

VACo 2011 Achievement Award Program Descriptions

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- **Botetourt County—Parks & Recreation**

- **“Upper James River Water Trail”**

The mighty James River finds its source at the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture rivers in Botetourt County. These headwaters commonly known as the Upper James River have played an important role in the economies of the communities along the river.

Historically, the river was used as a transportation system with a series of locks and canals used to carry goods downstream towards Lynchburg. Today, the river is a recreational corridor used for fishing, canoeing, kayaking and water viewing along is 45-mile stretch in Botetourt. The major assets of the Upper James River include its scenery, world-class bass fishing, friendly small town atmosphere and its rich history and diverse character.

In order to capitalize on the many assets of the Upper James, the Botetourt County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department developed a strategic analysis to use as a tool to improve, enhance, and preserve the environmental, historic, and recreational opportunities on the river for future generations to enjoy.

The goal is to create a water-based trail system that will link the different assets found on the river to form the Upper James Water Trail. A “Water Trail” is a small boat and/or paddling route (or series of routes) along a waterway that combines recreation and environmental awareness while linking communities and land-based attractions such as recreational trails, historic sites, and parks.

- **Chesterfield County—Health/Human Services**

- **“Build-A-House”**

The Build-A-House Project is a cooperative project through which students at the Chesterfield Technical Center construct homes on vacant County-owned land with Chesterfield Alternatives, Inc. funding the construction expense and the homes ultimately being used by Chesterfield County Community Services Board to provide affordable and accessible housing to county citizens with disabilities.

The purpose of the program is to provide real work experience for Chesterfield County Public School's Technical Center students. It also provides long-term permanent accessibility for individuals with disabilities at below fair market rent.

The first house was completed in 2010 with over 300 Chesterfield County students perfecting their skills in drywall, electricity, plumbing, woodwork, HVAC, carpentry and landscaping contributing to the completion of the four-bedroom, 2,300-square foot single family home. It is now home to three individuals with intellectual disabilities.

- **Chesterfield County—Community/Economic Development**

- **“My Business Starts Here”**

Starting and growing a business in Chesterfield County just got easier! With the launch of “My Business Starts Here,” Chesterfield Economic Development (CED) and the Chesterfield County Public Library (CCPL) have partnered to offer residents seamless service and resources for their small business needs.

This initiative creates a multipronged approach to getting residents the small-business information they need. Chesterfield County appreciates the contributions of small businesses to the local economy and works to provide programs and services that support their growth and success.

“My Business Starts Here” truly brands Chesterfield County as “your place for entrepreneurship and business solutions.”

- **Hanover County—Environmental**
“Organic Waste Diversion”

Nationally, the yard waste portion of organic waste stream comprises 13-15 percent of the total. Hanover County developed a policy of aggressively recycling this significant portion of its tonnages.

Five distinct areas of emphasis were identified for inclusion in the organic waste diversion program. Leaves, grass and wood waste were the waste materials determined to have the greatest value upon recycling.

Product generation and marketing of the product are critical to the success of any similar program. The five components that comprise the Hanover County initiative are presented in detail within our submission. In addition, citizen acceptance and participation are an essential part of this comprehensive undertaking.

Finally, having the governmental flexibility to deal with rapid market changes must be part of any program. Hanover County’s Organic Waste Diversion Program turned a large segment of the waste stream into a valuable end product. Our goal is to economically extract as much recoverable organic materials as possible and to turn a deficit into revenue.

- **Isle of Wight County—Customer Service**
“Isle Pre-Pay”
(BEST ACHIEVEMENT AWARD)

Isle of Wight’s tax system is significantly influenced by its farming culture. The due date for personal property and real estate taxes was initially set as December 5 – which coincided with the time of year that farmers generally received payments for their crops.

In the 1960s, as the County’s economic base became less dependent on agriculture, the Board of Supervisors voted to split the annual real property tax assessment into two equal installments due June 5 and December 5. Personal property taxes were not split at that time because farm machinery remained a significant part of the personal property tax assessment and it would have been a significant financial burden to farmers who continue to receive the majority of their income in late October and November.

As the County moves further from its agricultural roots, citizens are less and less influenced by the cash flow cycle of farming. Isle of Wight has become a retirement destination and we are seeing the average age of our citizenry increase. This has led to a more significant portion of our population living on a fixed income. Additionally, many of our citizens own their real property outright and therefore do not have their tax payments escrowed during the year. Having taxes due December 5 also coincides to time of year when many see increases in their household expenditures such as heating costs and holiday spending.

In 2007, hearing concerns from the citizenry about having a significant tax bill due December 5th, the Board of Supervisors asked the County's Treasurer and Commissioner of Revenue to consider ways to improve the County's tax collection process. Recognizing the rural mindset and reluctance to change of a majority of Isle of Wight citizens, as well as the increased costs associated with more frequent tax assessments (estimated at nearly \$175,000 to begin bi-annual assessments for personal property taxes), the Treasurer and Commissioner agreed that adjusting the current tax due dates was not a viable option.

Instead they determined that the promotion of an option already available to taxpayers – prepayments – could alleviate much of the financial strain associated with the County's tax due dates. While the Treasurer had always accepted prepayments, they had never been actively promoted. As a result of their brainstorming, Isle Pre-Pay was born.

- **James City County, York County and City of Williamsburg—Customer Service “Outstanding Customer Service for Prospective Employees”**

While local governments recognize the importance of providing outstanding service for both citizens and their own employees, an equally vital customer, yet often overlooked, is the job applicant or prospective employee.

Given the widespread challenge of attracting a highly qualified workforce, providing outstanding customer service for prospective employees is imperative, especially as we emerge from these difficult economic conditions.

