

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Now entering Outside, VA

Inside:

Best Day Trip
Destinations in
Virginia

Back to School
Perspectives

The story of VML's
new logo





(Left to Right Top Row): Town of Vinton, Alexandria Renew Enterprises, Town of Floyd
(Left to Right Bottom Row): Town of Grottoes, Town of Pearisburg, City of Winchester

Congratulations to the Town of Vinton!

The town was awarded the **Margaret A. Nichols Risk Management Leadership Award** from the Virginia Risk Sharing Association. This award is given to recognize and encourage innovation in risk management.

Congratulations to the **2020 Risk Management Performance Award** and **Individual Risk Management Excellence Award** winners!

- Alexandria Renew Enterprises
- Town of Floyd
- Town of Grottoes
- Regina Harless, Town of Pearisburg
- Michael Neese, City of Winchester



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BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT

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ABOUT THE COVER

Soar to new heights, embrace adventure, explore nature, and experience the best places to day trip in Virginia! Pictured on the cover is the Hiwasse Bridge at the New River Trail State Park. Photographed by Sue Mellen.

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BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



October 7-8

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In praise of wonderful people and beautiful places

WANT TO START by taking a moment to remember Dan Sze, council member for the City of Falls Church, who recently passed away. He was part of local government since 2002 and volunteered in many roles including the economic development authority and the board of zoning appeals. He was a valued member of VML's Legislative Committee and Environmental Quality committee and worked extremely hard on environmental issues. He also worked under six American Presidents with his last role being at the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. Our sympathies to his family.

By now, many of us have experienced the hardship of dealing with big life events that would be difficult even under normal circumstances but are made even more so due to this pandemic. At these times we are reminded how important our relationships and shared bonds to family and friends are to our well-being. So, these days I encourage everyone to check in with the people you care about more often and to remember to have some fun (where you can safely find it) to relieve the stress. These things are important and that is why our magazine this month is so relevant.

This month's theme is about day travel in Virginia where we have an abundance of beautiful places to visit and enjoy! I hope that you enjoy the photos and descriptions of these great outdoor places near so many of our member localities. Of course, there are many more outdoor places to visit in Virginia than we had space to list here, but perhaps you will recognize a few that you've enjoyed too. One of the things VML's staff has been doing these past months is sharing pho-

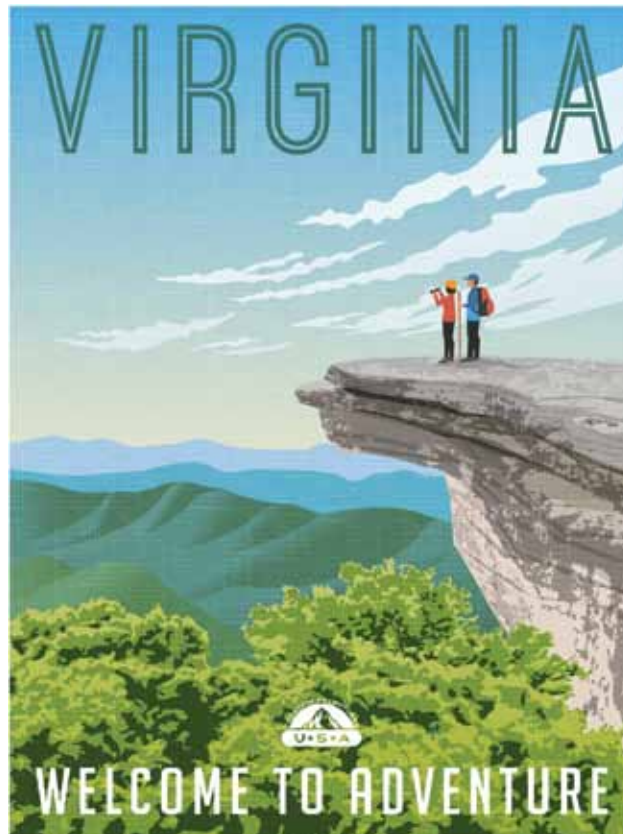
tos of the places that we have visited; it has helped all of us to see people smiling!

Recently I had the opportunity to go to a meeting of the Leesburg City Council and took a side trip to Middleburg. It was my first outing in an official capacity since March! As I was driving north on I-95, I thought of the many, many

times I have immediately become "cranky" just past Fredericksburg because of the traffic and yet, when I got to that point this time, I was still going 70 mph. At Tysons Corner, I was still going 55. It was so strange! In both Leesburg and Middleburg, it was refreshing to see the number of people walking around and at the restaurants on a Monday afternoon and evening. I thought either destination would make a fun family day trip.

As I met with the mayors and managers, we all endured the weirdness of "we're inside so we're wearing masks, but we can't understand each other" moments. Fortunately, the weather was beautiful, and no one seemed to mind standing or sitting outside so we could stow our masks. What advice would Emily Post give on proper mask etiquette? We all powered through and I even managed to score a new Middleburg branded mask! Thank you to both towns for a fun and educational experience.

So, as we ease back into business meetings in person, albeit with limitations, I am reminded of all the wonderful people in all the beautiful localities that make up VML. I hope to see you soon and I hope that this issue of our magazine inspires you to enjoy everything your locality has to offer. And while you're at it, don't forget to support your local businesses. I will be doing my part at my favorite shop in West Point (mentioned in last year's July/August issue) later this week!





Due to the affects of the COVID-19 outbreak, many events are going through a rescheduling process. To view the latest updates and changes, visit our on-line calendar at www.vml.org/events-list.

PEOPLE

In memoriam: Daniel Sze

Daniel X. Sze, council member from the city of Falls Church, passed away July 28. Mr. Sze’s first position in the city government was as vice chair of the Economic Development Authority from 2002 through 2006. He was first elected to city council in 2006 and served four years. He was elected again to city council in 2014.

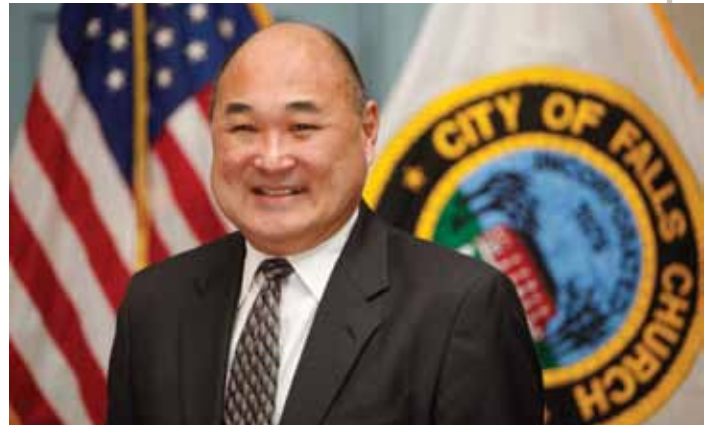
Mr. Sze was a leader for environmental stewardship at the local, regional, and state levels. He led the city policy that all new or renovated city facilities must achieve LEED standards, and he strongly supported the new high school design for net zero carbon emissions. Further, he encouraged other areas relating to sustainability, including moving the city fleet to biofuels, installing LED streetlights, and purchasing renewable electricity. He served as a member of and chaired VML’s Environmental Quality Policy Committee and served on the league’s Legislative Committee as well.

Mr. Sze was the city council liaison to the Environmental Sustainability Council and the Urban Forestry Commission and was the chair of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee.

Mr. Sze worked for the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Defense. During his federal service, he was responsible for major policy and regulatory initiatives under six American presidents. At his last assignment, Mr. Sze was with the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at the U.S. Department of Energy as Deputy Director of State Energy Programs.

After leaving full-time employment in 2012, Mr. Sze regularly lectured on sustainability strategies, worked on clean energy initiatives, was involved with several international start-ups, and was a consultant to businesses, organizations, and government.

Editor’s Note – Dan Sze was among the first VML members I met after I joined the league’s staff. I remember at my first



Legislative Committee meeting he asked that VML include the option for localities to tax disposable plastic bags – knowing that any such measure would have a very slim chance with the General Assembly that year (and in every year prior when he’d made the same request). So, when I heard that the 2020 General Assembly had passed HB534 / SB11 allowing localities to impose a 5 cents tax per disposable plastic bag, my first thought was “Dan must be thrilled!”

