

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: Stafford County Government

Program Title: Stafford County's 350th Anniversary Celebration

Program Category: Parks and Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Shannon Howell

Title: Public Information Officer

Department: County Administration

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Anthony Romanello

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

Overview – “Stafford County’s 350th Anniversary Celebration”

How do you engage and excite a transient and growing community about a 350th Anniversary? You throw a year-long party and invite everyone to it. For Stafford County’s 350th Anniversary celebration in 2014, the Board of Supervisors planned a celebration that the children of today can tell stories about to their grandchildren. We also wanted to build a sense of community which is challenging with a transient and diverse growing populace. We used an innovative partnership with private industry, civic groups and government to plan, create and fund five signature events and tons of historic, artistic and fun programming. We solicited the community’s input for a vision for the 350th Anniversary and appointed a Blue Ribbon Planning Committee of civic and business leaders to make the citizens’ ideas happen. We also put together a fundraising team that raised \$1 million to finance the efforts. The resulting celebration honoring Stafford’s past, present and future was attended by more than 40,000 people and several of its initiatives became permanent and ongoing Stafford County resources. By all accounts, our “Party of the Centuries” was a great success and will enrich the lives of citizens for years to come.

The Problem or Need for the Program

Stafford County, Virginia, is the 25th oldest county in the United States. Many of the milestones in Stafford’s history parallel those of the history of our nation. Both Captain John Smith and Pocahontas walked Stafford’s land. George Washington grew up here in a farm on the Rappahannock River. George Mason was raised here and authored the Virginia Declaration of Rights which became the basis for the Bill of Rights. Abraham Lincoln visited Stafford multiple times during the Civil War. Samuel Langley made one of the first attempts at manned flight off of Stafford’s Chopawamsic Island. The Marine Corps built their world renowned “Crossroads of the Marine Corps” at Quantico in the county. Stafford is the hometown for both the Harlem

Renaissance painter Palmer Hayden and the impressionist artist Gari Melchers. Honoring Stafford's rich 350 years of history and its present and future and creating a sense of community in a transient and growing diverse populace was the challenge the Board of Supervisors faced in 2011 when they started planning for the anniversary. Additionally, they faced the constraints of limited resources with which to do it. They also wanted to reach the bar set by organizers of Stafford's 300th Anniversary, 50 years earlier, an event that long-time citizens and Stafford's Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and life-long Stafford County resident Gary Snellings still talk about with a mixture of nostalgia and pride.

Description of the Program

1. Planning – How to Start

Planning for the 350th Anniversary celebration started three years ahead in October 2011. The Board of Supervisors appointed 11 community leaders to a "Blue Ribbon Planning Committee" to oversee the celebration. A diverse group who represented a wide range of groups and interests, the committee developed a system of coordination between partners, sponsors, and community groups. The committee itself formed four subcommittees to oversee 350th efforts. The Finance, Public Relations and Marketing, Education and Legacy, and Events subcommittees touched on every aspect of the celebration.

The County hired a part-time program director. She became the "ringmaster" for all the sponsors, partners and citizen groups. Multiple outreach efforts by organizers generated a list of 400 ideas, which were narrowed to 36 ideas by late fall 2012. A prioritization process was used to compare and develop consensus. The final projects were used to create a budget and fundraising goals. These plans deliberately involved placing events and programming at locations throughout the County, to truly make it a celebration accessible to all citizens. An issue

of the *Stafford* magazine, a quarterly County publication, was dedicated to details about the events of the 350th and mailed out to every home and business in the County in November of 2013.

A renowned Stafford resident, Lt. Gen. Ron Christmas, USMC-Ret., founder of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, was asked to assemble and spearhead a fundraising team of civic and business leaders in the community. They pursued fundraising with a three-pronged approach: 1) direct contact; 2) a letter writing campaign to organizations; and 3) a brick program, which enabled individuals to both support the 350th and memorialize their support. Starting in June of 2013, the team raised funds through 2014 and surpassed the fundraising goal of \$1 million by raising \$1,003,040.50. A mix of public and private sponsorship, approximately two-thirds of the funding came from private sponsorship from businesses and individuals, with the remaining third provided by Stafford County.

