

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: Isle of Wight County
Program Title: Hambassador Program
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Charles Meek
Title: Assistant to the County Administrator
Department: County Administrator's Office
Complete Mailing Address: P.O. Box 80, 17090 Monument Circle, Suite 138, Isle of Wight, VA 23397
Telephone # 757-365-6206 Fax # N/A
E-mail: cmeek@isleofwightus.net

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Anne F. Seward
Title: County Administrator
Signature: 

Program Name: Hambassador Program

Program Category: Customer Service

Program Criteria: 1) Offer an Innovative Solution to a Problem, Situation or Delivery of Services

2) Promote Intergovernmental Cooperation with Local, State, and Federal Entities and/or a Private Enterprise in Addressing a Problem or Situation

3) Provide a Model that Other Local Governments May Learn from or Implement in Their Own Localities

In March 2014, the Isle of Wight County Department of Tourism launched a unique customer service training program, the Hambassador Program, to enhance the level of customer service provided by front-line employees in the local tourism industry as well as the overall customer service experience received by visitors to Isle of Wight County. The program is offered to all who work in, contribute to, or support the tourism industry in Smithfield and Isle of Wight County including employees, employers, merchants, government employees, and members of volunteer organizations. The name Hambassador was chosen for the area's deep history as a national and international producer of hams. Isle of Wight is home to Smithfield Foods, the number one pork producer in the United States, as well as several local pork producers, specialty shops, and smokehouses. Over 13,000 visitors are received each year at the Isle of Wight Visitor Center and Smithfield, in Isle of Wight County, is the number one day trip destination for visitors to Colonial Williamsburg.

The Hambassador Program was developed by the Department of Tourism, which serves as the convention and visitors bureau and funded by both the County and Town of Smithfield. The program was implemented in March 2014 with minimal startup costs. All program materials and

marketing is produced in-house. Additionally an employee of the Department of Tourism serves as the guide for the familiarization tours. Program enrollment is rolling throughout the year.

The Hambassador Program is comprised of three components:

- 1) Participants are required to take a familiarization tour of the area led by the Department of Tourism.
- 2) Complete an online customer training course.
- 3) Visit 4 other merchants and post a review online at [Yelp.com](https://www.yelp.com) or [TripAdvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com).

Upon completion of the program, the participants become official Hambassadors and receive a pin, certificate, and Genuine Smithfield t-shirt. Most importantly, they are fully prepared to offer first class customer service to visitors. Employers are encouraged to pay their employees for the time spent toward certification as a Hambassador. Beginning in August 2014, Smithfield 2020, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the economic and cultural vitality of the Smithfield Historic District, began offering a matching grant of up to \$25 to offset the cost of the employees' time spent on the familiarization tour.

Since the program was started, twenty-three (23) front-line employees serving eight (8) local businesses have completed the program. Employees and business owners that have completed the program have been very enthusiastic about the impact that it is having on customer service. As noted by Amy Murrill Musick, Director of the Smithfield Center and Outdoor Venue, "Smithfield and Isle of Wight County have lots of visitors daily and to make them feel welcome it is important my employees know places to eat and things to see and do". This sentiment is echoed by other business owners throughout the community.

The Hambassador Program is a unique community and economic development program aimed at enhancing the customer service experience of visitors in Isle of Wight County.

The program addresses workforce development needs that contribute to the success of local businesses, their employees, and the entire community. The program is a model that demonstrates the power of partnerships between local government, local businesses, and nonprofit organizations serving the community. This program can be easily replicated in small and large counties throughout Virginia.

Hambassador Program

Program Category: Customer Service

Program Criteria: **1) Offer an Innovative Solution to a Problem, Situation or Delivery of Services**

2) Promote Intergovernmental Cooperation with Local, State, and Federal Entities and/or a Private Enterprise in Addressing a Problem or Situation

3) Provide a Model that Other Local Governments May Learn from or Implement in Their Own Localities

The Hambassador Program is a free program offered by the Isle of Wight County Department of Tourism to enhance the level of customer service provided by front-line employees in the local tourism industry as well as the overall customer service experience received by visitors to Isle of Wight County. The name Hambassador was chosen for the area's deep history as a national and international producer of hams. Isle of Wight is home to Smithfield Foods, the number one pork producer in the United States, as well as several local pork producers, specialty shops, and smokehouses.

The Hambassador Program was implemented in March 2014 and is comprised of three components: 1) Participants are required to take a familiarization tour of the area led by the Department of Tourism, 2) Complete an online customer training course, and 3) Visit 4 other merchants and post a review online at Yelp.com or TripAdvisor.com. Upon program completion, the participants become official Hambassadors of the County.

