

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs

2010 Achievement Awards

Virginia Association of Counties



ATTN: 2010 Achievement Awards Program
Virginia Association of Counties
1207 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, Va. 23219-3627

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Call for Entries



2010 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 1, 2010

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. Deadline: June 1, 2010.

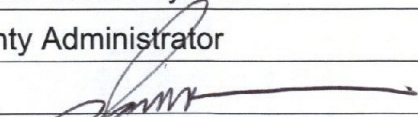
Program Information

Locality York County, Virginia
Program Title Putting History on the Right Path
Program Category Regional Collaboration
Population Category 50,001 to 100,000

Contact Information

Name Anne B. Smith
Title Director
Department Community Services
Complete Mailing Address P. O. Box 532, Yorktown, Virginia 23690-0532
Telephone # (757) 890-4111 Fax # (757) 890-4068
E-mail smithab@yorkcounty.gov

Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name James O. McReynolds
Title County Administrator
Signature* 

*Entries without this signature will not be accepted.

2010 VACo Achievement Awards

Putting History on the Right Path

Anne B. Smith, Director
Community Services
P. O. Box 532
Yorktown, Virginia 23690



Putting History on the Right Path
Department of Community Services
York County, Virginia

Nomination Summary for 2010 VACo Achievement Award

1. Overview

The York County Historical Museum first opened in 2001, in York Hall, the site of five county courthouses, dating back to 1697. It is the only Museum in the area that attempts to portray the complete history of Yorktown/York County. The oldest artifacts that were unearthed in 1989 provide evidence of York County's earliest residents, the Native Americans who inhabited the area between 500 B.P. and 900 A.D.

Due to its out-of-the-way location and restrictions on signage in the Historic District, Museum visitation has always been minimal. However, in 2006, the opportunity arose to establish a Museum on Main Street, the major thoroughfare for virtually all visitors to the Yorktown.

As a result of the cooperative efforts of York County, the National Park Service and the Historical Museum Board, the Museum on Main officially opened in 2007. Since that time, the number of visitors to the Museum on Main is more than twice the visitors to the original site and referrals have significantly increased visitation at the museum in York Hall.

2. The Problem, Challenge or Situation

As is most often the case, museums in small towns with limited accommodations, are often confined to out-of-the-way, inconspicuous places.

That was the case with the Historical Museum being located in York Hall, more specifically, the Lower Level (Basement) of the old courthouse building. Attendance figures were minimal due to its limited accessibility and exposure. (Only one elevator and two emergency stairway exits provide visitor access to the museum.) Signage restrictions in the Historic District were also a factor in the Museum's ability to advertise its presence or existence.

3. How the Program Was Carried Out

In 2005, the Fifes and Drums of York Town, an all-volunteer, ceremonial, youth fife and drum unit, completed a new headquarters building at 202 Church Street in Yorktown. In so doing, the organization vacated a building located at 408 Main Street which was available to them under a Use Agreement with the National Park Service. The transition to the corps' new headquarters provided a rare opportunity for the Historical Museum to finally envision a presence on Main Street, a far greater feeling of presence in the community and the ability to reach far greater numbers of visitors.

In 2006, the wheels were set in motion to secure "the old Fifes and Drums building" as a highly suitable museum facility. A collaborative effort between York County, the National Park Service and the York County Historical Museum resulted in the establishment of the "Museum on Main" in 2007. This partnership recognized the importance of having a prime and highly-visible location to display the complete picture of Yorktown/York County's unique and magnificent history and to host special, short-term exhibits and events of an historical nature.

4. Financing and Staffing

The roles each partner played in establishing the Museum on Main are highlighted below.