“Sponsors,” or donors, were crucial to the 350th effort. Without their financial and in-kind support, the effort would have been very limited in scope. Regional and local businesses stepped up to contribute. There were multiple levels of sponsorship “opportunities,” from being a “legacy partner” and donating \$250,000 or more, to being a “sponsor” for \$250. A local media conglomerate, the Free Lance-Star Companies, earned “Founder” status by agreeing to donate \$100,000 of in-kind media support. A Stafford company, Atlantic Builders, became a “Benefactor” by donating \$25,000 towards the building of Celebration Stage, a permanent amphitheater.

350th “Partners,” community groups as varied as the Rotary, Lions Club, the local school system, historic societies, the NAACP, the library and an artists’ guild, were invaluable. Their many members were an incredible asset in staffing and coordinating the five signature events.

A diverse group of County staff was selected from multiple Stafford Government departments to support the 350th. This group, many of which had never worked together before, met once a week, starting in early 2013. Their group efforts strengthened ties among them and benefitted both the County and citizens by making use of multiple resources efficiently. Staff outside this core group helped as needed, for a total of more than 225 staff members collaborating on this special event. Using County staff as a resource was also a big money saver and part of the County's contribution.

2. The Celebration Itself (See Appendix I for photos and examples of marketing materials.)

The 350th kicked off with "Celebrate Stafford 350," an outdoor event on January 4, 2014. More than 4,300 people enjoyed a temporary ice skating rink, music, a historical pageant, a history tent and vendors, despite temperatures in the teens. Founders Day in May featured a parade and arts festival over two days, with an attendance of 12,816 people. The grand opening in June of "Celebration Stage," Stafford's first permanent outdoor amphitheater, was enjoyed by 1,244 people. Fall's "Wings and Wheels Festival" at the local airport, brought more than 5,935 people out to enjoy an air show, car show and celebration of military heritage. In November, 1,001 participants had the opportunity to take bus tours of the "Trail to Freedom," a tour that stopped at sites around the County that played a part in enslaved people's routes to freedom. A permanent African-American history mural was unveiled before 256 people at the former home of the Stafford Training School. Now called the Rowser Building, the historic African-American school is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A permanent brick memorial garden, populated by personalized fundraising bricks, was also installed. The December premier of a movie of Stafford's history in honor of the 350th was screened by 362 folks and thousands of free copies were given to citizens. Additionally, there were many programs (See Appendix II for

examples.) put forth by local organizations. The George Washington Foundation administered the “Tell Your Stafford Story,” an opportunity for individuals to record, via video or audio, their experiences in Stafford to be stored for future use. It was very successful with 98 folks participating. The videos are available on the “What’s Your Stafford Story?” channel on YouTube. Educational grants were given to teachers to integrate the 350th Anniversary into their curriculum. One art teacher used a grant for her students to create tree ornaments and paintings of historic sites in Stafford. The library created a geocaching trail and provided GPS units for participants to borrow to hunt the caches. They created “History Adventure Packs” for teachers with information about Stafford’s history. They hosted a well-attended History Lecture Series that featured everything from a former Commonwealth’s Attorney, whose lengthy family history parallels Stafford County’s, to Cymon Snow, the manager of the ancestral home of George Washington’s family in England. More examples of programming can be found at www.stafford350.com.

Responding to Economic Downturn

Planning an ambitious celebration with five fairly large events and multiple other events and programs that would be significant enough to honor 350 years of history and have a lasting presence was a challenge with limited resources. The \$1,000,000 budget of the 350th Anniversary, \$350,000 of which came from the County, could not possibly cover all the costs. Stafford County, like most other localities, has learned to “do more with less” since the economic downturn. With less incoming revenue and non-public safety staffing levels lower than 10 years ago, Stafford has had to be more innovative with the use of its human, physical and monetary resources. These lessons were applied to the 350th Celebration. A core group of County staff was integral to the planning of the celebration, taking on those duties in addition to their

regular duties. Additionally, dozens of additional staff members volunteered their time as needed. Stafford County has a culture of going above and beyond and never giving up until a job is done. If something needed to be done that did not fit into the budget, staff figured out creative and innovative ways to make it work. Signs and banners were designed with redundancy in mind. Everyone was careful to use paper resources wisely. Emails were used almost exclusively for invitations instead of paper and postage. One of the events, the Founders Day Parade, was scheduled at the same time as the annual public schools' Fine Arts Festival, doubling resources without incurring additional cost. Stafford County has responded to the economic downturn by refusing to be limited by it.