Twenty-three (23) front-line employees serving eight (8) local businesses have completed the program to date. Employees and business owners that have completed the program have been very enthusiastic about the impact that it is having on customer service.

Hambassador Program Isle of Wight County, Virginia

In March 2014, the Isle of Wight Department of Tourism launched a unique customer service training program, the Ambassador Program, to enhance the level of customer service provided by front-line employees in the local tourism industry and the overall customer service experience received by visitors to Isle of Wight County. The County's welcome center receives over 13,000 visitors each year and Smithfield, in Isle of Wight County, is the number one day trip destination for visitors to Colonial Williamsburg. The name Ambassador was chosen for the area's deep history as a national and international producer of hams. Isle of Wight is home to Smithfield Foods, the number one pork producer in the United States, as well as several local pork producers, specialty shops, and smokehouses.

The Ambassador Program is comprised of three components:

- 1) Participants are required to take a familiarization tour of the area led by the Department of Tourism.
- 2) Complete an online customer training course.
- 3) Visit 4 other merchants and post a review online at Yelp.com or TripAdvisor.com.

Upon completion of the program, the participants become official Ambassadors and receive a pin, certificate, and Genuine Smithfield t-shirt. Most importantly, they are fully prepared to offer first class customer service to visitors.

Twenty-three front-line employees serving eight local businesses have completed the program to date. The local business community has been very enthusiastic about the impact that the program is having on customer service. As noted by Amy Murrill Musick, Director of the Smithfield Center and Outdoor Venue, "Smithfield and Isle of Wight County have lots of visitors

daily and to make them feel welcome it is important my employees know places to eat and things to see and do". This sentiment is echoed by many of the business owners that have enrolled employees in the program.



Local Roots, Global Reach

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Smithfield & Isle of Wight County CVB introduces the Hambassador Program!

We recognize how vital our “front-line” employees are to our local tourism industry. The [Hambassador Program](#) trains these employees so that they are fully prepared to add to the quality of our visitor's experience. They will also learn about the tourism industry and why they are so important to its success!

The program requires employees to complete *three simple steps*....Our Hambassadors will learn about the area's attractions, visit local merchants, and take an online customer service course.

We're asking employers and employee to become involved by filling out a Hambassador Registration Form and mailing or emailing it to us. They will then receive a [Hambassador Card](#) that explains the steps of the program and helps them keep track of their progress. A copy of the Hambassador Card is attached to this email.

We will be recognizing our Hambassadors throughout the year and at our [National Tourism Month Celebration](#) in May.

Our Hambassadors will receive a “Genuine Smithfield & Isle of Wight County” t-shirt, a Hambassador pin and certificate, and - for students – a letter of reference describing the program and their participation in it.

The program is free, but we encourage merchants to consider paying their employees for some or part of the time they will spend completing the three steps.

We hope our local merchants will encourage their employees to participate in this important program. Please let us know if we can answer any further questions about the program.

Judy Hare Winslow

Director of Tourism, Smithfield & Isle of Wight County

jwinslow@isleofwightus.net

Lois Tokarz

Marketing & Public Relations Manager, Smithfield & Isle of Wight County

ltokarz@isleofwightus.net

[Smithfield & Isle of Wight County Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)

319 Main Street, Smithfield, VA 23430

757.357.5182

1.800.365.9339

Fax: 757.365.4360

P.O. Box 80
17090 Monument Circle
Isle of Wight, VA 23397
(757) 365-6204

www.co.isle-of-wight.va.us

GENUINE
Smithfield
 & ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY
hambassador
 PROGRAM



PHOTO: TODD CAIRNS

*Fostering Smithfield's Unique Brand
 of Small-Town Southern Charm*

Recognizing the vital role "front line" employees play in our visitor's experience in Genuine Smithfield, the Tourism Bureau offers these employees a great training opportunity in three simple steps!

1. Take a familiarization tour of the area
2. Complete an online customer training course
3. Visit 3 other merchants and post a review online.

Once these three steps are completed, the employees become our Hambassadors and will receive a pin, certificate and Genuine Smithfield t-shirt, but more importantly, they will be fully prepared to offer first class customer service to our visitors.

*Congratulations to our first Hambassadors,
 recognized on Friday, May 16, 2014:*

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Smithfield Ice Cream Parlor | The Smithfield Center |
| Margaret Carroll | Amy Musick |
| Marion Aiden | Courtney Roggmann |
| Danielle Lambert | Herbert Kelly |
| Lynka Jordan | Josh Marshall |

For information or to sign up, contact Terry Rhinier at 757.357.2214 or terry.rhinier@isleofwightus.net.