Indeed, 2020 was a banner year for environmental advocates in Virginia like Dan. When I asked him to comment on the passage of the Virginia Clean Environment Act for our April *VTC*, he started off exuberantly: “Congratulations Virginia! VCEA is now law. We’ve waited a long time for this outcome.”

Too often we celebrate only the big accomplishments or the sudden victories. But these are not the stuff of successful local governing. Dan Sze was determined but he was patient, and, in the end, he made a difference. He will be missed.

Virginia Beach welcomes new city manager



- Duhaney -

As of July 20, **Patrick A. Duhaney** is the new Virginia Beach City Manager. Appointed by the Virginia Beach City Council, Duhaney was selected following a nationwide search.

Previously, Duhaney was the city manager in Cincinnati, OH where he also served as assistant city manager and chief procurement officer. He currently serves on the Cincinnati Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors as well

as being a member of the Local Initiative Support Corporation’s Emerging Leaders Council in New York.

Duhaney holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology and urban studies from Cleveland State University and a master’s degree in community planning from the University of Cincinnati.

Burcham retires as Clifton Forge town manager; assumes interim role in Pulaski

After ten years in the position, **Darlene Burcham** retired as the Town of Clifton Forge’s town manager at the end of June.



- Burcham -

Burcham has joined The Berkley Group’s Executive Transition Assistance team and will take the position of interim town manager for the Town of Pulaski; a position left vacant by the departure of Shawn Utt to become the Smyth County administrator. Previously, Burcham was the city manager for the City of Roanoke and the deputy city manager for the City of Norfolk City Council.

PEOPLE

Danville announces new director of public library



- Carter -

Russell Carter has been selected as the director of the Danville Public Library. Carter has served as interim director since October and assumed the fulltime position on July 1. A national recruitment process was conducted prior to Carter being selected from a pool of 20 applicants. During his time as interim director, Carter was responsible for initiating several new programs and series including “Good Night Hometown,” which uses social media to provide children’s bedtime stories to the community.

Daley wins ICMA Distinguished Service award



- Daley -

This year’s winner of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Distinguished Service award is **Edwin C. Daley**. With more than 40 years of experience in local government, Daley has served as the city manager in Dodge City, KS; Fairmont, WV; Winchester, VA and Hopewell, VA. He is a past president of the ICMA and the Virginia Municipal League.

The ICMA is the leading organization of local government professionals. The ICMA Distinguished Service award is given by the ICMA Executive Board to a manager who has been retired for a minimum of two years. The recipient of this award is an individual who has exceeded the standard for service in their community, deemed to be strong or exceptional, and has made major contributions beyond direct service to local government.

Leider retires as Alexandria general registrar; Turner appointed to acting position

In late June, **Anna J. Leider**, General Registrar for the City of Alexandria officially retired after being an Alexandria election official for 22 years, with six of those years as general registrar. During that time, Turner helped manage more than 30 elections and



- Leider -



- Turner -

coordinated the absentee voting process, according to the press release announcing her retirement.

By a unanimous appointment from the Alexandria Electoral Board, **Angela Maniglia Turner** will serve as acting general registrar. Turner has been an elections official with the City of Alexandria for more than 12 years, with two of those years as the elections manager and four of those years as the deputy registrar. This year, Turner orchestrated the planning process for the city’s first election during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chesapeake appoints new director of human resources and director of public works



- Myers -



- Sorey -

In June, City Manager Christopher Price announced the appointment of **Allison B. Myers** as Chesapeake’s new director of human resources. In July, Price appointed **C. Earl Sorey, Jr., P.E.**, as Chesapeake’s new director of public works.

Myers had been serving as acting director since the departure of former director, D.L. Mears in December 2019. Myers joined the Chesapeake human resources team in September 2011 as the assistant human relations director.

Prior to coming to Chesapeake, Myers spent seven years as the senior coordinator for human resources and benefits with the City of Norfolk Public Schools. She has also worked in private sector human resources positions. Myers holds a master’s of science degree in human resources management from Troy University, and a bachelor of science in business administration from Old Dominion University.

Sorey replaces Eric Martin, P.E., who is retiring as director of public works after more than 21 years of service. Sorey is a Chesapeake native who most recently served

as assistant director of public works. Prior to that, he served as Chesapeake’s city engineer, traffic and transportation engineer, and served as city traffic engineer in the City of Portsmouth and as an engineer in Virginia Beach.

Sorey is a Registered Professional Engineer in the Commonwealth of Virginia. He has received the G. Robert House, Jr. Award from the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and the Mid-Atlantic Region Professional Manager of the Year Award from the American Public Works Association.

Loudoun County selects Spells as new assistant administrator



- Spells -

Beginning September 3, **Monica Spells** will be the new assistant administrator for Loudoun County. Spells was selected for the position after a nationwide search. Spells will be coming to Loudoun County from Beaufort County, SC where she is currently serving in the same role.

Spells has a bachelor of arts degree in history from the College of Charleston and a master of public administration from the University of South Carolina.

Spells is also an active member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and has earned the prestigious Credentialed Manager designation. To receive the designation, a member must have significant experience as a senior management executive in local government, meet educational requirements and demonstrate a commitment to high standards of the profession and to lifelong learning and professional development.

Teague Bobe to become Danville’s director of economic development



- Bobe -

Interim Director **Corrie Teague Bobe** has been promoted to be the active director of economic development for the City of Danville. After Telly Tucker, former director, left in January to accept a similar position in Arlington County, Bobe had been serving in an interim capacity. After a highly competitive

nationwide search, it was determined that Bobe is the perfect person for the job due to her leadership skills as well as her 11 years of service in Danville.

Bobe will lead the department's business attraction, retention, and River District revitalization efforts with a staff of four full-time employees and one economic development consultant. She is a graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and has a degree in marketing management.

Longnaker elected to VACo/VML Virginia Investment Pool board

Rebecca Longnaker, Treasurer for Chesterfield County, was unanimously elected to the Board of Trustees of the VACo/VML Virginia Investment Pool (VIP) on July 17.



- Longnaker -

Longnaker began her career with Chesterfield County in 2013, in the Central Accounting department. In 2017,

she moved to the Treasurer's Office as fiscal manager/deputy treasurer. In this capacity she managed the accounting section of the Treasurer's Office and handled the County's investments. Longnaker also played an integral role in the implementation of the County's new property tax system. She was elected treasurer of Chesterfield County in November of 2019 and began her first term in January of 2020.

Longnaker holds a master's degree in business administration from the University of Baltimore and is a certified public accountant.

The VIP is Virginia's premier local government investment tool established to provide political subdivisions of the Commonwealth of Virginia an investment vehicle to pool their funds and to invest under the direction and daily supervision of a professional fund manager.

Developed in 2013 by local treasurers and investment officers with the sponsorship of the Virginia Association of Counties and the Virginia Municipal League, VIP has nearly 130 participants and over \$2 billion in assets under management.

Byrd appointed new Arlington County chief race and equity officer



- Byrd -

Samia Byrd has been appointed as the chief race and equity officer in Arlington County. In this role, Byrd is tasked with advancing racial equity, diversity, and inclusion both internally and externally. The work will

require new policies and practices enacted through leadership, guidance, and implementation.


Byrd served as a deputy county manager for three years after a decade as a principal planner in the department of community planning, housing and development. Her work in government administration, land use planning and development with Arlington County builds upon her career offering state and local practitioners resources and information on housing and community economic development policy, practices and programs.

Byrd holds two degrees in city planning, a master's from Georgia Tech and a bachelor's from the University of Virginia.

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 Current yields posted daily at VirginiaInvestmentPool.org

Farr retires from Arlington police department after 30 years



Police Chief **Murray "Jay" Farr** has announced his retirement from the County of Arlington's police department. Chief Farr has served in the capacity of chief since May 2015, during which time he

focused heavily on community engagement, transportation safety, and crime prevention.

During his 30 years with the department, Farr served in many roles, including assignments as deputy chief of police for systems management, operations, and criminal investigations. He also served as acting deputy county manager and has been an active member of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, serving as the chair of the Police Chief Committee.

