

Screen Time!

Annual Conference goes virtual

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE



Inside:

Commentary:
Pandemic relief
Epidemic crisis

Local Champions

Norfolk:
CARES T.E.A.M.



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**Thursday, November 19
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

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from VML member localities.**

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2020 has been a hard year for local governments and the people who make them work. With the long dark days of winter looming, and traditional holiday gatherings and celebrations curtailed, it's more important than ever to find ways to renew and take care of yourself so you can continue to help your community innovate and adapt.

This event is sponsored by the Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA).



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ABOUT THE COVER

Remember when people got together in the same place at the same time? Really, it used to happen! For example, every October VML members would gather in the same place for our annual conference. Well, we weren't all in the same place this year, but we did gather, and it was great to see everyone peeking out from our computer screens. Thanks for being "there."

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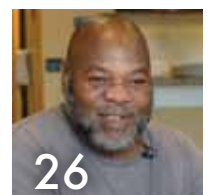
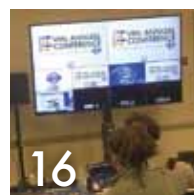
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Michelle Washington, a public relations manager for the City of Norfolk, describes the origins of this successful program and charts its future. 26



Now more than ever, support each other and be kind!

I WANT TO THANK EVERYONE who attended the VML Annual Conference; while it was a rocky road at times I enjoyed the laughter and camaraderie that took place during the occasional technical hiccups when awkward silence would have otherwise ensued. Thank you for filling in the silence and for having some fun!

Speaking of fun, I'm sure I'm not the only one who has decided that as soon as the world gets back to normal to pay a visit to Jimmy's Old Town Tavern in Herndon. Thanks again to Mayor Merkel for introducing us all to the unofficial mayor of her town Mr. Jimmy Cirrito and his mixology skills.

Congratulations to Willie Greene our new President. Willie is the Mayor of Galax and has always been a calm and steady force on the Executive Board. Those qualities will be much appreciated as we work to implement the VML Strategic Plan this year.

On November 19, VML will host an event free of charge to our members entitled "Transformations" hosted by Nick Kittle which will be an exciting afternoon of thoughts on helping your community innovate and adapt to the challenges that we all face. Please visit www.vml.org/transformations-webinar to sign up.

This year has been stressful for everyone and while COVID-19 has been at the forefront of most of our concerns, many of us have faced personal tragedies or struggles that don't relate to COVID-19. These have been made particularly difficult because we can't hug a friend or attend a gathering or even go to visit someone in the hospital. But we've made do. I have a friend who held a tailgate gathering as they waited for a loved one to come out of surgery – certainly not an ideal way of being there, but a vital show of support, nonetheless. And we've seen people waving outside windows or putting up signs with encouraging messages to help friends and loved ones holed up during difficult times. All of this is important and we must continue to show support for one another however we can.

VML is telling a tragic story in the magazine this month, but it is an important one and I urge you to read the article "Pandemic relief. Epidemic crisis." (on page 10) by my friend and colleague Mark Hayes, the Executive Director of the Arkansas Municipal League. One of Mark's observations on the situation in Arkansas is true for the Commonwealth and unfortunately most of the country: "The combination of COVID-19 and opioids in Arkansas is a hell on earth." This painful story details how Mark's son

Wells died this spring at the age of 23 from an opioid overdose. It also talks about his son's friends who fell victim to this horrible addiction. I communicated with Mark not long after and what most impressed me was that he understood his family was one of many and they are now committed to making sure others don't feel the pain that they now do. On October 6 of this year, the American Medical Association offered an issue brief which stated: "More than 40 states have reported increases in opioid-related mortality as well as ongoing concerns for those with a mental illness or substance use disorder."

The bottom line: The opioid crisis and other addictions along with mental health still need our attention despite the pandemic. Indeed, they need our attention now more than ever.

I am encouraged by recent efforts in Virginia, such as the local police and sheriff's departments which recently held a drug take-back event and the work being done to turn the tide of the epidemic using data (as outlined by Chief Data Officer Rivero after Mark Hayes's article). But there is much, much more to be done and we must not lose sight of its importance.

Lastly, I want to thank all the people who worked so hard to allow the citizens of the Commonwealth to vote. There are so many people in different jobs who worked to make sure that our voting processes were fair and safe. Please know that we appreciate it. As I write this it is the week before the election, but please remember it is our job to respect the outcome and – as is true not just in election years but *every year* – be kind to each other!





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: Daryl Thomas Terrill



Town of Middletown Council Member **Daryl Thomas Terrill**, age 80, passed away in August at his home in Middletown. A native of Meadville, PA, he was active in the Middletown community. Terrill was elected to council in 2018 after having served on the town’s Planning Commission for two years and as its chairman. During his tenure on the Planning Commission he was proud of his work to get approval for the “Village of Middletown” subdivision and the completion of the town’s Comprehensive Plan.

On council, he served as Chairman of the HR/ Finance Committee, in addition to serving on the Public Safety Committee, as Chairman of the Ordinance Committee, and on the Planning and Zoning Committee, where he completed a ten-week course and became a certified Planning Commissioner.

Mr. Terrill was also very active at the Warrenton/ Fauquier Visitor Center where he was certified through the Commonwealth as a Tourism Counselor. He worked as an instructor for Northern Virginia Community College and from 1996 to 2002 was on the air as a disc jockey for WCVA-FM in Culpeper.

