

Jason D. Bellows '14 talks

Virginia Certified County Supervisors Program

Good morning to start I'll give you a little background on me. I am the 5th generation of my family to call my district home. Besides time away at college at Radford University where I earned a BS in Biology and a stint in California in business for myself I have resided here in White Stone, Va. Currently for the past 13 years I have been a Science teacher at my local high school where I graduated in 1995. It is in education that I found my true calling and formed the foundation for why I chose to run for the board in the first place in 2011. Education opportunities are the lynch pin for economic development and success for an area. I saw a vital need for boards to work together instead of always in opposition of us versus them and thought my experience as an educator would be a valuable asset in this endeavor.

As the youngest member to ever serve on our board you quickly learn there is no textbook as in education that tells you all you need to know to be a great supervisor. Networking and knowledge are keys to success and the VACo supervisor program offers just those key assets. You often think that the problems you face in your locale are unique or in isolation but in fact through the networking opportunities afforded through this program you realize that many areas and other supervisors face the same issues. The friendships and professional bonds made during the classes make for more informed decision-making and a vetting process to see what has worked and what has not.

Learning is a lifelong endeavor and once again there is not true manual of how to be a great leader. The course on leadership was very informative and underlined the importance of the many hats a great leader must wear. Great leadership does not happen in isolation and the program brought together many different supervisors from different regions of Virginia giving a large spectrum of knowledge both from rural and more urban locales. All the courses have been an invaluable knowledge asset and are a reference for my future needs as a supervisor. I have already used many of the skills developed through the program to aid my performance on the board.

By improving my knowledge base and network of fellow supervisors across the state, the program has created a valuable asset to tap as I continue in the job as supervisor. As I near the end of my first term in office, I can reflect back and know this program has been very rewarding and will forever be useful both professionally and personally. Knowing that collaboration is key to success today the program brings comfort in knowing others face the same problems and that help is just a call or email away. The discussions and discourse of the classes brings hallmark to the founding principles of a successful democracy that somewhere between all the competing views and interest there is a solution that benefits all. I believe the

program shows what true statesmanship is when people of different political ideologies can have frank debate but remain friends and colleagues in the end. If we are to solve our problems and create a bright future both locally and nationally we must restore this working relationship and that is my goal as an elected leader going forward. As Jefferson once said "I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend."

I would not hesitate in recommending fellow supervisors to take this program. No matter what your level of experience is you can never stop learning or be stagnant and expect to be a great leader. The world today is a vastly different one then just a short while ago and we can assume the world of tomorrow will be very different then that of today. So as leaders we are preparing and making decisions on a world that does not yet exist and so continued education and networking with others is vital and this program offers all of these things and more.