York County

- Completed a use agreement with the National Park Service for the federally-owned building located at 408 Main Street in Yorktown, referred to as “the old Fifes and Drums building.”
- Completed a building use agreement with the Museum to allow the use of the building in keeping with the integrity of its historical location, and for the establishment and operation of a historical museum to be open to the public.
- Agreed to provide the following products and services:
 - Replace windows in the building as required.
 - Refinish and polish the interior floors in the building prior to the Museum’s occupancy, and thereafter to wax and polish the floors periodically.
 - Maintain the plumbing and electrical systems in the building at the County’s cost.
 - Erect and maintain exterior signage indicating the museum and its hours of operation.
 - Repair any holes in the building’s ceilings and walls prior to occupancy.

- Provide hazard insurance.
 - Pay all costs for heat, electricity and water utilities to the building.
- Appointed a staff member to serve as a member of the Museum Board in order to coordinate County support of their efforts.

National Park Service

- Through a Use Agreement, permits use of the building as a public museum and as a venue for special, short-term exhibits and events of an historical nature.
- Provides maintenance of the exterior aspects of the building, specifically exterior painting, the shake shingle roof, and lawn maintenance.
- Works closely with York County and the Museum to sponsor exhibits and events in order to avoid conflicts with offerings and scheduling.

York County Historical Museum

- Provides general housekeeping and general maintenance inside the building.
- Provides any furnishings, equipment and fixtures it deems necessary in connection with the use of the building.
- Maintains building security.
- Provides limited exterior maintenance to the building and landscape.
- Develops exhibits and events featuring local history and artifacts in the building.

- Works with the County and the Park Service on projects beneficial to all parties.

NOTE: The Museum applied for, and received, a matching grant from the Commonwealth of Virginia which allowed it to make three capital improvements to the building thus far:

- The installation of a HVAC/Humidity Control system to maintain the building suitable for housing museum artifacts.
- The remodeling of the rear entrance of the building to meet required safety standards and improve the exterior appearance.
- The installation of an intrusion/fire detection system.

Portions of the grant are also earmarked for additional artifact display cases and, computers and visual display systems for the building.

The Museum is also working in cooperation with the local power company to relocate or disguise a power transformer immediately adjacent to the building entrance to improve the exterior appearance of the building and make it more aesthetically pleasing and consistent with the historic nature of its surroundings.

All entities have established web sites. The web sites are also linked to each other. The museum applies the use of computers, touch-screen display technology, audio/visual equipment and lighting in the presentation of artifacts and information. The internal environment of the building is maintained by a thermostatically controlled HVAC/Humidity Control system that maintains the environment well within levels suitable for a museum environment.

Cost of the Program

York County Historical Museum Board

- HVAC/Humidity Control System - \$12,353.00
- Remodeling of Rear Entrance to Building - \$540.00

National Park Service

- Painting, replacing two doors and two broken windows - \$2,000.00

York County

- Door locks, minor repairs to the hardwood floor - \$200.00

Total Cost \$15,093.00

5. Results of the Program

Visitation for special events/exhibits at the Museum on Main is more than double that of the main Museum in the basement of York Hall. The Museum staff has been highly successful in using the Museum on Main as a referral point for visitors to the York Hall Museum, which has created an increase in visitation to that Museum as well. The location of the Museum on Main has also allowed the Museum Board to conduct events and exhibits using both the building's interior and exterior grounds (as for example, when the Museum cosponsors the annual Christmas Market on Main Street with the County.)

6. How the Program Fulfilled the Awards Criteria

This nomination is worthy of an award because it meets several of the award criteria. Those specific criteria are:

Offers an innovative solution to a problem, situation or delivery of services: The physical location of the Museum on Main has raised the awareness of both the community and visitors of the Museum's existence. Visitors to Historic Yorktown whom, at one time, could have come and gone without ever having seen this particular Museum are now drawn to its location as they drive or stroll on the main thoroughfare of the town.

Promote intergovernmental cooperation and/or cooperation with local, state, and federal entities and/or a private enterprise in addressing a problem or situation: Individuals in each of the three organizations recognized the inability of the Historical Museum to realize its full potential in its current location. It was only through a turn of events, the partnership that evolved, and the eagerness and responsiveness of all parties that the project reached fruition. The National Park Service, the County and the Museum Board are to be commended for their swift and cooperative efforts.