He was described as the sort of person who “never met a stranger and always had a smile and a hearty handshake for everyone.” He and his beloved wife “Pink,” who preceded him in death, cared for over 60 foster children in their home.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Middletown Fire Department, P.O. Box 111, Middletown, VA 22657; to St. Thomas Chapel, P.O. Box 181, Middletown, VA 22657; or to his son, Mike Terrill, c/o Maddox Funeral Home, 105 W. Main Street, Front Royal, VA.

In Memoriam: Paul Douglas Harvey



Former mayor and current council member for the Town of Appomattox, **Dr. Paul Douglas Harvey** passed away on October 19. A native of Staunton, VA, Harvey was a 1975 graduate of Hampden-Sydney College and in 1979 graduated from Medical College of Virginia with a Doctor of Dental Surgery. Upon graduating, he opened Paul Harvey DDS in Midlothian and in 2000 he moved his practice to Appomattox.

He made serving others a priority in his life. Harvey traveled yearly to The Bland Ministry Center Dental Clinic to volunteer his services. Harvey served 12 consecutive years as mayor of Appomattox and was currently serving on the Appomattox Town Council.

Paul will be remembered as a loving husband, father, grandfather, and brother.

In lieu of flowers the family suggests memorials be made to Courtland Festival Park, PO Box 863, Appomattox, VA 24522; a project that was important to Paul. He saw a great importance in creating and enhancing public gathering spaces in Appomattox.

Alexandria Fire Lieutenant Wilson appointed to the Virginia Child Fatality Review Team

Governor Ralph Northam recently announced the appointment of Alexandria Fire



- Wilson -

Department Lieutenant **Kaandra Wilson** to the Virginia State Child Fatality Review Team.

“Lieutenant Wilson continues to show a great sense of leadership, and she is always willing to share her knowledge and

talents with others in an effort to move the fire and EMS service into the future,” said Fire & EMS Chief Corey Smedley. “We know she will represent our department well and be a great asset to the State Child Fatality Review Team.”

The Virginia State Child Fatality Review Team is unique when compared with similar groups across the country. Rather than review every fatality each year, Virginia’s team chooses a specific injury type, or cause or manner of death, on which to focus its review. The team is tasked with developing recommendations for prevention, education, and improved investigation.

Lieutenant Wilson, who is also a paramedic, joined the Alexandria Fire Department in 2011 and has since received several awards.

The State Child Fatality Review Team is chaired by the chief medical examiner, and the governor appoints one representative from various agencies – including local law enforcement, local fire departments, social services agencies, and community service boards – to serve for three-year terms.

Arlington County Board Member Cristol named UNUM Fellow



- Cristol -

Arlington County Board Member **Katie Cristol** has been named one of 14 Southern elected leaders who will form the inaugural class of E Pluribus Unum (UNUM) fellows. The program is designed to equip Southern

PEOPLE

leaders with resources that advance racial and economic equity within their communities.

Over the next year, the cohort will address inequitable and discriminatory policies and practices within their communities. The program comes with a commitment of up to \$75,000 to support the implementation of an equity-focused project led by the fellow.

Founded by former New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu in 2018, UNUM is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to build a more just, equitable, and inclusive South, uprooting the barriers that have long divided the region by race and class.

Cristol has served as a member of the Arlington County Board since 2015 and served as chair in 2018. Regionally, Cristol represents Arlington as the chair of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission. She also is the immediate past chair of the Operations Board of The Virginia Railway Express. Cristol represents Arlington on the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and serves on the Human Services Policy Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. She is also the urban section chair on VML's Executive Board.

Cristol has been an advocate for women's issues for more than a decade, and was appointed to the Arlington Commission on the Status of Women by the County Board in 2012.

Lexington's Interim police chief Rilely retires to begin new role; Frost begins as new interim police chief



- Frost -

On October 26 Lieutenant **Michael Frost** became the interim police chief for the City of Lexington while the prior interim chief, **Mark Rilely** began his new job as the associate director of Public Safety at Washington and Lee University after 27 years in law enforcement.



- Rilely -

Rilely joined the City of Lexington police force when he was only 21 years-old after graduating from the FBI National Academy in Quantico, which he called "the Top Gun for cops." Since then, he has done "just about every job in the building."

The new interim chief, Michael Frost is a native of Rockbridge County and has over 20 years of law enforcement experience having served with both the Lexington City and Roanoke County police departments. He is also a veteran of the United States Marine Corps.

Frost has earned several honors during his career including the Life Saving, Meritorious Service, and Distinguished Service Medals. When asked about the opportunity, Frost commented, "I look forward to building and growing on the previous generations

of the Lexington Police Department and all their hard work and dedication. In doing such, I feel our team can provide the highest level of service to the community and be exemplary stewards of the public's trust."

Frost earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Radford University and completed the Administrative Officers Management Program through North Carolina State University.

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O'Brien is Loudoun County's new chief of staff

In September, Loudoun County Administrator Tim Hemstreet announced that **Dorri**



- O'Brien -

O'Brien would be the new chief of staff in the Office of the County Administrator. Prior to that, O'Brien served as chief of staff for Broad Run District Supervisor Sylvia Glass. She previously served as chief of staff to then-Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Ralph Buona, a position she held from 2012 through 2019.

The chief of staff's duties include overseeing administrative staff and operations of the Office of the County Administrator; serving as liaison to the Board of Supervisors, their aides and county departments; managing the Board agenda process; supporting development of the county budget; and managing special projects.

O'Brien began her service to Loudoun County with the Department of Economic Development. In 2003, she was hired for the newly created position of business ambassador and in 2005 she was promoted

to marketing and communications manager. Prior to working for Loudoun County, she worked in marketing in the private sector.

O'Brien holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from George Mason University.