Use of Technology (See Appendix III and IV for examples)

Using technology was one of the keys to the success of the marketing of the 350th Anniversary. We used a website, social media and an e-newsletter to create a buzz before the year even started. By the time the first event kicked off in January of 2014, citizens were already familiar with where to find information. A 350th Anniversary website – www.stafford350.com was created and launched in 2013 to centralize information and keep citizens and visitors up-to-date on the development of events. Likewise, a Facebook page, Stafford County 350Anniversary, and Twitter feed, @staffordco350, were used in two ways to inform citizens: information was posted ahead of an event to create interest and attendance; and information was posted and tweeted live to show people how exciting the events were, creating a desire to attend events in social media users. Slides with information on the 350th Anniversary ran on Stafford County's government cable channel. Budgets, responsibilities and fundraising efforts were managed via Excel spreadsheets. All the information pertaining to the celebration was kept on a computer drive accessible by the many staff members across different departments. Signs and

commemorative plaques were designed using Publisher. A monthly e-newsletter was sent out via email.

The Cost of the Programming

The cost of the year-long 350th Celebration was \$1 million. These are the types of program-specific expenses that localities would have to keep in mind if attempting to replicate the program:

1. Contracted Personnel – Stafford hired a 350th programmer.
2. Marketing and Promotional Materials
3. Limited Edition Merchandise – For example, commemorative coins
4. Appreciation Expenses – Thank you tokens for sponsors, partners and volunteers
5. Program Specific Expenses – For example, the cost of GPS units for the library's geocaching program
6. Documentation Expenses – Photographers, Videographers
7. Operational Materials – For example, signage for events
8. Logistical Costs – For example, portable toilets
9. Transportation Expenses – For example, motor coaches for Trail to Freedom tour
10. Food – For example, 350th anniversary cakes, sponsor reception food, etc.
11. Costs Related to Fundraising
12. Entertainment
13. Permits
14. Construction – For example, Celebration Stage, Rowser Memorial Brick Garden

The Results/Success of the Program

Success can be measured by tangible statistics: more than 40,000 citizens and visitors attended the five signature events and the movie debut, with thousands of others participating in the many types of programming throughout the year; the 350th e-newsletter had a circulation of 400 readers; the Facebook page had 1,170 followers and the Twitter account, 252 followers; the website had 178,997 total page views; and the fundraising goal of \$1,000,000 was surpassed by the end of 2014.

Success can also be measured by the intangible results. Through their combined 350th efforts, new partnerships were made and old ones were strengthened among County government,

businesses and the community. Those ties will continue to reap dividends for Stafford County by strengthening its ability to call on the community to help in solving problems and challenges together. The diverse nature of the five signature events alone created a venue to showcase Stafford's businesses, schoolchildren, civic groups, Sheriff's Office, Fire and Rescue Department, airport, parks and facilities, and historic resources to citizens, visitors and the world via social media and the website.

Certainly, Stafford reached one of its biggest goals of creating a sense of community. At the very first event in January, the faces of parents were beaming as dozens of schoolchildren participated in the history pageant and dropped items into the time capsule. That event helped drive attendance at the remaining events, providing citizens and visitors with many opportunities to have their own 350th experience.

Perhaps the biggest success of the program was the legacy it left behind. Adults and children have memories of a remarkable year of events that celebrated the history of their home. There are 98 videos available on a YouTube Channel of current and former residents telling their Stafford stories. There are special medallions and signs bearing the 350th Anniversary logo throughout Stafford County that remind everyone of the special events of 2014 and of Stafford's rich history. While Celebration Stage was built to host a 350th Anniversary event, Stafford County's first amphitheater is a permanent fixture that will host events for years to come. In fact, this summer marks Stafford's first "Songfest Sundays" series of concerts that will take place at Celebration Stage. Likewise, the 350th Anniversary Memorial Brick Garden and the African-American History Wall at the Rowser Building are historic resources the public will have access to for the foreseeable future. Best of all, community ties were strengthened between the participants – citizens, business owners, members of civic groups, volunteers and Stafford

County government staff. These relationships will surely be beneficial in the years to come as everyone works together to continue the progress in Stafford County that started in 1664.

Summary of the Program

2014 marked Stafford County's 350th Anniversary. The 25th oldest county in the United States, Stafford wanted to throw a party to remember that inspired a sense of pride and community in the citizens of Stafford County. They also wanted to establish ongoing, permanent reminders of the celebration and of the County's rich 350 years of history.