“Providing Outstanding Customer Service for Prospective Employees” is noteworthy for both its achievements and how they were accomplished:

- It brought together human resource directors from regional public and private sector organizations to share expertise, experience and best practices to meet the area's evolving business needs
- It addressed previously unmet needs of prospective employees for a central source of information about jobs and relocation opportunities, and educational, recreational and entertainment amenities
- It developed and implemented a successful shared services model that expanded and improved customer service at a lower cost (www.williamsburgworks.com)

As a result, James City County, the City of Williamsburg, and York County, along with its partners, are now able to provide outstanding customer service to prospective employees in an appealing way that is efficient and effective, with easy access to resources that will aid them in deciding to live, enjoy and work in this area.

- **Louisa County—Health/Human Services “Louisa County Parks and Recreation VIEW Partnership”**

Since December 2008, the Louisa County Department of Social Services has collaborated with the Parks and Recreation Department to create work activities for participants in the Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW) program.

One goal of the VIEW program is to encourage partnerships between public, nonprofit and faith-based organizations to end individual's dependence on public assistance by moving participants from a structured job search to paid employment.

The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the management and maintenance of several park sites and playgrounds, athletic fields at the elementary schools and middle school, and all county-owned property, excluding some school grounds.

VIEW participants assisted with the management and maintenance these properties by performing various grounds keeping and landscaping duties. By working with the department, VIEW participants learned the importance of basic work principles such as attendance and punctuality, gained a sense of self-worth by working daily and were able to take pride in beautifying their community.

The savings realized through the partnership is twofold. The Department of Social Services actualized a reduction of participants' TANF benefits, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program benefits, transportation assistance and Medicaid. The Louisa County Parks and Recreation Department receive more than 700 hours in free labor provided by the VIEW participants, for a cost savings to the taxpayer of just over \$7,000.

The greatest result has been that because of the experience the VIEW participants acquired through hard work, training and encouragement, they have all been motivated to find and obtain paid employment with local businesses, with an average starting salary of \$10.54 an hour.

- **Prince George County—Criminal Justice/Public Safety**
“iGotcha’ Anonymous Tip Text”

The Hopewell/Prince George Crime Solvers program is located in South Central Virginia. This organization serves the city of Hopewell and the county of Prince George with a combined population of 59,123. This program assists with operating a system in which citizens can anonymously report information related to criminal activity. This program works in conjunction with the law enforcement agencies for both jurisdictions.

A need for this text-a-tip service was identified as an avenue to reach the younger generation of each locality by utilizing the capabilities of cellular phone technology. This target group was identified as a viable means of obtaining information in reference to criminal activity. The use of this system would provide an alternate means of obtaining information as opposed to the existing tip line, which uses a conventional telephone line. This text-a-tip service originated as an idea by the members of the Hopewell/Prince George Crime Solvers in conjunction with the Prince George County and Hopewell Police Departments in January of 2011.

A committee was formed to research the program and a determination was made to implement the service. The Prince George County High School's marketing class was utilized as a focus group for identifying ways to market the program to the younger generation. The students had direct involvement in designing the brochure, flyer, poster, and the banner for the text-a-tip program.

- **Prince William County—Criminal Justice/Public Safety**
“Air Track Management/Advanced Fire Behavior”

The Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue has introduced a fire behavior training programs to its personnel that is based on a European curriculum that emphasizes a working knowledge of the physics of fire to enable firefighters and their officers to make better risk assessments on the fire ground. Because of an opportune availability of surplus staffing, the staff was able to provide this training to all career personnel assigned to suppression equipment at twenty-fire stations. The goal is prevent fire fighter injuries, deaths and near misses by arming them with knowledge about fire behavior and how air affects fire development.

The training has been offered without large costs and has been made available to departments to generate interest and to promote fire fighter safety. Positive results have been realized with incident commanders and crews making better risk assessments and tactical decisions based on knowledge gained from the training.

- **Roanoke County—Communications**
“Crisis Management and Communication—Critical Steps Localities Need to Take During and In Advance of an Emergency”

On December 6, 2010, Tina Smith was found murdered in her home. Realizing Smith’s 12-year-old daughter Brittany was missing, police issued an Amber Alert fearing she was abducted after the attack by her mother's boyfriend, Jeff Easley.

To find Brittany, Roanoke County Public Information staff managed a communications plan that kept the search in the national news. The plan included message development, media relations, news releases, press conferences, and social media.

Five days later a woman who saw the story on CNN recognized Brittany panhandling in California. Brittany returned home to Virginia and Easley is in jail awaiting trial.

- **Washington County—Regional Collaboration**
“MERG: Mountain Empire Regional Geographic Information System”

MERG is a collaborative regional project involving five counties and one city: Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Washington and the City of Bristol.

The MERG project has created a secure and accessible regional data repository, which includes data, web mapping and map services. It streamlines the process for data sharing among localities and the state through development of a regional GIS data replication system in near real-time. It significantly improves public safety in a large region of the state, and is the largest regional geographic data repository project in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

- **York County—Criminal Justice/Public Safety**
“Automatic External Defibrillators in the Parks”

York County is proud to offer the community several park facilities with playing fields, including a new Sports Complex with lighted baseball fields, soccer fields and playground equipment covering many acres of land. Injuries during sporting events are fairly common occurrences and, in 2007, a volunteer coach experienced a cardiac arrest at one of our sports

fields. The need for access to Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) in county parks became apparent because of this incident and the potential for future injuries/health concerns.

The county applied for and received grant funds from the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation to equip park facilities with an AED housed within a cabinet or free-standing pedestal that is connected directly to the Emergency Communications Center (911). When the AED is accessed, 911 is called immediately and instructions can be given over the telephone while emergency personnel are dispatched to the scene.

The installation of these life-saving devices has already proven successful when a child received a laceration that required medical care.