Spencer begins as Roanoke's city attorney

As of October 1, **Timothy R. Spencer** is the City of Roanoke's new city attorney.



- Spencer -

Spencer had been the senior assistant city attorney since October 2013. Prior to that role, Spencer served as an assistant city attorney for nine years. Spencer also served as city attorney for the City of Danville for more than seven years.

Spencer is immediate past president of the Local Government Attorneys of Virginia, a member and past president of the Virginia Council of School Board Attorneys, and served as an adjunct professor for Hampton University, teaching graduate level courses in educational and administrative law.

A native of Portsmouth, Spencer holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from the Virginia Military Institute, and a Juris Doctor Degree from the T. C. Williams School of Law. He was admitted to the Virginia State Bar in 1986 and is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of Virginia, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, and the U.S. District Courts for the Eastern and Western Districts of Virginia.

Damascus honors former vice mayor Williams

Tim Williams, who recently stepped down from the Damascus town council after devoting years to the town



- Williams -

both on council and as vice mayor, will be honored this fall for his many contributions, in particular for creating "tent city," a section of land on the outskirts of town for hikers. His volunteer work will be recognized with a plaque that will be erected at tent city.

According to Damascus' current vice mayor Susan Seymore, Williams has been

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instrumental in just about everything in town. “He has nearly single-handedly organized our annual Trail Days. He’s the one who oversees Christmas and other decorations in town,” she said.

Williams has dabbled in many careers, primarily working in business for most of his life. Williams earned a degree in physical education from Berea College in Berea, KY in 1979.

Passionate about helping others, Williams joined the Damascus Volunteer Fire Department in the late 1980s, often dropping his work as a butcher at the Minute-Ette grocery store in town to answer a call. From 1987 to 2010, he worked as a staff assistant for former U.S. Rep. Rick Boucher, traveling with the congressman to events throughout the 9th District of Southwest Virginia.

In 2012, Williams was elected to the Damascus town council.

Observes Williams of the place he fondly calls home: “You can’t export the tourism we have here. Our trails are here to stay. As long as we maintain those resources, the future will be bright for Damascus.”

Williams says he will continue to volunteer in the town.

Camacho named Harrisonburg’s interim police chief

Harrisonburg Police Department Deputy Chief **Gabriel Camacho** began as the city’s interim police chief in September.

Camacho has served as deputy chief of HPD since December 2019, when he



- Camacho -

arrived in The Friendly City with more than 25 years of experience in law enforcement – most recently as captain of operations for the Camden County Police Department in New Jersey.

The city’s press release describes Camacho as “a stellar example of the Harrisonburg Police Department’s values and mission. Camacho has recently worked with other Spanish-speaking officers at HPD to create a Spanish language Facebook page to help get critical information into the community and is constantly looking for other opportunities to bring HPD and our residents closer together.”

Rocky Mount’s Town manager Ervin set to retire; new assistant town manager Moore comes on board



- Ervin -

Rocky Mount’s town manager of 14 years, **James Ervin** recently announced his intention to retire in April of next year. In an article about the announcement, Ervin noted that “2020’s been full tilt. It’s time to ease up on the marathon. Though in my mind, I’m still helping council move their agenda forward, I do know that this is a game that’s best served with energy, enthusiasm and new

ideas. As we let the future unfold, a different skill set is probably a better fit for tomorrow.”

Mayor Steve Angle notes that “James has done an incredible job...I’m certainly going to miss him.”

Ervin has more than 30 years of experience working in local government in Virginia. His first role began in 1989 when he joined the staff of the city (now town) of Bedford.

At the same council meeting at which Ervin officially announced his intention to retire, he introduced the newly hired assistant town manager, Mark W. Moore.

Moore, a 1998 graduate of Ferrum College and a 22-year veteran of municipal government, comes to Rocky Mount from Pittsylvania County, where he served as the director of parks and recreation for more than nine years. His experience also includes positions with the cities of Roanoke and Salem as well as Botetourt County. Moore is a graduate of Virginia Tech’s Local Government Management program and holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Columbia Southern University.

“I am excited to return to Rocky Mount and the region that helped shape me during my formative undergraduate years,” Moore said. “I look forward to meeting the community, staff, and council and working as a team to move Rocky Mount forward.”

Moore’s employment with the town began October 5.

NEWS & NOTES

Town of Tazewell opens renovated historic train depot

IN SEPTEMBER, THE TOWN OF TAZEWELL announced a partnership with the Tazewell County Historical Society to open and staff the newly restored Tazewell Train Station in the North Tazewell section of the town. The restoration, which has been underway for five years, repurposed the depot that had served as the transportation hub of the community for much of the twentieth century.

The renovated building will be open six days a week so visitors can enjoy numerous artifacts recounting the history of the Town of Tazewell and the Clinch Valley Line, as well as a mural depicting much of Tazewell’s history. The facility also includes a community meeting room and gift shop operated by the historical society.

The train station is open from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM Monday through Saturday. More information is available at www.tazewelltrainstation.org.



City of Portsmouth announces police department recruitment initiative



AT A TIME WHEN LOCALITIES are looking for ways to unite communities and their law enforcement agencies, the Portsmouth Police Department (PPD) is taking bold new steps to meet the challenges of recruiting and retaining the best and brightest Virginia has to offer.

On November 2, the city launched an aggressive marketing police recruitment campaign with outreach focused on local individuals but also wrapping in potential candidates from around the region and the nation.

“Portsmouth’s Police Department is a small, family-based en-

vironment with a good solid foundation,” said Michael Floriano, a public safety recruiter based in the city’s Human Resource Management Department. “Existing police officers and even city residents will be involved in this effort.”