Prior to joining the Arlington County Police Department, Farr worked with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service where he conducted complex criminal investigations concerning fraud against the United States government. He is also a U.S. Marine veteran, where he served with the Presidential helicopter unit.

Farr earned both bachelor's and master's degrees from George Mason University where he serves as an adjunct professor and teaches criminal justice and emergency management for law enforcement.

Kushner fills interim Danville council seat



Former City of Danville mayor **Sam Kushner** has been appointed to fill an interim city council seat until a special election can be held in November. Council member Adam Tomer recently vacated his council seat

leaving an open spot. Kushner served on the city council from 1978-1986 and held the position of mayor from 1984-1986. A Danville native, Kushner is an attorney and practiced law in Danville for nearly 40 years before his retirement.

Movers and shakers

Do you know someone who's on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

Town of Vinton manager Thompson retires

Barry Thompson, who has served as Vinton's town manager since 2016, retired at the end of July after 30 years of service in local government. Among his many accomplishments were the completion of several town revitalization projects.



Thompson started working for the town in 2004 as the finance director and treasurer. Prior to coming to Vinton, Thompson worked for the City of Bedford, where he served as assistant city manager, assistant to the city manager and director of finance for 14 years. He has also worked as a consultant in governmental accounting and as a director of financial support for a government accounting software company.

Thompson attended Lamar University in Beaumont, TX where he received a bachelor of business administration in management.

Wytheville police chief Arnold retires, Hash appointed new chief



Wytheville Chief of Police **Ricky Arnold** retired at the end of June after more than 40 years of service. During his time on the police force, Arnold served in every capacity of the agency from patrol to administration.



In July, the town council appointed interim chief **Joel Hash** as the new Wytheville chief of police. Hash has served in the Wytheville Police Department for almost 35 years beginning as a patrol sergeant, then 1st sergeant to captain and, in more recent years, deputy chief. Hash played a key part in the agency's accreditation process, mandated by the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Committee.

Hash holds an associate degree in police science from the Wytheville Community

College and a bachelor's degree in administration of criminal justice from Bluefield College.

Moore appointed Wytheville town manager



On July 1st, **Stephen A. Moore** was appointed as Wytheville's new town manager. Moore succeeded longtime town manager Wayne Sutherland who retired at the end of June.

Moore worked at the architectural firms of Lathrop & Associates in Staunton and Dewberry & Davis in Marion before being hired as the assistant town manager and director of planning for the Town of Wytheville in 1990.

Since then, Moore has contributed to many successful building and design projects in Wytheville, including the construction of the Wytheville Community & Meeting Center, the E. Lee Trinkle Regional Visitors Center, and the Heritage Preservation Center. He also played a key role in recent downtown revitalization efforts, serving on numerous Downtown Wytheville Inc. committees as a liaison of the town and advising on issues related to the construction aspects.

Moore holds a bachelor of science degree in architecture from Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. He is a registered architect in Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland, and a Certified Planning Commissioner.

Falls Church mayor Tarter re-elected chair of NVRC



Mayor **David Tarter** of the City of Falls Church was re-elected as chair of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC). NVRC is a coalition of the surrounding area's cities, counties, and towns that

cooperate with one another on regional issues. Comprised of 13 member jurisdictions, NVRC represents more than 2.5 million residents and approximately forty percent of the Commonwealth's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).



Mountain Lake makes a comeback *Dirty Dancing* fans rejoice!

FOR A LONG TIME, Virginia was home to only two natural lakes – Lake Drummond in the Great Dismal Swamp and Mountain Lake in Pembroke. However, in 2008 Mountain Lake mysteriously drained leaving Lake Drummond as the official best (and only) natural lake in the Commonwealth. But Lake Drummond needs to watch out because Mountain Lake recently began refilling!

In a process that scientists describe as not only unique to Appalachia but unique in the world, Mountain Lake rids itself of sediment by draining completely, hitting a low every 400 years or so. It remains to be seen whether the lake will refill completely this time around. Of course, fans of the 1987 film *Dirty Dancing* are excited that the lake where the much of the movie was shot is making a comeback.

Dirty Dancing fans regularly flock to Pembroke to see the various landmarks featured in the film including the cabin that “Baby” and her family stayed and the gazebo where guests took dance lessons. Many also come for *Dirty Dancing*-themed weekend packages that include a scavenger hunt, trivia, and a dance party (of course). Perhaps some day soon it will be possible to recreate the iconic lift scene from the movie. In the meantime, let’s hope Mountain Lake, unlike the movie, has a sequel.



Ashland to create new Arts and Culture Incentive Program

IN JULY, THE TOWN OF ASHLAND announced the creation of a new Arts & Culture Incentive Program to assist existing and new arts and culture businesses in keeping with the town’s strategic plan.

Qualified businesses located within Ashland’s Arts & Culture District (established in 2012) are eligible for funds up to \$4,000 to be administered and disbursed by the town for special projects that contribute to and further enhance Ashland’s arts and cultural offerings.



Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year until all available funds have been allocated. To apply for the Arts & Culture Incentive program, a business must be a qualified arts organization that positively contributes to the spectrum of arts and cultural activities and venues available within the Town of Ashland.

More information is available at www.ashlandva.gov/117/Incentives-Grants.



Hampton wins census competition

IN MAY, HAMPTON AND NEWPORT News began a friendly competition to see which city could have the most residents complete the census. At stake were juicy James River oysters, courtesy of Newport News Mayor McKinley Price and blue crabs from Hampton Mayor Tuck. On July 7, when the competition ended, the crabs knew they could relax, and Mayor Tuck could count on oysters coming his way as 64 percent of Hampton’s residents had completed the census versus 61.9 percent of Newport News residents. However, both cities are winners as each increased its response rates by 1.9 percent. And every person counts (literally) because cities get up to \$2,000 per year (or \$20,000 over the decade) in federal spending for each resident to fund such things as programs for children, education, and seniors, among others. Also included is funding for roads.

Anyone who has not already filled out their Census form can visit www.my2020census.gov, call 1-844-330-2020, or return the Census envelope that came in the mail.

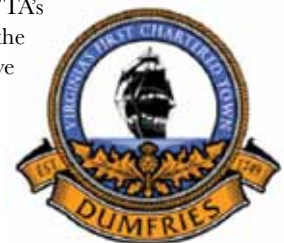
Congratulations to both cities for finding a fun and creative way to get their citizens enthusiastic about the census.

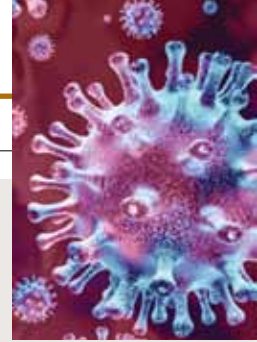
Dumfries secures funds necessary to widen Route 1

AT THEIR JULY 9 MEETING, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) allotted \$78 million to the Town of Dumfries to assist with the town’s plans to expand Route 1. A top priority for over a decade, the widening of Route 1 is expected to help draw more people to Main Street by reducing congestion on the notoriously gridlocked stretch of road running through downtown.

According to the official press release, the total cost for the Dumfries Route 1 Widening Project is \$126 million. The Town previously received NVTA grant awards totaling \$48 million. So, NVTA’s latest approval provides all the necessary funding to move forward with the project.

An update on the project will be provided to town residents this fall.





VTC is pleased to highlight actions localities are taking to overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. If your locality has something going on you'd like to have featured in VTC please let us know by emailing the editor Rob Bullington, rbullington@vml.org. We also encourage you to nominate groups and individuals for our "2020 Local Champion" awards. Details are on page 10 or visit www.vml.org/local-champion-awards.

Alexandria Health Department "ALX Promise" program supports safe businesses

THE ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT (AHD), in conjunction with Visit Alexandria and local restaurant and business associations, has launched the "ALX Promise" program. The voluntary program was put in place to help Northern Virginia businesses safely reopen by encouraging COVID-19 safety standards for employees and customers that exceed the minimum rules required by law. A customer seeing the ALX Promise logo displayed at a business can be assured that it has:

- Participated in training with an AHD Environmental Health Specialist on the requirements to reopen their business.
- Trained all its employees on the safety measures needed for a safe reopening.
- Submitted a completed checklist, training record and pledge commitment to ensure the safety of its employees and staff.
- Agreed to follow all future applicable health guidance as Alexandria enters new phases of reopening.