Local Roots, Global Reach

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Hambassador
Program



GENUINE
Smithfield
& ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY

hambassador

PROGRAM Fostering Smithfield's Unique Brand of Small-Town Southern Charm

"I find the program very valuable. Smithfield and Isle of Wight County have lots of visitors daily and to make them feel welcome it is important my employees know places to eat and things to see and do. The Smithfield Center has a constant stream of visitors attending meetings, weddings and other events and I never want to hear one of my staff members say "I know!" when a visitor asks "what is there to do here?"
Amy Murrill Musick, Director, Smithfield Center and Outdoor Venue

We are pleased to announce that [Smithfield 2020](#) is partnering with [Smithfield & Isle of Wight County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) to offer an incentive grant for the [Hambassador Program](#).

The Hambassador Program program is offered to all who work in, contribute to, or support the tourism industry in Smithfield & Isle of Wight County including employees, employers, merchants, government employees, and members of volunteer organizations. These are the folks we consider our "front line" workers in ensuring that visitors get a great experience here.

We encourage employers to pay their employees for the time spent on the program. Smithfield 2020 is now offering a matching grant to offset cost of the employees time spent on the familiarization tour. An application and further information on the 2020 grant program is included in on this webpage. *Deadline to apply is October 1, 2014.*

For further information click [here](#) or contact Terry Rhinier at 757.357.2214 or via email at Terry.Rhinier@isleofwightus.net .

Hambassador E-Blast, August 2014

P.O. Box 80
17090 Monument Circle
Isle of Wight, VA 23397
(757) 365-6204

www.co.isle-of-wight.va.us

Step Three: Take a Fham Tour

What's a fham tour? A "familiarization tour" is a guided tour of the wonderful attractions in our area. It's purpose is not to simply learn about our area, but to experience the attractions as a visitor would! Taking this tour will then make it much easier for our you to speak knowledgeable about area sites to visitors - from personal experience! Participants will board the tourism van to visit the area's two historic forts, St. Luke's Church, the Isle of Wight County Museum, the Schoolhouse Museum, and more. Even if you have visited these sites before, you and your group will be given a personal guided tour of each attraction and the VIP treatment!

There is no set time or date for this tour. We will make arrangements to suit your schedule. Once you let Terry know that you've completed step 1, she will contact you to schedule the tour. Be sure to ask the tour guide to sign and date this card at the end of the tour.



SIGNATURE OF TOUR GUIDE _____

DATE OF TOUR _____



Once all three steps are completed, take or mail this card in the envelope provided to the Visitor Center (319 Main Street) to the attention of Terry Rhinier. The Tourism Bureau will contact you with details on how and when you will be recognized and receive your Hambassador pin, Genuine Smithfield t-shirt, certificate and letter of reference.

Thank you for participating!



Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Name of Employer/Business: _____

If you have questions about this program, contact Terry Rhinier at 757.357.2214 or via email at terry.rhinier@isleofwightus.net. Thank you for participating in the Hambassador Program!

Thank you for participating in the Hambassador Program. Keep track of your progress with this card and turn it into Terry Rhinier at the Visitor Center in the envelope provided when you've completed all three steps.



Step One: Online Training

Once you register we'll send you a link to the online training course. *This is not a test! You won't be graded!* Simply read through the course. You'll find the information interesting and informative - and you'll learn something new about our area and why **YOU** are so vitally important to our local economy and tourism industry. If you don't have access to a computer we can provide a printed version of the course.

Completing the online course is a prerequisite for Steps 2 & 3, so be sure to email Terry when you have finished - as instructed on the last page of the training. Terry will then contact you to arrange your familiarization tour.

I completed the Hambassador Program online training on the date below.

YOUR SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Step Two: Visit 4 Merchants

This is an opportunity to experience a trip to Smithfield & Isle of Wight County from a visitor's point of view and to see how easily you can influence others online. Choose one restaurant, two shops and one lodger to visit from the **dining, shopping and lodging** pages of our website VisitSmithfield.com (please do not choose where you work) . Answer the questions on the next pages and post a review of one of your visits on either Yelp.com or TripAdvisor.com. Assistance is available if you are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with posting to travel sites.

Posted on: YELP.COM or TRIPADVISOR.COM

Date of Post: _____

Name of business reviewed: _____

General comment made: _____

While we may pass on your comments on to the merchants, no one will know who wrote the comments. This is why it is important that you return your 3-Step Card in the envelope provided.

