Twenty lesson plans (10 for middle and 10 for high school) were developed and will be used in after-school STEM programs in Giles County schools and transitioned to use as part of in-class science and math instruction.

As a side note, Ms. Margi Journell, a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics teacher at the Eastern Elementary/Middle School in Giles County was selected as a Virginia state-level finalist for this year's Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST).

Margy is one of four Giles County Elementary and Middle, and High School teachers working with NanoSonic and Leidos Inc. engineers on this project. Beyond staff time, there is no other

funding required. Management is achieved between school staff, NanoSonic and Leidos Corporation.

**Department of Social Services/Temporary Aid for Needy Families Program**

**(TANF)/Community Mentoring Partnerships for Enrichment, Training and Employment**

**(CoMPETE) collaboration** The TANF Program is administered through the Department of Social

Services (DSS). When DSS has individuals who are receiving these public benefits, and who are physically able to work, they refer them to us. We interview them to learn what their interests, aptitudes and aspirations may be and provide them with the tools and guidance to help them achieve their goals. We usually place them in a volunteer work setting where they provide benefit to the public in return for their receipt of public assistance. This volunteer time allows us to determine whether an individual has a sincere willingness to work. If this person demonstrates this willingness, and is reliable, we are often able to place them in a paid position. (If they do not desire to work (volunteer) the 35 hours per week as required by DSS, they are sanctioned and lose their benefits.) In a few cases where the individual has expressed an interest in further education, we refer them to a battery of interest inventory and aptitude tests at the Goodwill Industries/Workforce Office. (Last year we were able to refer a number of the Day Report clients into an Industrial Maintenance Program at New River Community College through a Goodwill/Workforce program.) They may also receive job search assistance there. CoMPETE, in several cases was able to provide temporary pay to the participants during their trial period. There is no additional funding required beyond staff time and existing program funds. Management is achieved by Giles Special Project & Community Service coordinators, DSS, Goodwill/Workforce staff and CoMPETE staff depending upon the situation.

## Overview and Summary

In summary: **(Enhanced Pre-K)** Giles County begins our systemic interventions with early education of 4-year olds; this is proven to increase readiness/future success in school. A successful school experience increases lifetime success. This program is funded through a 4-year grant from the Department of Education and awarded to the Giles County School System. (Sustainability plans are being developed.) This funding will enable us to build 2 new Pre-K classrooms and serve an additional 36 children. **(Summer Youth Work Program)** Work experience while in high school; ages 16-19, has a dramatic impact on job success and lifetime earnings. (Unfortunately, opportunities for work experience during these formative years have plummeted in the past few decades. Summer Youth Work Program provides this opportunity.) **(Day Report Center)** For those individuals in the court system, reintegration education/counseling availability has a positive impact on reducing recidivism rates (a low 18.3% in Giles) and predicting future success for these participating citizens. **(Community Service Program)** The Community Service Program allows individuals to pay their court costs through the provision of community service hours within Giles. Perhaps even more importantly, these individuals learn accountability, good work habits and through this experience, realize increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. **(Access to Community College Education- ACCE)** High school graduates may or may not have the financial resources to continue on to a college education. No-cost, Access to Community College Education will immediately elevate the prevalence of college-level educated members of the Giles workforce. Additionally, these students commit to 80 hours of community volunteerism per year, thereby, providing benefit to the Giles community while participating in and learning about the “world of work.” **(Public/Private Sector Collaboration)** For those students who have an interest/aptitude for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), the county relationship with NanoSonic Corp. has become quite important. Most recently, a grant was awarded by the US Department of Transportation to NanoSonic to develop 20 modules of curricula for middle and high school students on the topic of Intelligent Transportation. According to the US DOT, this is an important job growth area where formal education opportunities are lacking throughout the US. **(Collaboration with DSS/TANF/CoMPETE)** Those individuals that are receiving Temporary Aide for Needy Families benefits, if physically capable, must, by law, work. These individuals are placed into volunteer positions. When and if they prove to be reliable workers, effort is made to place them in paying jobs or further education.