More information is available by searching "ALX Promise" at www.alexandriava.gov/Health.



Richmond welcomes rental assistance program for immigrants

THE CITY OF RICHMOND has started a rent and mortgage assistance program designed to help immigrant families who have been financially impacted by the pandemic. This program strives to provide relief to families who cannot receive financial assistance from the federal government as a result of their non-citizen or mixed immigration status. The \$250,000 fund was provided by Open Society Foundations, a non-profit organization from New York that focuses on human rights.

Applicants who have not already received assistance from other initiatives will be given priority. Each household will be given a limit of \$1,500 or the equivalent of up to two months' rent (whichever is less). Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, the organization that oversees the city's eviction diversion program, will ensure that payments are sent directly to landlords or property managers.

Information about this and other assistance programs in Richmond is available at www.help1rva.org.

Fredericksburg uses CARES Act allotment to support small businesses

THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG will use \$500,000 of its allotted CARES Act funding to assist the city's small businesses affected by COVID-19. Of the money slated for small businesses, half will be used for assistance grants.

Virginia is one of 14 states that chose to share a portion of their federal CARES Act allotments with localities on a per capita basis. Of the \$2.5 million the City of Fredericksburg received from the CARES Act, the relief for small businesses is the second

largest line item in the budget unanimously passed by the city council on July 14. The largest item was \$750,000 which will go to providing hazard pay for public safety employees. \$208,000 will be used for marketing purposes to publicize the city's safe reopening. The remaining \$42,000 will go to Fredericksburg, VA Main Street to help with additional grants for downtown businesses attempting to shift to online sales.



Charlottesville creates housing relief fund

IN JUNE, THE CHARLOTTESVILLE City Council unanimously voted to create a Housing RELIEF Fund to assist those being affected by the pandemic. Totaling \$792,000, this fund became available to applicants in mid-July. The fund will provide short-term financial assistance to tenants living in the City of Charlottesville and landlords in the form of rent payments.

The program seeks to serve the following groups:

- Individuals residing in the city who were recently released from a correctional institution (from January 2020 to present).
- Individuals and households in the city that are experiencing homelessness, and more specifically, households with children under the age of 18.

- Landlords who have rental tenants that reside in the city and are at risk of experiencing homelessness due to nonpayment of rent.

Individuals and families receiving funding will receive additional assistance such as financial literacy education, job search/placement help, and/or peer recovery support services.

The Office of Economic Development, through the Downtown Job Center, will administer the funds. More information is available at www.charlottesville.gov/209/Downtown-Job-Center.



Waynesboro receives WanderLove grant for tourism marketing

RECENTLY, THE VIRGINIA TOURISM Corporation (VTC) launched its “DMO WanderLove Recovery Grant Program” which is available to Virginia’s Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) across the Commonwealth. The grant is intended to help those DMOs that have been heavily impacted by the novel coronavirus pandemic by funding recovery marketing initiatives.



In July, the City of Waynesboro received \$10,000 from the program. Waynesboro will use the grant to encourage road trippers to enjoy the city as the

gateway to the Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway.

According to the press release, “As Virginia begins reopening, there is a lot of pent-up demand for leisure travel and people are seeking safe, close-to-home destinations that allow for social distancing and access to open spaces. With this in mind, the WanderLove campaign provides travel inspiration for road trips, outdoor recreation, hidden gems, small towns, and Virginia’s signature LOVEworks program.”

Tourism is one of the largest economic engines in the Commonwealth. In 2018, Waynesboro generated more than \$37 million in revenue from tourism which supported over 350 work opportunities and contributed over \$2.8 million in local and state tax revenue.

Prince George County launches small business grant program

AT THE DIRECTION of its Board of Supervisors, Prince George County, in partnership with the Prince George Industrial Development Authority, has launched the “Prince George CARES Small Business Grant Program” to support small businesses affected by COVID-19. The \$3,500 maximum per business grant is designed to provide immediate relief and assist with reopening under the guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Applicants are required to demonstrate that they are eligible per federal requirements, that they were operational pre-COVID-19, and that they are suffering financially due to the pandemic. The online application process started on July 15 and ends Wednesday, September 30 at 5:00 PM (or when the available funding is fully distributed). Funding is on a first come, first serve basis.



Winchester area businesses benefit from PPP loan approvals

MORE THAN 1,800 BUSINESSES and nonprofit organization in the Northern Shenandoah Valley region were approved for tens of millions in loans through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA). The City of Winchester alone had 10 businesses approved for more than \$2 million, 16 for between \$1 million and \$2 million, 74 for between \$350,000 and \$1 million, 27 for between \$150,000 and \$350,000 and an additional 791 for less than \$150,000.



This \$659 billion program has guaranteed 4.9 million forgivable loans nationwide. According to the Associated Press, businesses and nonprofits in Virginia took in between \$9.5 billion to \$18.2 billion through the program. Nearly 110,000 PPP loans were awarded in Virginia, with most – 93,000 – under \$150,000.

Do you know a “2020 Local Champion?”

THIS YEAR, VML will be giving “2020 Local Champion” awards to highlight the hard work that our localities are doing to keep their citizens safe and healthy during the COVID-19 outbreak. Examples of “Local Champions” might be an agency that was willing to transition its work to provide more effective help to the community, an economic development department that did something spectacular to help local businesses, a communications director who came up with a creative way to keep residents informed and involved, or a locality’s first responders who were steadfast in their jobs.

We are asking any interested local officials or staff to submit entries in as many of the categories below as they like. However, please submit only one entry per category.

Categories

- Communication
- Community Health
- Continuity of Operations
- Economic & Business Stability
- Public Safety
- Risk Management
- Education & Youth Initiatives

How to enter

Use our online Locality Champion 2020 form (currently in development) to submit your entries. For each, please include:

- The person, project, organization or department you want to nominate.
- A description of what they have done and why you feel they merit consideration
- Links to supporting materials

Additional details about the contest and entry form is at www.vml.org.





2020 VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



October 7-8



Although we will miss seeing everyone in person, VML is pulling out all the stops to make this year's event the best it (virtually) can be! To accomplish this, VML is working with an experienced virtual event production company using the EventMobi platform. Attendees joining by smartphone, tablet or computer can look forward to a seamless, enjoyable, and productive event. Sponsors and exhibitors can expect opportunities to engage attendees to demonstrate the value of their services.

The 2-day event will cover the afternoon of October 7th and the morning of October 8th. Topics to be addressed during the conference include (but are not limited to):

- VML's annual business meeting
- Financial good governance for localities
- Equity and diversity
- Emergency and crisis management
- New transportation legislation
- The Virginia Clean Energy Act
- Housing
- Risk Management
- FOIA / COIA
- Some positive predictions from forward looking futurists
- Local Champion awards
- ... and more!

Register now at www.vml.org

Day trips for the soul

Over the river and through Virginia!

By Josette Bulova

2020 HAS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF CHAOTIC and it is barely half-way over! Since March, when the Governor placed Virginia under a stay at home order, every month seems to bring another life changing development. We went from packed concerts and guiltless sneezing to only leaving the house when necessary while always wearing a mask lest we sneeze.

Significantly, even during the stay at home order period the Governor stressed the importance of going outside to get exercise. Since then, the great outdoors has become the place where we feel more at ease. For many of us, day trips have become an outlet to get some exercise, experience nature, and feel summer's warmth all of which are crucial to our mental, physical, and emotional health.

With this in mind, I recently found myself tinkering with the lyrics to the popular children's song "Over the River and Through the Woods." I include them here to let you know where my mind has been wandering:

*Over the river and through the woods to escape the pandemic we go!
VTC knows the way to enjoy V-A; grab your mask and your gloves and let's go!
Over the beaches and through the hills, feel how the warm wind blows.
Though the mask hurts your ears, please wear it my dear, to ensure that the COVID goes.*

Luckily, Virginia has a wide variety of day trip destinations to choose from. For example, from where I sit in Richmond, I can go over the James River and travel west until I reach Shenandoah National Park and the valley beyond. Or I can strike east across the Piedmont plain and into the Northern Neck by the Chesapeake Bay. Whatever adventure I choose, I can be back in Richmond by the end of the day.