Incentives are being offered to those who become police officers (applicants are eligible for a sign-on bonus) as well as existing police employees who recommend/refer a candidate who becomes a sworn officer. Recruitment materials also outline other employment benefits, including paid annual leave, paid holidays, retirement plans, and the opportunity for promotion after two years at the Portsmouth Police Department.

Fiorano continues, “We are looking for men and women who reflect the values of the Portsmouth community, including selfless public service, integrity, teamwork, cooperation, and the ability to continue growing and improving.”

The recruitment campaign utilizes a multi-media strategy, including a more concerted effort on social media to tell stories that demonstrate the diversity in the types of work performed by law enforcement. The department’s social media sites have been updated and are being used to establish and maintain connections with interested individuals.

If you or someone you know is interested in working for the Portsmouth Police Department, reach out to the recruiter at ppdrecruiter@portsmouthva.gov. Or visit www.portsmouthpd.us/recruiting for more information.

City of Newport News offers Tutor.com to K-12 dependents of all employees

THE CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS has partnered with Tutor.com to provide K-12 dependents of the city’s 4,000+ full and part time employees free access to 24/7, on-demand, 1-to-1 online tutoring. Newport News is the first city in the country to offer Tutor.com’s online academic support services as an employee benefit.

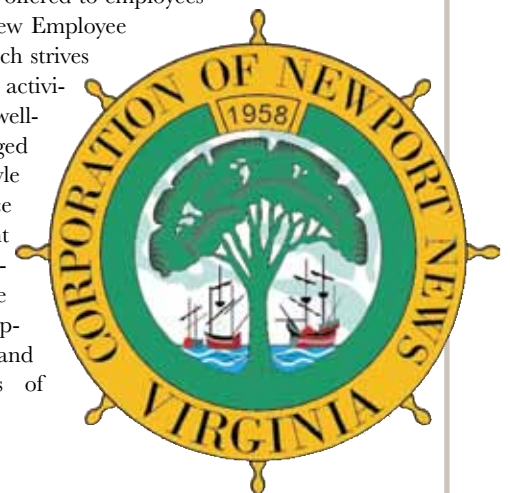
“We understand the challenges parents are facing in this COVID environment in terms of helping their children with virtual learning,” said City Manager Cindy Rohlf. “It is our hope that by providing this service our employees and their school aged children will get the support and assistance they need for academic success.”

Tutor.com offers services across more than 75 subject areas ranging from basic science to algebra to world languages. Additionally, K-12 dependents of city employees also have access to student study-skills training, drop-off essay review, SAT/ACT prep, and more.

“As an organization, we are thrilled to be able to offer the benefits of Tutor.com to our employees,” said Newport News Director of Human Resources Karen Witherspoon. “This amazing resource can provide invaluable benefits to employees in all job groups.”

Pamela Brehm, senior director of government programs for Tutor.com, notes that the organization is “honored to support City of Newport News employees and their children with Tutor.com as an employee benefit.”

Tutor.com is being offered to employees through the city’s Renew Employee Wellness Program, which strives to deliver proactive activities that promote a well-rounded, more engaged and healthier lifestyle for the city’s workforce by exploring the eight dimensions of wellness. Services available through Tutor.com support the intellectual and emotional dimensions of wellness.



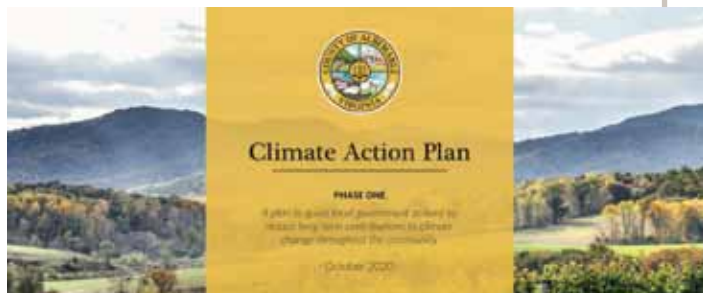
Albemarle County Board of Supervisors approves climate action plan

ON OCTOBER 7, THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to adopt the County’s first Climate Action Plan (CAP). This is a critical first step for launching a multi-phase, multi-year effort to reduce the community’s contributions to global climate change while advancing the county’s vision of a thriving, vibrant community for every resident.

The Climate Action Plan recognizes and aims to meet the following targets, set last year by the Board of Supervisors, for addressing climate change in the coming decades:

- By 2030, Albemarle County aims to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent from 2008 levels.
- By 2050, Albemarle County aims to achieve zero net greenhouse gas emissions community-wide.

“The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors understands that leadership at all levels of government is required in order to meet the global challenge for climate action. I am proud that Albemarle County is one of the leading localities in the United



States by adopting an ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction goal of 45 percent by 2030 (from 2008 levels) and zero net emissions by 2050. We cannot achieve these goals without the partnership of our residents, business community, and institutional partners,” shared Ned Gallaway, chair of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors.

Read the full plan by searching “Phase I Climate Action Plan” at www.albemarle.org/home.

Town of Remington residents choose new town seal

RECENTLY THE TOWN OF REMINGTON’S council members unveiled the town’s new seal. Vice Mayor Devada Allison said that the winning design, created by local graphic artist Alison Wargo, was his personal favorite. “There was so much history in her design,” said the vice mayor, “and I think it was the most upscale of the three.”