Name of the **Shop** you visited:

What was your first impression of this shop? What stood out as a special?

Describe the customer service you received:

Was there anything negative to report about your visit?

Would you recommend this shop to friends and family?

Rate your overall experience:



Name of the **Shop** you visited:

What was your first impression of this shop? What stood out as a special?

Describe the customer service you received:

Was there anything negative to report about your visit?

Would you recommend this shop to friends and family?

Rate your overall experience:



You won't be able to experience the lodging venue exactly as a visitor would, so explain at the front desk that you are with the Ambassador Program and ask to look around, perhaps even to see a room. We will be notifying our lodgers that you will be making these visits.

Name of the **Lodger** you visited:

What stood out to you as a special about the lobby/rooms/overall atmosphere?

Describe the customer service you received:

Would you like to stay there if you were visiting? Why or why not?

Was there anything negative to report about your visit?

Rate your overall impression of the venue:



Name of the **Restaurant** you visited:

What was your first impression of this restaurant? What stood out as a special?

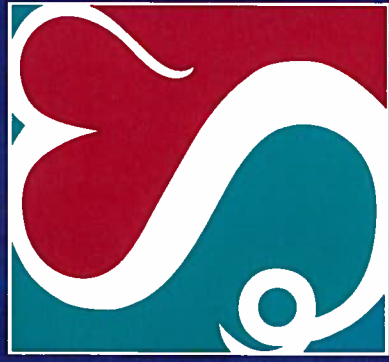
Describe the customer service you received:

Was there anything negative to report about your visit?

Would you recommend this restaurant to friends and family?

Rate your overall experience:





GENUINE
Smithfield
& ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY

hambassador

Congratulations on becoming an official Genuine Smithfield & Isle of Wight County Hambassador! Your commitment to providing your own special brand of genuine hospitality to our visitors and residents is greatly appreciated by all.

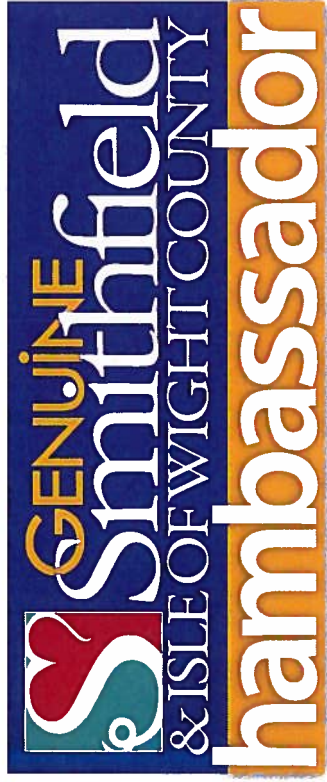
Herbert Kelly

The Smithfield Center

Presented by Smithfield & Isle of Wight County Convention & Visitors Bureau, May 16, 2014

Fostering Smithfield's Unique Brand of Small-Town Southern Charm

PROUD PARTICIPANT IN THE



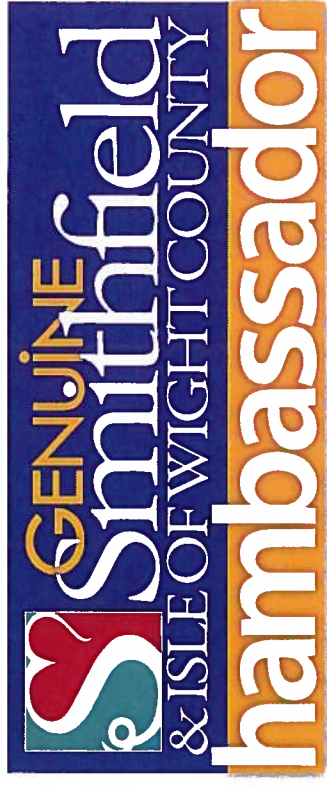
PROGRAM

Fostering Smithfield's Unique Brand
of Small Town Southern Charm

Congratulations to the
Smithfield Ice Cream Parlor
and their **Hambassadors:**

Marian Aiden
Margaret Carroll
Lynka Jordan
Danielle Lambert

PROUD PARTICIPANT IN THE



PROGRAM

Fostering Smithfield's Unique Brand
of Small Town Southern Charm

Congratulations to the
Smithfield Center
and their **Hambassadors:**

Amy Musick
Courtney Roggmann
Herbert Kelly
Josh Marshall