As people travel from one end of the Commonwealth to the other to explore the outdoor wonders of Virginia, they find beaches, mountains, fields, cliffs, and so much more waiting to be visited. Whether you are an experienced hiker or just want to take a stroll with your family, thanks to Virginia's scenic byways you are guaranteed a breathtaking view. Hiking, biking, horseback riding, swimming, fishing, orienteering...the list of activities within a day of most Virginians is expansive. Furthermore, there is a state, national, or regional park for you.

With so many outdoor destinations to choose from, VTC thought it would be a great time to look at some of the best, most beautiful around. We took to social media and other platforms to ask our members and staff about their favorite day trip locations in Virginia.

We received a wide variety of responses from across the Commonwealth. Many people commented that until their outings were limited by the pandemic, they never noticed how many wonderful trips are available so close to them. For example, some parks are easy to miss if you have lived in the area for a long time.

So, whether you live by the coast or in the mountains, near the woods or in a city, here are a list of the top day trip destinations our contributors found for you!



FAVORITE DAY TRIP DESTINATIONS

• IN VIRGINIA •

Douthat State Park: Getting it right since 1936



Douthat State Park, located in Millboro, was established in 1936 and soon became the blueprint for the development of parks nationwide. Within this park you will find numerous hiking, biking, and horseback riding trails with breathtaking views and a waterfall along the way. Further into the park you will find interpretive programs, an enormous lake full of trout, and a sandy beach made for swimming. What's a day trip without snacks? Douthat State Park is equipped with a snack bar, boat rental shop, a gift shop, playgrounds, picnic tables, camping areas, a restaurant, and lodging.

Manassas National Battlefield: History makes a great park



Manassas National Battlefield was the site of the First Battle of Bull Run (a.k.a. the First Battle of Manassas), the first major battle of the American Civil War. Full of rich history, the battlefield houses monuments, buildings, and markers to be appreciated along the way. The park also has numerous trails ranging in length, skill level, and terrain. Differentiated by colors, these trails venture through forest, open fields, rolling hills, and along creeks. Learn the history of the battlefield with every step as you retrace the steps of Civil War soldiers on a series of loops outlined on a trail map that is easy to read and perfect for families.

The Channels: Thrills a plenty



Named for the maze-like system along the summit of Middle Knob on Clinch Mountain, **The Channels** spans a total of 721-acres. With a high elevation, the area has forests, rock scrambles, and cliffs, perfect for thrill seekers. The Channels were officially declared the 53rd State Natural Area Preserve in 2008. The Channels Area Nature Preserve is part of a 4,836-acre State Forest also set aside in 2008. If you are an avid hiker who enjoys a thrilling climb, beautiful views, or exhilarating exercise (or all of the above), then The Channels for you!

Grayson Highland State Park: Great for you (and the horse you rode in on)



Located between two of Virginia's highest mountains – Mount Rogers and Whitetop Mountain – stands **Grayson Highlands State Park**. This state park is home to scenic views, a range of hiking trails, designated horse trails, and gorgeous overlooks that make Grayson Highlands State Park a bird watcher's paradise. For those interested in bringing their equine friends to Grayson Highlands State Park, horse campers equipped with electricity, water hookups, and stables are available year-round with electricity and water. Whether you choose to come and social distance with your family, by yourself, or with a horse, this park is sure to please.

Day trip destinations

Rock Castle Gorge: Appalachia ho!



Located near Floyd, **Rock Castle Gorge** trail is a 10.7-mile hike through the Appalachian trail. During this 10-mile trek, rated a 4 out of 5 on the difficulty scale, hikers encounter steep hills, breathtaking views, cows, bulls, meadows, and rocky terrain. The trail head is home to a visitor center, campgrounds, and historic sites such as the chimney of an old homestead. Rock Castle Gorge is the perfect place to go if you are a thrill seeker, avid hiker, view lover, or simply enjoy the rewards of solitude.

Dragon's Tooth: Up for a challenge?



With a difficulty rating of 4, **Dragon's Tooth** is a popular destination for high-intensity hikers. The Dragon's Tooth derives its name from a rock monolith of quartz shaped like a dragon's tooth near Roanoke. The 5.7-mile hike leaves adventurers sweaty but fulfilled by incredible views. There are designated camping areas along the way. Over the years, Dragon's Tooth has grown increasingly popularity due to its proximity to a well-known slightly easier hike, McAfee Knob. But, if you're up for a challenge, then Dragon's Tooth is the perfect day-trip hike for you.

Mason Neck State Park: Family fun approved



Mason Neck State Park is an ideal location for a day trip! At the entrance enjoy a large grassy area where visitors play games, enjoy a picnic, or lounge on the grass reading a book. There is also a playground for the kiddos. As you travel further into the park you reach the visitor center and a car top canoe launch site that provides canoe, kayak, and bicycle rentals. Once you have rented your canoe or kayak, take part in the guided canoe trips and bird watching available to all park visitors. Besides water activities, visitors enjoy a series of easy trails through forest areas, hikes to a lookout point, woodlands, and a wetland used for environmental studies and wildlife observation. A boardwalk around the wetland provides access to a sandy beach. Mason Neck State Park is the place to be for family fun away from it all.

Sugar Hollow Park: A great escape in SWVA



Located near Bristol, **Sugar Hollow Park** spans a total of 400 acres. Within this vast park are a series of athletic fields that host softball and soccer games but are equally suited to families that just want to kick the ball around a bit. Besides athletics, visitors enjoy swimming in the pool (when open) or riding along the park's extensive biking trails. After working up an appetite, sit down and enjoy lunch at the picnic area. Sugar Hollow is easy to access and a great way for SWVA families to relax in a different setting.

Huntington Park: A Tidewater oasis



Located in Newport News, **Huntington Park** is a 60-acre area with a variety of activities for people of all ages. Spend the afternoon playing on the ball fields, playground, or the tennis courts used for regional and USTA Junior and Adult tournaments. AAU Junior Olympic Games have also continuously been conducted on these courts. Besides the sports areas, Huntington Park also has a concession stand, crab shack, and picnic tables. Want more? How about a rose garden and a beach area great for fishing for trout and sea bass and perfect for swimming. With so much to do at Huntington Park you are guaranteed to find something for everyone.

Claytor Lake: Where the New River is a lake



When is the New River not a river? When it's **Claytor Lake!** In 1939, the New River Power Company completed a project begun some 30 years prior to impound a 21-mile section of the New River near Radford by creating a concrete hydroelectric dam that generates 75 megawatts of energy. The resulting lake, named for the vice president of Appalachian Power, W. Graham Claytor, Sr. of Roanoke who had supervised the construction of the dam, measures nearly 4,500 acres and reaches depths of 115 feet. None of these statistics, however, will matter much to the visitor enjoying the beautiful vistas, boating, fishing, swimming and trails the area offers today. Two state parks, Claytor Lake State Park, which borders 3 miles of the lake front, and the **New River Trail State Park**, which follows part of the shoreline and crosses the lake on the Hiwassee Bridge (cover photo), offer further opportunities for enjoyment.

Hungry Mother State Park: Mother knows best



Hungry Mother State Park, located just north of Marion, is one of the original six Virginia State Parks. Famous for its woodlands, Hungry Mother is a popular spot for outdoor family activities like hiking and biking. Besides woodlands, Hungry Mother also has a 108-acre lake located in the heart of the mountains with a sandy beach and rentals for canoes, kayaks, paddle boards, and paddle boats. Visitors also take advantage of the boat launch and fishing pier. Still hungry? Hungry Mother is home to a campground, cabins, yurts, gift shops, a visitor center, lodging, a restaurant, and a conference center. Hungry Mother has you covered!