Through an innovative partnership with civic organizations and businesses, Stafford planned and executed a successful celebration with five signature events and countless other programming.

More importantly, a legacy was established of intangible things – memories, experiences and relationships - and tangible items - permanent fixtures like the amphitheater, African-American History Wall, and a brick memorial garden – that will continue to tell the story of the 350th Anniversary for years to come. Additionally, all new facilities opened in 2014 - Grafton Village Elementary renovation, Chichester Park, Rowser Brick Garden, Stafford Regional Airport, Celebration Stage Amphitheater, the Staffordboro Commuter lot and the Courthouse Streetscape project - bear a special medallion of the 350th Anniversary logo that will remind folks of the anniversary for a long time to come.

Without a doubt, Stafford achieved its goal of throwing an anniversary celebration that Stafford's adults and children would talk about for years to come while educating and informing them about Stafford's past, present and future. Perhaps the success of the 350th can be summed up best by the words of 10-year-old John Baroody, son of Stafford's Deputy County Administrator Tim Baroody when he said, "Dad, I wish we could have the 350th every year."

Appendix I



STAFFORD
Virginia



Stafford's 350th Anniversary Celebration in Pictures



Celebrate Stafford 350 - January 4, 2014



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Virginia

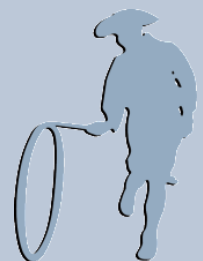




***Founders Day and Fine Arts Festival -
May 3 - 4, 2014***



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Celebration Stage - June 25, 2014



STAFFORD
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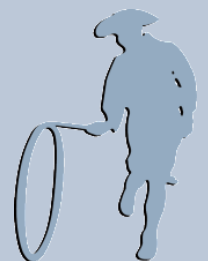




Wings and Wheels - October 18, 2014

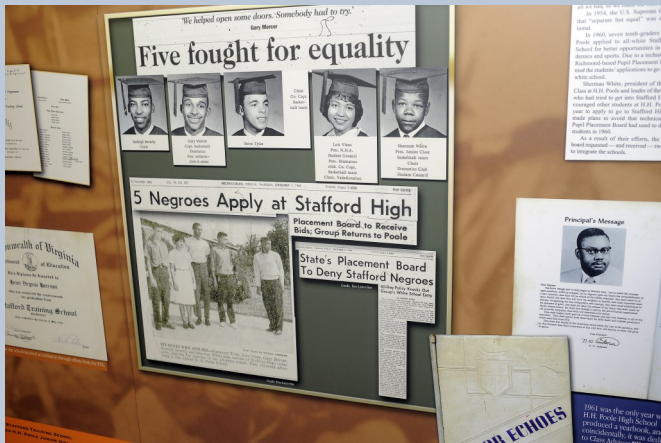


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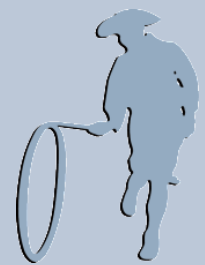




**Trail to Freedom/African-American History Wall -
November 1 - 2, 2014**



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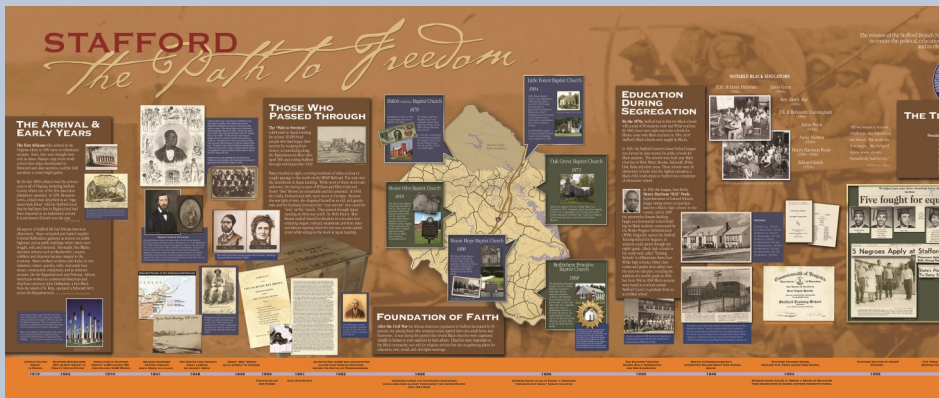