Allison had said at the council’s July meeting that considering the national reckoning over institutionalized racism and the “healing process” happening in the country, it was time for the seal to change. The previous town seal, in place for decades, featured a small depiction of the battle flag used during the Civil War by the Army of Northern Virginia, which fought for the Confederacy.

“We are moving forward as a community,” Allison said. “We definitely want Remington to be represented as welcoming to everybody, because that’s what it is.”

Wargo, who works for the federal government at the Institute of Heraldry, said that in her research, Remington was described as a “town at the crossroads of history. I liked that crossroads concept.”

The artist said that when she talked to people, “There was no singular thing that told me ‘We must have this.’ But everyone

talked about the town’s beauty, the landscape, the river. And of course, the bridge is iconic to the town.”

“And the anchor kept coming up again and again. There are two anchors in front of the Remington Fire Station. It is an intriguing symbol for people.”

The anchor throughout history has been “a symbol of hope and salvation,” Wargo said, and she wanted to make it a focal point of Remington’s new seal. “Hope keeps us anchored in our humanity.”

As someone who designs official symbols, insignias and seals for the military, Wargo understands their power. “Seals and insignias were used as far back as the 11th or 12th centuries. They are an art form unto themselves. They have to be bold and recognizable from a distance.”

Wargo and her husband Bob have a business in town, Wargo Properties, LLC, a real estate investment firm. Bob Wargo was raised in Remington, attended the local elementary school, and his mother worked in the Fauquier County Public

Schools for many years.

With so many ties to the community, Wargo said she was pleased that town residents got to vote on the final choice. “I’m happy the town could choose it for themselves.”





Petersburg City Assessor's Office awarded certificate of excellence

THE PETERSBURG CITY Assessor's Office was recently honored with a Certificate of Excellence in Assessment Administration by the International Association of Assessing Officers. The Certificate of Excellence is a rigorous program that recognizes governmental units that integrate best practices in

the workplace.

Founded in 1934, the International Association of Assessing Officers is a worldwide professional membership organization of government assessment officials and others interested in the administration of property tax. The Petersburg City Assessor's Office is only the fifty-second jurisdiction in the world, and the seventh jurisdic-

tion in Virginia, to receive the group's Certificate of Excellence.

The Petersburg City Assessor's Office was reformed in 2018 to re-establish the real estate assessment function in Petersburg. Utilizing the recommendations of a 2017 study performed by the International Association of Assessing Officers, the City Assessor's Office conducted process analyses to create an award-winning office. Team members include City Assessor Brian E. Gordineer, AAS; Real Estate Technician, Crystal L. Green; Real Estate Appraisers, Shannon F. Griffin and Mary E. Burket; Real Estate Analyst, Shaun P. Criss; and GIS Analyst, Carter A. Chassey.

More information about the City Assessor's Office can be found at www.petersburg-va.org/148/City-Assessor.

VML member localities receive Virginia American Planning Association awards

AT ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE on October 13, the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) announced this year's winners of its prestigious awards. Among the winners were projects in several VML member localities listed below.

The **Commonwealth Plan of the Year Award** (2 recipients: one small area plan and one broad area plan) honors Virginia's best planning document of the year that demonstrates outstanding planning processes, vision, implementation strategies and innovative approaches.

Winners: The **City of Manassas 2040 Comprehensive Plan** which judges cited as looking ahead to the year 2040 to sketch out both big-picture issues and neighborhood-specific plans that will guide future land use, development, recreation, preservation, and transportation policy decisions. And the **City of Newport News' Denbigh-Warwick Area Plan** which was cited not only as a stellar small-area plan, but also a well-documented example of the thoughtful outreach, analysis, and presentation needed for successful planning in the future.

The **Old Dominion Innovative Approaches Award** (2 recipients) recognizes pioneering, inventive, and creative planning efforts in the Commonwealth.

Winners: The **City of Manassas Community Conversations**, conducted by the City of Manassas staff and community which used pop-up events, small group discussions and an interactive website to draw input from a broad and diverse set of residents to help define a community-driven vision for the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. And the **City of Roanoke Public Schools Planning Workshops** where students and teachers provided planning staff with a vision to improve the livability of the Oak Grove community as a component of outreach for the Oak Grove Center Plan. These workshops were successful in eliciting input from residents under the age of 50 and in sparking interest in the planning profession.

The **Dogwood Award - Virginia's Citizen Planners of the Year Award** honors an outstanding group of citizens, civic

leaders, or similar community groups that exemplify all citizen planners by being dedicated, objective, open, moral, balanced, and knowledgeable of the framework of planning in Virginia.

Winner: The **City of Norfolk's Olde Huntersville Community** for its recently adopted Olde Huntersville Plan Book, which is a thorough, detailed design book intended to make it easy for potential homeowners to build their dream home in the beautiful, historically African-American Olde Huntersville neighborhood.

The **Resilient Virginia Community of the Year Award** recognizes a community's effort and commitment to build resilience through responsible planning practice and innovation.

Winner: The **City of Virginia Beach** for its **Sea Level Wise** planning project which was exemplary in how a locality can plan for sea level rise and recurrent flooding through rigorous data gathering, modeling, and analysis. The data was used to quantify flood risk and vulnerability in individual watersheds, enabling a much more nuanced investigation of flooding impacts.

The **Red Clay Award - Development of the Year** honors a development that exhibits the values of great planning, helping to create a great place in Virginia.

Winner: The **City of Falls Church** for its **Railroad Cottages** development which incorporates numerous mitigation efforts including photovoltaic solar cells on the roof of the carport and geothermal heating for renewable energy, building upgrades to reduce harmful chemical emissions, pervious pavers and native plants for more natural stormwater management, and universal design elements for greater accessibility for all residents and guests.