Natural Bridge State Park: The 100% organic way to cross Cedar Creek



Natural Bridge, a 215-foot limestone gorge created by Cedar Creek, has been making folks stop and stare ever since the first person laid eyes on it. Walk under the bridge and see where George Washington carved his name while you explore this natural wonder. Delve deeper into the park by hiking seven miles worth of trails including Cedar Creek Trail that leads to the Monacan Indian Village and 30-foot cascades at Lace Falls. These trails begin at the visitor center where you will find exhibits of historical interest (such as old toys) and a gift shop full of unique treasures. After a day of exploring, experience living history programs with shows on the history of the bridge and other stories of the region. Natural Bridge State Park is something everyone should see.

Day trip destinations

The “Farmville Five” state parks: Why visit just one park when you can visit five?



Twin Lakes State Park: Spanning a total of 548-acres, Twin Lakes State Park has numerous cultural, environmental, and recreational activities including swimming, fishing, boating, hiking, and picnicking next to the lake. This gorgeous lake is a popular location for weddings, family reunions, retreats, and business meetings. Also located at Twin Lakes State Park is a 33-site campground and 11 climate-controlled cabins.



Holiday Lake State Park: Situated in the Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest, Holliday Lake State Park is a family day trip destination for great fishing. The largemouth bass, crappie, and bluegill fish are off the hook (at least until a worthy angler puts them on). Apart from fishing, enjoy your day at the park’s beach swimming, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boating, paddle boarding, or playing at the “critter hole”. Holliday Lake State Park is also equipped with a campground, picnic shelters, playgrounds, a snack bar, and a gift shop! Holiday Lake is nothing like a workday.



Bear Creek Lake State Park: This park’s 40-acre lake area makes it ideal for a day in the sun without having to drive to the ocean. With a boat launch, fishing pier, and a beach for swimming there is sure to be something for all. Besides water activities, you can find a

meeting facility, cabins, a campground, picnic area, playgrounds, and an archery range! Visitors also enjoy strolling one of the many hiking trails that adjoin Bear Creek Lake and the Cumberland State Forest. Hike, bike, or horseback ride through the 14-mile Cumberland multi-use trail and enjoy a day trip full of outdoor adventure.



High Bridge Trail State Park: Named for the old rail bed bridge that is its centerpiece, the High Bridge Trail has been widened and leveled making it an easy path for children. The trail totals 31 miles of finely crushed limestone paths perfectly suited for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Of course, High Bridge Trail State Park’s major draw is the breathtaking, 2,400 feet long High Bridge which stands 125 feet above the Appomattox River, making High Bridge the longest recreational bridge in Virginia! High Bridge is a Virginia historic landmark and is on the National Register of Historic Places.



Sailor’s Creek Battlefield State Park: Located near the Appomattox Court House where the Civil War ended, visitors can tour the historic battlefield that was the site of the last major engagement between the armies commanded by generals Grant and Lee. The staff present various history programs and visitors can participate in living history events or tour the Overtone-Hillsman House which served as a hospital during the Battle of Sailor’s Creek. Walk or drive through the park and read about the history on signs located at each stop. Sailor’s Creek Battlefield State Park is the perfect place to reflect on history.

Falling Springs Falls & the Jackson River Scenic Trail: An Allegheny twofer



Falling Spring Falls is a breathtaking 80' waterfall that is one of the most visited and photographed spots in the Allegheny Highlands. The scenic waterfall is located on Route 220 in Allegheny County, just five miles north of Covington. Please note: venturing from the overlook to explore the falls is dangerous and illegal. The overlook is patrolled to prevent trespassing and violators are subject to a fine.



The Jackson River Scenic Trail follows an old railroad bed of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway (Hot Springs Branch) and passes through small communities, cultivated fields, small patches of woodland and spectacular rock formations along the way. With a trailhead located just minutes from downtown Covington, the Jackson River Scenic Trail has a surface of finely crushed gravel and is well-suited for family rides and hikes. There are four trailheads along the 14 miles, with a proposed fifth for future expansion. The trail hosts the Allegheny Highlands Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Annual Marathon.

Shenandoah National Park: Take the long view



Shenandoah National Park is an expansive network of trails located in the Blue Ridge Mountains and includes a lengthy stretch of Skyline Drive. Also located within Shenandoah National Park is a 100 mile stretch of the famous Appalachian Trail which runs from Georgia to Maine and takes approximately four to six months to complete. Within Shenandoah National Park you will find rock scrambles, high elevation, cascades, steep hills, panoramic overlooks, and waterfalls. Hiking trails are numerous and yield sightings of wildlife such as deer, birds, bears, wildflowers, and more. With over 500 miles of trails in the park, there is a trail for each person and their comfort level.



Due to COVID-19, various parks may be currently experiencing partial closures or a change in hours of operation. For the most up to date information on state and national parks please visit www.dcr.virginia.gov or www.nps.gov. Do not forget to bring water, snacks, and your mask when enjoying these wonderful destinations.

About the author: *Josette Bulova is a rising senior at Christopher Newport University where she is majoring in communication and double minoring in political science and human rights and conflict resolution. Josette has been an intern with the Virginia Municipal League for two summers as the communication and policy intern. During quarantine, Josette and her family took day trips to different locations to hike and enjoy nature which inspired this piece.*





Back to school perspectives

WITH SO MANY OF US bracing for another round of virtual schooling this fall, *VTC* checked in with a couple obliging members of VML's Executive Committee who have some notable perspectives on the matter.

Tommy Smigiel (City of Norfolk council member and high school principal) on equity, simplicity, and community.

“Resilient” is the best word to describe our students, parents, and school systems while handling school closures and virtual learning since last March. Everyone was caught off guard in the Spring, but school systems across Virginia adapted quickly and worked to support teaching and learning as much as possible. We all hoped that the COVID numbers would be low enough for students to return physically across the Commonwealth, but persistently high rates in larger localities have led many school systems to make the hard decision to start the school year with 100% virtual learning. Even many localities with lower numbers have chosen a to start virtually to prevent breakouts. So, while we have all had more time to plan, schools, parents and students are still entering a world of unknowns. Simply put: We haven't tried to start school this way before.

As a principal of a high school with approximately 2,000 students, my biggest concern is for our equity and opportunity students. Equity and opportunity students are defined as English Language Learners (ELL), high-poverty, and special education students. The lack of technology including high-speed internet access, makes this group even more vulnerable to learning gaps. For all these reasons, equity must be at the top of any school system's list when it comes to planning virtual learning. After equity, concerns about stability and simplicity follow. Schools must work to ensure students are provided with the most stable type of learning possible. This will mean a mindset change for many educators who are used to a traditional approach to teaching and learning. It also means making things simple for students and their parents. Complex virtual learning will not be successful.

It is also important that communities come together to support their schools and families that having difficulties with technology and childcare. Now is the time for business leaders, church leaders, community leaders, those who are retired, and many others, to work with schools to help keep ALL our students educated. Business leaders need to allow employees more flexibility to work from home. Parents who may have not had the time or inclination to involve themselves with their kids' schools need to step up as well. It is very important to make sure your contact information is current with your schools and stay engaged as schools disseminate information.

Schools aren't just the places where kids come to learn. For a long time now, they are also the places where many kids get their best meal of the day, feel loved, and have a sense of belonging. Schools do a lot, but some of what they do simply cannot be replicated at a distance. I remain hopeful, that everyone will embrace the need to help the children and schools in their community during this challenging time. If you can help, please reach out to your local school today.





Jon Stehle (City Fairfax council member and business analyst) on lessons learned by a family living, learning, and working under the same roof.

In the June 2020 edition of *VTC*, a quotation from Michael Darcy, the recently retired executive director of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, caught my attention. Commenting on what it means to be a local official, Mr. Darcy said: “They engage as local officials out of concern for their neighbors...It’s the ultimate in volunteering and caring for your neighbor. When we approach our challenges with that in mind it makes everything possible.”

These words reminded me of a conversation I had when I first took office as a council member. A veteran councilmember told me that council debates and challenges each other while considering an issue. Then council votes on it. After the vote is taken, we support the decision and work to make it the best we can for our community.

In July, Fairfax County Public Schools (which serve the City of Fairfax) announced they would begin the school year with 100% distance learning. My family of four learned back in the spring that living, learning, and working together in our small townhome was challenging and we were hoping we wouldn’t have to do it again this fall. But, as I learned from that veteran council member years ago,

now that the decision has been made to start with virtual learning, it is everyone’s job to support our community! And, like Mr. Darcy up in the Garden State, I am reminded that everyone in the Commonwealth involved in the process is doing their best to make it work for all.