**Brick Memorial
Garden -
Rowser Building**

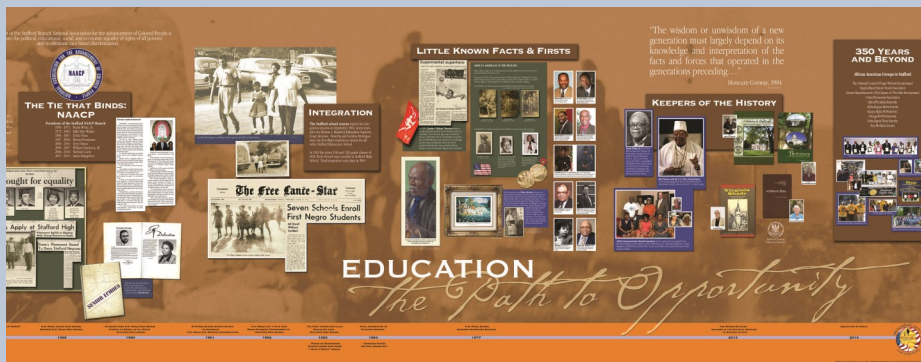


Celebration Stage

Permanent Legacy



**Rowser African-American
History Wall**



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Appendix III e-Newsletter



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Virginia





350th Anniversary

Stafford County, Virginia

July 2014

Volume 1, Issue 10

79 days till Wings & Wheels!

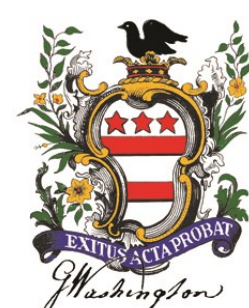
Tell Your Stafford Story

There is no more fitting time than during Stafford County's 350th Anniversary to Tell Your Stafford Story!

When: Continuing through the end of 2014

Where: Ferry Farm and other locations throughout the county

Find out more on the [Tell Your Stafford Story](#) page.



Donations

Please mail donations to:

Stafford County 350th Celebration
PO Box 1463
Stafford, VA 22555-1463

2014 Events:

October 18th—[Wings and Wheels](#)

November 1st—[Rowser History Wall](#) and [Trail of Freedom Tour](#)

Contact Information

[Blue Ribbon Committee](#)

[Sue Henderson](#)—350th Program Manager

[Erin Brooks](#)—Technical Support

[Cathy Vollbrecht](#)—Media

[Joanie DeShazo](#)—Sponsors and Small Business Initiative

[Jeff Shover](#)—Volunteers

Stafford County's History Lecture Series

The Central Rappahannock Regional Library will host a Lecture Series detailing Stafford County's 350 year history.

August 5, 2014—Government Island

September 9, 2014—Expansion of Quantico Marine Corps Base

October 7, 2014—The Washingtons of Sulgrave Manor

And many more throughout the year...

[Central Rappahannock Regional Library](#)

[LibraryPoint.org](#)

[LibraryPoint.org](#)

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Want To Leave A Legacy?

The deadline has been extended!

Your donation of \$350 will help support the Trail to Freedom Tour and the Rowser African American History Wall, along with other programs and events, as a part of the lasting legacy and continued celebration of Stafford County's 350th Anniversary.

To commemorate your gift, a **personalized engraved brick** will be installed at the Rowser Building.

Purchase a brick before August 31, 2014 to be included in the November 1, 2014 unveiling (bricks will still be available to purchase until December 31, 2014).

[Buy a Brick!](#)



Fun Family Activities All Summer Long



Need some great family fun this summer? Explore Stafford County with the Stafford Trailblazers program!

Thanks to the 350th partner, the Central Rappahannock Regional Library for organizing this exciting voyage.

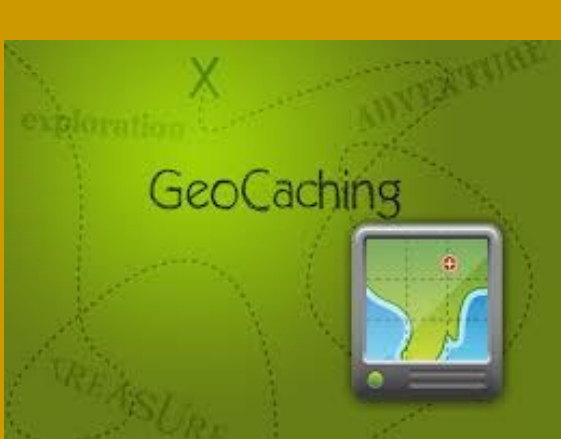
Learn more on the [Stafford Trailblazers](#) page.

