



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Category: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# Promoting Library Services, Collections and Partnerships, One Week at a Time

2024 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Chesterfield Public Library

## Executive Summary

Chesterfield Public Library's 10 locations offer their communities a wide range of services in addition to the expected books, DVDs and other media. Many of these services are utilized regularly by customers; however, others are lesser-known and, subsequently, used less often. During the summer of 2022, the library launched a new initiative to enlighten customers about some of these lesser-known services. The initiative was internally called, "52 Things," and marketed a different service or material, or "thing", to the community each week for an entire year, or 52 weeks. The library employed various methods of marketing, including social media, printed materials, website updates and staff word-of-mouth training. Two goals were identified from the onset. Most importantly, the initiative aimed to increase customer knowledge of, and engagement with, the wide variety of services and products offered by the library. Its secondary purpose was to help familiarize staff with those same products and services. Over the course of the year, the initiative met both of those goals, as evidenced by service usage data and staff feedback. The increase in usage of several services highlighted during 52 Things has become the new baseline for those services.

## Problem/Challenge

Chesterfield Public Library tracks usage of all services offered. Regular reviews of this data pinpointed services that were not being used, or were being used infrequently, by customers. The rate of usage for services being provided in conjunction with Chesterfield County Mental Health Support Services, such as

free medication lock bags and gun locks, were of particular interest, since that partnership was developed in response to disturbing trends of gun violence and prescription drug abuse. Library customer service staff also noted how few requests they received for services that were underused. Library training staff expressed a need for developing more documentation and training materials for the services offered at the library. This would allow for more specific learning opportunities while onboarding new staff members, as well as provide refresher training for existing staff. By expanding the training available to staff, the goal was to make it easier for staff to respond to customer questions or offer solutions to customer needs.

## Description of the Program

There were two main objectives for the 52 Things project. Most importantly, 52 Things was developed to inform customers of key services at the library and promote usage of these services where appropriate. To help support that objective, a secondary goal was created of educating library staff about the same services. Promotional materials for the first objective targeted customers and included reasons for needing the services in addition to clarifying how to access services. Educational materials for staff focused primarily on what each service was, who might need it and how to help customers receive the service. Staff education prepared staff not only to answer questions from customers as they arose but also to recognize when a service may be needed so staff could recommend it to customers.

Development of 52 Things began as an idea expressed during a library publicity staff meeting. Over the course of several weeks, administrative staff continued to share ideas with each other and collaborated with the library analytics team in order to determine what services would benefit most from being included in 52 Things. As those services were identified, staff got to work on creating fliers and rack cards to be distributed each week at all library locations to describe the service or product being highlighted. Graphic designers on staff, in conjunction with the library photographer, designed

promotional images for each service. Staff content developers and editors wrote narratives about each service, why customers would need or want to use it and how customers could access the service.

Promotional images and wording were created for both print materials and social media, blog posts and website updates.

Corresponding training materials for each resource were also created for library staff. These materials differed from those for customers in that information about each service was directed towards helping staff understand who might need the service, how to provide the service to customers and further details about services that might be needed to answer customer questions. Training materials included PDFs and videos made available to library staff via email and on the shared drive.

Implementation of 52 Things was accomplished in 52 weeks, as planned. Materials for libraries were developed and sent to each library a week in advance so library staff had time to review them before making them available to the public. Educational materials for staff were also developed within that time frame. While a few weeks' worth of customer and staff resources were created in advance of launching 52 Things, most were produced throughout the program itself. Costs to develop and implement the program were very low. Print materials were designed and printed in-house and delivered by library couriers. All services promoted through 52 Things were already budgeted or paid for by CCPL and did not contribute financially to 52 Things.

Efforts to highlight the library's broad offerings to the community led to increased usage of library products and services across the board; however, usage increased more significantly for those products or services that had previously been lesser known to the public. For instance, after the toy collections for children were promoted in week 5, average monthly toy checkouts went up 40.2%. Daily meeting room reservations rose 28.1% following the week of promotion for study room and meeting spaces. Book club backpacks, which allow customers to check out six or more books of the same title to host a

book club outside of the library, had an increased checkout rate of 7.8% in the year following its mention in 52 Things. Select Reads, a newsletter filled with book recommendations based upon the customer's preferred genres or topics, experienced an 11.2% increased subscription rate in the month after it was highlighted, representing the single greatest month-to-month increase of program or service engagement during 52 Things. Anecdotal data from library staff affirmed that the materials provided to them for educational purposes were helpful and informative.

## Collaboration: A Model for Other Localities

Chesterfield County has a population of more than 385,000 across 424 square miles. The population is as diverse as the county is wide, with acres of rural farmland and miles of urban development that is often considered an extension of Richmond. Chesterfield County is the largest locality in the Richmond, Virginia MSA, accounting for over a quarter of the MSA population, and is the fourth largest county in Virginia. Chesterfield Public Library has ten library locations across the county. While each location serves a unique demographic and tailors programs to each community, the library ensures that services like those promoted during 52 Things are provided uniformly across all 10 locations.

Two of the services provided by Chesterfield Public Library that were highlighted during 52 Things were services that are unavailable through neighboring library systems. Cable gun locks are available to customers for free at all library locations through a partnership with Chesterfield County Mental Health Support Services (MHSS). Cable locks, when properly installed, prevent firearms from being discharged accidentally. The library provides both the locks and instruction on how to use them. Another unique service promoted through 52 Things, drug deactivation kits, was also developed in collaboration with MHSS. By rendering medication inert and safe for disposal in household trash cans, these kits help customers prevent accidental poisonings, theft and misuse that can lead to prescription drug addiction

or fatalities. This collaboration between the library and MHSS is a direct attempt to combat the rising rates of gun violence and overdose deaths throughout the Commonwealth.

Through its 52 Things program, the library improved administration of existing services while upgrading the level of training for library employees regarding those services and increased customer utilization of these services. What makes 52 Things even more exceptional is that it is a program that can be replicated not only in libraries across the nation but also again at Chesterfield Public Library. Since the library offers more than 52 products or services, it would be easy to replicate the initiative using 52 services that were not included in the original program. Libraries must change in order to grow with the communities they serve. The concept behind 52 Things lends itself to this ongoing metamorphosis because it allows libraries to showcase offerings to customers and track what offerings strike a chord with those customers.





Selection of Facebook posts during 52 Things:

Samples of the training materials provided to staff



---

## SELECT READS



### SUBSCRIBE TO THE LATEST TITLES

---

Your library is adding new titles all the time - biographies, science fiction, thrillers, DVDs, and more. Somewhere among all those new releases are titles that interest you, but they might not be easy to find. Select Reads searches for you and sends a monthly email list that matches your interests.

---

**Take the training in Niche Academy by clicking [here](#).**

Then, [explore SR on the CCPL site here](#) and subscribe yourself.  
Remember to add the training to your timecard.