And it is going to be different for everyone. As my wife noted early in this process, “We are not all in the same boat. We are in the same vast ocean of pandemic, riding in our own boats.” It is important to recognize that each community, family, and individual will struggle with different things, will find success in unexpected ways, and will come away with different lessons.

However, there are lessons we can learn from each other as we all navigate our boats safely to shore. Here are some things my family has learned so far. (Note – I am proud to share that my kids agreed to participate without requesting extra dessert!)

Steph (aka Mom) – PhD Student.

I have learned is that I just need to ask for help. We have a wonderful network of family and friends who are willing and able to support us and our kids from afar. One of our relatives, a retired English teacher, has already volunteered to have a weekly Zoom session to answer any English related questions the kids have from their work that week. I need to learn to ask, and accept, help. That will be my biggest challenge this Fall.

Zoe – 6th Grader.

I don’t think virtual learning will be that bad but I hope there are activities that require you to go for a walk, or do some exercises, or turn off your computer and write a story, or something like that. I liked how

our family set up a sticky note board where you put up a sticky note for each of your goals for the day and you could rip it off once you completed it. It felt good when you ripped it off! I hope we continue that this Fall.

Cooper – 3rd Grader.

I feel like I have gotten used to virtual learning now. I hope we will still be able to do “fieldtrips” like we did last year. We went to websites and pretended to go on a field trip to the beach and looked at animals at the zoo. I want to get better at typing so I can be a fast typer [sic] and not have to look at the keys. This will help me use the chat box. I want Mom, Dad, and Zoe to not walk in front of my camera when I am in class.

Jon (aka Dad) –

Back in the Spring, the loss of daily rhythms was hard to deal with. To get some of that back, this fall we are going to try having the kids put on their bookbags and take a walk around the neighborhood before school starts. Another challenge was providing each person a place to work in our tiny townhome that best fit their schedule for the day. To accommodate everyone, we have started a post-it notes “hot desk” system indicating where each of the four of us will be working for the day. This way, the kids know if I am on a video call at the kitchen table, it is OK to walk by even if they happen to wind up on camera – and my co-workers have embraced this new reality with me.



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH
SOUND GOVERNMENT

The story of VML's new logo

IN TODAY'S HYPER-CONNECTED, visual online world, new businesses and organizations put a premium on developing a suitable logo as one of the first steps necessary to establish the new venture. This was not always the case. For example, the Virginia Municipal League began in 1905, but it wasn't until the early 1980s that the league adopted its first official logo and tag line "Serving Local Governments Since 1905."

Fifteen years later, the league's logo got a modern revamp. It was rendered much bolder with clearer visual cues. The biggest challenge was making the "L" in the acronym distinct from the letter "I" as the acronym was frequently mis-identified as being for the Virginia Military Institute. The bold logo proved very effective across the board. Not only did it look good on paper, its clean and simple design translated well to online applications. With the new logo came a new tag line: "Cities • Towns • Counties."

Recently, VML began a process to develop a strategic plan as announced during the 2019 Annual Conference in Roanoke. The league decided it was time to freshen up its logo and tag line. Following a full day retreat devoted to the strategic plan process, VML staff worked to develop the new logo and, in conjunction with the Executive Committee, a new tagline: "Better Communities Through Sound Government".

What difference does a logo make?

If developed correctly, an organization's logo will seem like it was always meant to represent the organization. This is no easy task for the designer who must take into account ever changing moods, trends, policies, and the opinions of decision makers outside the development process.

When conceived with proper graphic design considerations, a logo visually expresses the essence of an organization's mission. A well-designed logo makes everything from stationery and marketing materials to website design and social media campaigns more effective.

A Google search for "municipal league logos and images" is a great way to appreciate the variety of municipal league logos currently in use. VML thinks our new logo stacks up well!

About the author: *Manuel Timbreza is VML's Director of Digital Communications and is the Contributing Editor and Graphic Designer of VTC.*



CITIES • TOWNS • COUNTIES

VRSA names 2020 risk management award winners

EACH YEAR, THE VIRGINIA RISK Sharing Association (VRSA) presents several types of awards as part of our annual meeting each spring.

The Margaret A. Nichols Risk Management Leadership Award is presented each year to recognize and encourage innovation in risk management by members of the pool. The award is named in honor of Margie Nichols, the longtime administrator of VRSA who passed away in 2002.

Risk Management Performance Awards are based on several criteria including: the member's loss ratio over a five-year period, having completed 100 percent of the risk management guidelines applicable to the member's tier, and proactive efforts to achieve their risk management goals.

Individual Risk Management Excellence Awards recognize individuals for their personal contributions to risk management.

Because this year's annual meeting was held virtually, the awards were mailed to the winners. But that won't stop us from celebrating. Introducing this year's winners!

Margaret A. Nichols Risk Management Leadership Award: Town of Vinton



Town of Vinton: (L-R) Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police Mandie Baker, Community Programs/Facilities Director Chasity Barbour, Facilities Manager/ Project Manager Bo Herndon, HR Director Donna Collins, Interim Police Chief Fabricio Drumond, and Community Programs & Facilities Coordinator Amanda Payne.

“Over the last few years, the town implemented a workplace violence deterrence and notification system for the safety of employees,” said VRSA Director of Education and Training, Thomas Bullock. “This process was led by HR Director Donna Collins, who requested a physical site assessment from VRSA.”

VRSA Public Safety Specialist, Gary Dillon, and VRSA Senior Safety Consultant, Edward Shelton, conducted the assessment and provided recommendations on strengthening the town's security and employee protection plans.

The Vinton town council then appropriated \$100,000 in emergency funding for these upgrades, which included; the installation of bulletproof glass in areas with customer interaction, key fob-only access to specific areas of the town facilities, security cameras, and ceiling lighting with employee-controlled panic buttons. Employee panic buttons are connected directly to the police department to alert others to when a lockdown or evacuation should take place.

“These efforts support a safer working environment for the town's staff and the citizens who visit the building,” said Bullock.

Risk Management Performance Award: Alexandria Renew Enterprises

Alexandria Renew Enterprises (AlexRenew) received a Risk Management Performance Award for their focus on education and training.

“AlexRenew hired a new safety coordinator, Alex Rigby, who has worked diligently with VRSA's risk services consultants to set up training courses for staff,” said Bullock.

AlexRenew staff attended the 2019 water and wastewater authority roundtable hosted by VRSA, and regularly utilize VRSA webinars and regional trainings. Recently, VRSA risk services staff performed a mock OSHA inspection at their request, which resulted in increased awareness in hazard recognition and ultimately, a safer work environment.

Their staff have also participated in training including: Intro to OSHA, Hazard Recognition, OSHA at a Glance, Emotional Intelligence, and Active Shooter. Additionally, employees attended an OSHA 10-Hour Construction course provided by VRSA in Manassas.

AlexRenew utilizes VRSA's CompCare On-Call services as well as VRSA's panel of physicians to report workers' compensation injuries or injured workers and provides light-duty work for injured employees.

Alexandria Renew Safety Coordinator Alex Rigby with the VRSA Risk Management Performance Award.



Alexandria Renew Director of Human Resources Wendy Callahan with the VRSA Risk Management Performance Award.



Risk Management Performance Award: Town of Floyd

The Town of Floyd is also a recipient of the Risk Management Performance Award based on its loss ratio of just 2 percent within a five-year period.

“Town Manager Kayla Cox is focused on the safety of town employees and ensures that either she or someone from the town attend VRSA trainings and roundtable safety discussions whenever possible,” said Bullock. “She is always interested in guidance or assistance from VRSA safety consultants.”



Town of Floyd: (L-R) Public Works Staff Members Jeffrey Hale and Tyler Wood, Town Manager Kayla Cox, Public Works Staff Member Jason Slusher.

For example, at Cox’ request, VRSA Senior Safety Consultant, Edward Shelton, conducted a hazard identification walk-through of the town’s municipal office and public works department this January. In February, Cox attended a cyber roundtable in Radford with regional members focused on reviewing cyber challenges. Cox continues to participate in virtual roundtables discussing issues such as COVID-19 and reopening with regional members.