Want a fun, exciting, and inexpensive reason to get outdoors? Try Geocaching!

The Central Rappahannock Regional Library has partnered with the 350th Blue Ribbon Committee to create The Stafford 350 Geocaching Trail.

Start your adventure today!

Learn more on the [Geocaching Trail](#) page.



Partner Pit-Stop: PAAASC



The Professional Artists and Artisans Association of Stafford County (PAAASC) partnered with the 350th Blue Ribbon Committee to seek artists to design, paint, and submit an original two-dimensional composition that clearly commemorates the County's 350th Anniversary.

Congratulations to Anne Kadis of Stafford County, the winner of the 350th Commemorative Art Piece Competition.

Read more on the [Commemorative Art Piece](#) page.

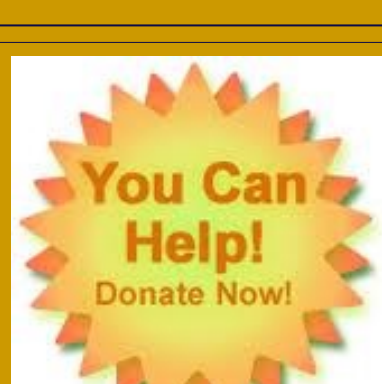
How Can I Contribute?

Thanks to the Fundraising Team, we have raised over **\$957,000!!**

This money is helping to bring the citizens of Stafford County together as a community to celebrate their unique history.

Want to contribute to this once in a lifetime opportunity?

Click [here](#) to see how.



Grateful To Our Volunteers!



A major **THANK YOU** to all of our volunteers! Without your help, we would not be able to provide the celebration Stafford County deserves.

Get your friends to like us on [Facebook](#), visit the [350th website](#), or add a friend to the e-newsletter [subscriber list](#).

If you would like to get involved, please [volunteer](#) on the 350th website.

Sponsor Spirit!



A major **THANK YOU** to all of our sponsors! Without your contributions, we would not be able to provide the celebration Stafford County deserves.

The Free-Lance Star Media Companies, Quantico Corporate Center, B101.5, Atlantic Builders, GEICO, NSWC, Stafford Hospital Foundation, Dominion Power, Intuit, Newland Companies, Wal-Mart, Hilldrup Moving and Storage, Walton Development, Rappahannock Goodwill Industries, Long & Company LLC, The Garrett Companies, Hirschler Fleischer, Colonial Circuits, Fredericksburg Rentals, Lifecare, Patricio, J.F. Fick Inc., and many many more!

[B101.5](#)

[NEWS TALK 1230 AM WFVA FREDERICKSBURG](#)

[Quantico CORPORATE CENTER at Stafford, Virginia](#)

[The Free Lance-Star freelancestar.com](#)

[fredericksburg.com](#)

[93.3 WFLS Today's NEW Country](#)

Go to the [Corporate Sponsors](#) page to see all of our sponsors!

History Minute

Who served on board a ship commissioned by George Washington during the Revolutionary War?

Hint: He was a free Black and operated the ferry at Falmouth.

Find the [answer](#).



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Appendix IV

Website, Facebook and Twitter



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350th Anniversary Website



STAFFORD *Virginia*



Facebook

Stafford County 350 Anniversary



STAFFORD *Virginia*



Twitter

@staffordco350



A screenshot of a web browser displaying the Twitter profile page for @staffordco350. The browser's address bar shows the URL "https://twitter.com/StaffordCo350". The page header includes navigation icons for Home, Notifications, Messages, Discover, and a search bar. The profile header shows the Stafford County 350 logo, the name "Stafford County 350", and the handle "@StaffordCo350". Below the name, it says "Official twitter for the Stafford County 350 Anniversary" and provides the website "twitter.com/StaffordCo350". There are buttons for "Follow" and "Following". The statistics show 817 tweets, 28 following, and 259 followers. The main content area displays two tweets: one from Feb 17 about a "GOVERNMENT CHALLENGE GRANT" and another from Feb 10 congratulating the Central Rappahannock Regional Library. The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons and a system tray displaying the time "9:58 AM 3/24/2015".

STAFFORD *Virginia*