Congratulations to all the winners!

Learn more at www.virginia.planning.org



Pandemic relief. Epidemic crisis.

Editor's note – *This letter originally appeared in the May issue of the Arkansas Municipal League's magazine. We have received permission to reprint it here because we believe that the powerful, effective, and emotional weight of Mr. Hayes' story and message about the opioid crisis will resonate for many of our members. Mr. Hayes' letter also serves as a strong reminder that while other crises have taken over the headlines, the opioid epidemic continues unabated.*

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS I'm hopeful our state will have begun its rebirth from COVID-19. Not too fast mind you, but rather a logical and rational approach...It may take months or even years for our society to fully deal with the coronavirus, but we will. A vaccine will be invented and like so many other killer viruses, COVID-19 will wither on the vine and die.

Unfortunately, our journey to health as Arkansans will not end with a COVID-19 vaccine. No, there's another killer on the loose and it hasn't yet been fully addressed. We will be leaving the virus pandemic but remain in a deadlier, more long-standing epidemic that in many instances hasn't been dealt with. I speak of course, of the epidemic of opioid addictions, overdoses and deaths. By the time you read this my 23-year-old son¹ will have been dead from such an overdose for nearly a month. Four or five weeks will have passed since he collapsed, passed out and drifted into death. He is now part of a lost generation. His best friend suffered the same fate just



over two years ago. And then, horrifically, two days after Wells died another good friend he met in rehab passed away. My son Wells suffered so much after his best pal died. He lived an anguished life over the past 24 months. Near-death experiences from overdoses certainly weren't everyday occurrences with him but they happened often enough that we knew what the drill was. We knew the need for chest compressions, counting one, two, three, four while listening to the neutral calm voice of the 911 dispatcher. We knew that help would arrive quickly. We knew Narcan could be administered with near-miraculous results. We also knew it was too late this last time. I tried. Nearly two minutes of me pushing on his chest. Oh, how I tried.

Many other friends of my children have died. I can quickly count five without even trying. With just a little effort the number gets closer to 10. It happens so frequently



that there's almost a callousness from the remainder of us. "Oh, there's another one. When will it end?" Well, when will it end? How many people must die? Like the coronavirus, opioid addiction knows no boundaries. Wealthy, poor, educated or not, male, female. If you know a group of people under 30 or 35 there is a high likelihood that someone in that group has an opioid problem. Lots of them start on pills, "hydros" and "oxys."² Some don't do pills but try other things. Regardless, in all too many instances black tar heroin is just plain cheap. Just a few dollars for a hit.

As I've said many times, the illegal drug manufacturing world cares nothing about the quality control of their product. Thus, it matters little that the concentration of the drug or the mixture with death traps like fentanyl are so high that death is a very real possibility even for the most casual of users. In some instances, what's sold as heroin may in reality be fentanyl. One may as well put a gun to their head if that's the case. That's a high that nobody recovers from. These drugs produce a high that ends in a pleading, screaming mother wanting her child back. They cause funerals attended by family torn to shreds by the death of a young person whose life had just barely begun. Grief so very profound that it hurts. It quite literally hurts in the chest as though a force so strong is tearing through the rib cage and brutalizing the heart. It is the worst possible thing to witness and be a part of. It is my reality, and it is the reality of my wife Alison. My dear precious spouse now faces motherhood with only three of her four children. She faces every waking minute without her baby boy. And she faces most sleeping minutes tortured with horrible visions and what ifs. That is the harsh, vicious, and brutal truth of the opioid addiction. That is our life now and forever more.

The combination of COVID-19 and opioids in Arkansas is a hell on earth. We are lucky however because we are assured by virtually every expert that a vaccine will be created for the virus and it likely will be done in record time. That would be a miracle for sure. But our society will continue with this plague of addiction caused by manu-

facturers and distributors placing profits before people. They value cold hard cash more than Wells, more than his friends and more than an entire generation. Amid our new normal of social distancing there is a new surge of fatal opioid overdoses. That's right, while taking precautions to stay away from the pandemic the epidemic is killing at a record pace. There are multiple reasons this is happening. Certainly, the stress and depression of being alone leads some away from sobriety and into the warm, welcoming death hug of heroin. For others the inability to get to daily or weekly sobriety meetings or church services pushes them to use again. And for those who use suboxone in their fight for sobriety the inability to get to the doctor or the clinic or both to get the prescription updated leads to the same dark place. I fear we'll see more suffering and more death. I fear for my children, your children and grandchildren. I fear for my grieving wife. I



The "unblended blended family:" Wells, Alison, Bliss, me, Franz and Colin.

fear for Wells' dad, his aunts and uncles and his grandparents.

All is not lost. There are some simple steps that can save lives. Learn CPR. Carry a dose of Narcan. Talk to your kids and their friends. More importantly, listen to your kids and their friends regardless of whether you like what you're hearing. The truth is often ugly and painful. Ignoring the truth is worse. Ignoring equals death, plain and simple. What else can be done?

Most of you good readers are familiar with the League's litigation efforts taken in conjunction with the Association of Arkansas Counties. As I'm writing the likelihood of a favorable settlement is beginning

A Virginia perspective: Using data to fight the opioid epidemic

By Carlos Rivero, Chief Data Officer for the Commonwealth of Virginia's Office of Secretary of Administration

LOSING A LOVED ONE under any circumstance is a tragedy especially when it's preventable.