Risk Management Performance Award: Town of Grottoes

The Town of Grottoes received a Risk Management performance Award for its commitment to risk management as evidenced by the town’s 13 percent loss ratio within the period of five-years.



Town of Grottoes: (L-R) Council Member Mark Keeler, Council Member Joshua Bailey, Council Member Jo Plaster, Town Manager Nathan Garrison, Mayor Emily Holloway, Councilman David Raynes, and Councilman C.W. Stephenson.

“VRSA staff have recognized the efforts of Town Manager Nathan Garrison for his hands-on approach to risk management,” said Bullock. “Nathan has invited VRSA safety consultants to teach two safety meetings for public works staff, as well as provided space for a regional meeting to discuss safety. He has also implemented process and practice changes that were discussed after a mock VOSH inspection.”

The Town of Grottoes has a variety of unique experiences such as Adventure Cave Tours. Although these come with a relatively high level of risk, the work of the staff has assured VRSA that they have followed the guidance and have adopted the necessary safety measures.

Individual Risk Management Excellence Award Winners

Additionally, the following individuals were recognized for their personal contributions to risk management.

• **Regina Harless, Town of Pearisburg Town Clerk** has made significant strides in managing the town’s risk and safety programs. Harless worked with VRSA and Senior Safety Consultant, Edward Shelton to coordinate several training programs such as lock-out tagout, hazard communication, and OSHA at a Glance. Support for these programs stems from the partnership between Harless and Town Manager Todd Meredith.



Town of Pearisburg: (L-R) Director of Public Works Rodney Wilson, Town Clerk Regina Harless, Town Manager Todd Meredith, and Assistant Town Clerk April Williams.

“Without Todd’s support, it would have been difficult to get everything in place,” said Harless upon receiving her award. “Rodney assisted me in working on getting policies adopted by town council and was very helpful with advice on what his employees needed from me. April was my right arm in helping me get the training set up, reminding departments to show up and completing behind the scenes tasks. We all work as a team, and it’s a group effort. I do care about the employees and want to ensure their safety in the workplace. Once things calm down, I plan to start up training even if we do them remotely. I just wanted to give everyone credit. I truly appreciate the award. Thanks VRSA!”

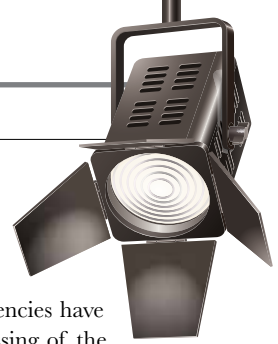
• **Michael Neese, Refuse and Recycling Manager for the City of Winchester** has created the spark to get his organization excited about risk management programs. Neese pushed for changes such as the addition of lift assists on trucks as well as providing extensive weight calculations to determine how much employees were lifting per day. These calculations proved extremely valuable in helping to justify needed upgrades. He also organized a “Dump Truck Rodeo” for staff that provided extensive and detailed training, tested employee competence, preached safe lifting, backing, personal protective equipment, and their own standard operating procedures. Additionally, Neese has promoted important VRSA training to other departments, including the VRSA Focus Four and VRSA’s online training courses.



City of Winchester: Michael Neese with the 2020 Risk Management Excellence Award.

Congratulations to all our 2020 award recipients! We thank you for all you do to support your communities, fellow staff members and employees.

About the authors: *The Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA) is the first and most financially sound self-insurance pool in the Commonwealth of Virginia. VRSA provides auto, property, liability, and workers’ compensation coverage to Virginia’s local political subdivisions.*



Blackstone's BABS keeps rolling

LIKE MANY ORGANIZATIONS and businesses, the Blackstone Area Bus System (BABS) has faced difficulties meeting its goals and fulfilling its mission as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has caused varying complications for many, if not all, transportation providers. Depending on the size of the transit system as well as the scope of its operations, each must respond in different ways.

Throughout the crisis, BABS has taken numerous steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As a rural transit system with limited resources, however, two significant obstacles remain to be overcome to ensure that BABS continues to provide safe, reliable service to the region.

Obstacle #1 – Increased expenses

At the beginning of the crisis BABS, provided its staff with personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves, masks, disinfectant spray, and hand sanitizer. Employees were then instructed to use PPE whenever on duty. Furthermore, transit vehicles were cleaned with disinfectant at the end of each shift (instead of each day as previously done). BABS was fortunate to have a reserve supply of disinfectant cleaners, but these crucial items became increasingly difficult and expensive to acquire. Being a rural transit system, BABS has a limited amount of resources at its disposal and derives roughly half of its operating revenue from the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) section 5311 grant. As such, day-to-day operations are limited to strictly normal consumption and spending. The COVID-19 pandemic forced BABS to spend a larger portion of its annual budget on cleaning supplies and related services.

Obstacle #2 – Decreased funding

As the number of confirmed cases of the virus increased, BABS reduced service hours to mitigate the spread of the virus. This move coincided with Governor Northam's Executive Order 55 which mandated that all individuals, with some exceptions, "remain at their place of residence." While the transit system never completely shut down, operations and services suffered greatly. Riding capacity was reduced to twenty percent and services were reduced to only one day per week at their lowest point (down from a typical amount of four or five days of service per week). This reduction, along with Executive Order 55, caused a significant drop in ridership across the entire system. Further complicating matters, the section 5311 grant BABS depends upon matches revenue generated by passenger fares. This match must meet five percent of the total annual operating budget for rural transit systems. Although this number may seem small, it is often difficult to generate that revenue even in normal circumstances when one considers that the typical fare to ride BABS is \$1.00 per ride with the Blackstone Line and the Fort Pickett Express being only \$0.50 per ride. The grant match typically amounts to roughly \$30,000 annually for BABS. Thus, any reduction in ridership has a significant impact to BABS' budget. With the decreased ridership in recent months, it is highly unlikely that BABS will generate the required match.

Hanging in there

The issues outlined above are certainly not unique to BABS. In fact, COVID-19 has created myriad difficulties for transit agencies across the United States. However, thanks to the actions of the White

House and the United States Congress, transit agencies have been given a lifeline. This aid comes from the passing of the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). The FTA alone will allocate over two billion dollars (\$2.2 billion) to provide aid to rural transit systems like BABS impacted by the virus. These funds will be instrumental in reducing the substantial costs incurred by transit systems.

Lessons being learned

Only time will reveal the full extent of the coronavirus' impact to public transportation agencies across the country. However, some lessons are already clear. For example, we now know that the cost to respond to these types of emergencies are high enough to break small systems. But at the same time, these costs are necessary not only to ensure the physical health of riders and staff, but their psychological and emotional well being as well. Riders should not have to wonder whether it is safe to use public transportation which, for many, is the only option to accomplish necessary tasks. Staff should not fear for their health by doing their job. As such, BABS will continue to provide public transportation across Southside Virginia by practicing frequent disinfection of transit vehicles and bus terminals. PPE will continue to be provided to employees and BABS will continue to encourage all riders to wear masks and gloves while on transit vehicles. Further, BABS is considering a safety and emergency response plan to act as a "playbook" for BABS and its staff.

BABS would like to remind everyone that public transit remains a safe, reliable, and affordable means of transportation. Stay safe and thank you!



What is BABS?

The Blackstone Area Bus System (BABS) is a multi-route rural transit system spanning eight counties in Southside Virginia.

BABS operates eight routes and averages over three thousand one hundred and ninety (3,190) riders per month and about thirty-eight thousand (38,000) per year. These routes include:

- BABS Line serving the Town of Blackstone
- Brunswick Express serving the County of Brunswick, the Towns of Lawrenceville, and Alberta
- Crewe-Burkeville Express serving the County of Nottoway, Towns of Crewe, and Burkeville
- Dinwiddie Express serving the County of Dinwiddie and the Town of McKenney
- Fort Pickett Express serving Fort Pickett
- Piedmont Area Transit – Amelia Line serving the Counties of Amelia and Prince Edward
- Piedmont Area Transit – Buckingham Line serving the Counties of Buckingham and Cumberland
- own and County Express which services the County of Lunenburg and the Towns of Kenbridge and Victoria.



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