This is why the Framework for Addiction Analysis and Community Transformation (FAACT) is focused on empowering communities and individuals to make the most informed, data-driven decisions possible. The work we started in Winchester has enabled community leaders to quickly respond to overdose events, focus substance use outreach efforts at the right time in a child's life based on "age of first use" data, and determine the relative intensity of different substances based on the time between "age of first use" and "age of first interaction with law enforcement". Further, the platform provides members of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition the intelligence they need to properly respond to the opioid epidemic including acquiring additional resources from a private foundation to establish innovative programs like the Give Me a Reason (GMAR) drug prevention initiative. The goals of this program are to encourage parents to talk to their kids about drugs, identify early substance use, and intervene before more severe consequences occur. This program provides parents with an at-home testing kit that provides results in minutes and screens for 16 common drugs. The program empowers parents to take immediate action and take a positive stand against drug use.

This important work is now being expanded to the Roanoke and Southwest Virginia regions with plans to expand to four additional regions in the next two years.

to emerge from the fog and rhetoric that accompanies most large cases. Litigation seldom completely solves societal problems. Those problems are solved by the commitment and work of people on the front lines. It starts with parents, teachers, counselors, doctors, friends, clergy...this list goes on and on. Together we can solve this opioid epidemic. Together we can help those with addiction. COVID-19 will have an injectable vaccine soon. The opioid vaccine isn't in a tube with plunger and needle. We are the opioid vaccine. We need the dollars that a settlement may bring, for sure, but the reality is the citizens of this state have to fight this evil together. That and that alone will defeat this epidemic. We can win for Wells and every other person stricken with this plague and for every family and friend that is tortured by the loss of a loved one.

I've written many, many things in my life but this has been the hardest thing I've ever attempted. Strangely there's a small catharsis in seeing the words in black and white on my laptop screen. Not complete by any stretch of the imagination, but a start. Frankly, I don't think my family as a whole or individually will ever be the same, particularly Alison. Mothers do indeed have a stronger bond to children. I've seen the anguish up close and personal. She suffers because she carried him for nine months and nurtured him from infancy to manhood. She was a great mom to Wells and is a great mom to Franz, Bliss and Colin. I need to give credit where credit is due. Alison helped me by proofing this. The reality, however, is that we co-authored this column. I've done nothing more than repeat the many conversations she and I have had during the past two weeks and likely will have for the remainder of our lives.

As I conclude on this bright sunny day, I can see Alison and our dogs on our back deck. They are in the shade looking into the trees. It is a perfect day made for fishing or golfing, two of Wells' favorite hobbies. I think it's a small sign from above. Wells is no longer tortured by addiction and in that sunshine, there is hope that we can defeat both the pandemic and the epidemic.

Until next month, Peace.

¹Wells Curry Bratton came into my life in 2007 when I married Alison. He and his sister became instantly close with my sons and as our relationships deepened I simply referred to them as my children. My three boys and my daughter. Legally, Wells was my stepson, but his mother and I raised him with his father, giving him three parents. Recently one of Wells' friends described our family as the most "unblended blended family" she had ever seen. She meant that as a compliment noting that we were a family without notations of step or biological. Just a loving, caring family of six that is now down to five.

² Hydrocodone and Oxycodone.



Wells and his sister, Bliss.

VRSA: Celebrating 40 years of providing more than insurance

FOR THE VIRGINIA Risk Sharing Association this year began, as it did for so many of you, full of promise and plans. VRSA was ready to celebrate our 40th anniversary of providing comprehensive coverages, services, tools, and resources to Virginia's local governments.

However, 2020 had other plans in store and, like so many other organizations and people, VRSA had to pivot.

"If this year has taught us anything, it's that it is time to reimagine risk management," said VRSA Managing Director Steve Craig. "Our members are facing challenges today that no one had considered could happen in our lifetimes."

When most people think of risk management, they think about protecting employees' safety and property. However, Craig says, it is much more than that.

"Risk management – particularly enterprise risk management – looks at the whole picture and how everything intersects," observes Craig. "COVID-19 is the perfect example of how the impacts of one risk can ripple throughout every aspect of an organization – and it's planning for how to mitigate those enterprise-wide risks."

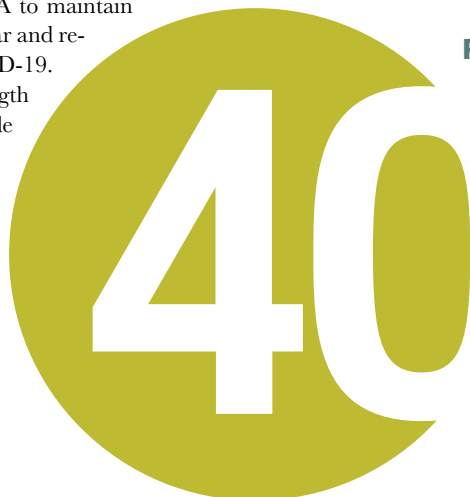
For VRSA, monitoring emerging risks and how they may impact members is standard procedure. Over the past 40 years, VRSA has developed a variety of tools, resources, coverages, and services to help ease the worries of our members so they can focus on what matters most: serving their communities.

So, while 2020 hasn't offered many reasons to celebrate, we here at VRSA want to take this opportunity to celebrate 40 years of doing things that help Virginia's localities in good years and help even more in the bad ones.

Reason to Celebrate #1 – Financial strength when its most needed

Among VRSA's core missions is to provide our members with financial stability through risk management. VRSA's financial strength enables the pool to manage claims and protect member employees and assets, as well as provide value-added services and resources. This strength has allowed VRSA to maintain stable rates from year to year and react to the impacts of COVID-19.

"This financial strength allowed us to quickly provide a 15 percent refund on members' annual 2019 – 2020 automobile liability and general liability contribution this spring," said Craig. "This helped address the immediate fiscal impacts of the pandemic on our members."



Reason to Celebrate #2 – Timely consulting services

As local governments faced unprecedented changes in response to COVID-19, VRSA's consulting specialists responded with assistance and training on a variety of topics. Our human resources specialist quickly provided training on the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and employer requirements and employee rights with COVID-19.

Our local government specialist worked directly with members on their response to COVID-19 – fielding questions on handling public meetings, public notice requirements, special event cancellations, and CARES Act funding eligibility and reporting requirements.

Our public safety specialist worked quickly and proactively with police members to help them address civil unrest in their communities by providing additional training on subjects such as duty to intervene in unreasonable force, arrestee restraint, and implicit bias during interactions with citizens and suspects.

And our communications specialist presented trainings on reopening communications and crisis communications in the time of COVID-19 and worked directly with members on issues related to communications to various audiences in times of civil unrest.

Reason to Celebrate #3 – Expanded risk management services

VRSA's public safety specialists, two of whom previously worked for Virginia Occupational Safety and Health (VOSH), reacted quickly to the VOSH Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS), putting together a training template for members as well as coordinating 26 ETS roundtables and two webinars on the subject.

VRSA now has five COVID-19 Infectious Disease Prevention Specialists, certified by the National Association of Safety Professionals (NASP). This has enabled our specialists to provide infectious disease risk assessments for members, classify worker exposure to infectious disease, develop risk reduction strategies, and assist members in building an Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan.

Reason to Celebrate #4 – New grant opportunities

Over the past ten years, the VRSA Risk Management Grant program has provided \$3 million in funding to strengthen risk management programs and help members promote their strategic goals.



This year, the VRSA Members' Supervisory Board increased the amount of grant funding available to members for the purchase of safety equipment, training, and education to expand risk management programs. Additionally, the board earmarked funds for educational scholarships to cover professional management, leadership, and governance training.

Reason to Celebrate #5 – Truly comprehensive coverages

Over the past 40 years, VRSA has continued to offer comprehensive coverages tailored to meet a wide variety of local government exposures to loss, including emerging issues, liabilities, and risks.

As members turned to VRSA this spring and asked, "What about COVID-19?" our answer remained the same: VRSA members were covered.

"Our primary liability policy does not contain any COVID-19 exclusions," notes Craig. "From a liability standpoint, we believe our members deserve to be protected against this unprecedented risk – and we have the financial strength to provide this coverage."

Reason to Celebrate #6 – Increased online training

In 2019, VRSA significantly increased the amount of in-person training offered to members – and in 2020 staff were on-track to exceed last year's numbers. Due to COVID-19, VRSA again pivoted, delivering more online training and content to ensure members continued to receive the training they needed while working from home or maintaining social distance.

Since March, VRSA has conducted 67 virtual engagements with members, ranging from online forums and roundtables, to webinars and training events – with more than 277 members in attendance. These offerings were in addition to courses available through the VRSA Online University and VRSA Public Safety Academy, which provide courses on a variety of subjects available online 24/7/365.

Reason to Celebrate #7 – Tailored technology and data analysis

Data is a core component in the effort to mitigate and reduce losses. Since 2015, VRSA has employed a full-time data analyst who tracks trends to ensure members have access to the data they need to inform their risk management decisions.

Additionally, VRSA has expanded our technology – such as our new OSHA tracking application launched this summer – to assist our members. The OSHA 300 Log Recording application imports workers' compensation claims data nightly and allows members to flag an incident as recordable or non-recordable.

VRSA also launched Insight, a strategic decision support application, that bridges the gaps between the strategic objectives of our members' organizations and the significant decisions needed to reach those objectives.

"Members make decisions everyday as they serve their communities – whether it is a decision impacting daily operations or those in response to new challenges, like COVID-19," observes Craig. "The new Insight application allows them to weigh each decision and its impact on communities and their strategic objectives."

Reason to Celebrate #8 – Investment in a devoted, experienced, professional staff

A hallmark of VRSA is the pool's professional staff, who are singularly devoted to providing outstanding customer service to our members. Not only are our staff focused on customer service, they are

also focused on improving their knowledge in their areas of expertise. Combined, our staff hold 79 designations such as Associate in Risk Management, Certified Playground Safety Inspector, Senior Professional in Human Resources, and many more.

VRSA staff is long-tenured, with 51 percent having more than 10 years of experience and 25 percent having more than 20 years. Moreover, VRSA is making it a priority to ensure the next generation of employees is prepared to provide the same level of service our members have come to expect.

Since 2017, VRSA has hired 16 new team members, reflecting both growth in the program and retirements of long-tenured staff. As a result, our staff is younger, more educated and more diverse than ever.

"We are taking full advantage of our younger workers' desire to participate and make a difference in the strategic direction of the pool," said Craig.

Over the past few years, VRSA has formed several employee committees to enhance our operations and to better serve members. These include committees working on Diversity and Inclusion, Employee Engagement, Enterprise Risk, Website Improvement, and VRSA 2030 Strategic Foresight/Strategic Planning.

Craig explains how these committees serves the organization and its members well: "The diverse life experiences our employees bring to work provides us expanding-problem solving, better decision making, increased productivity, better customer service and enhanced employee development, engagement and retention – all of these things benefit our membership."

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.*

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Grants distributed each year to members for the purchase of safety equipment, training, and education to expand risk management programs.



g More Than Insurance

More Than Insurance

Comprehensive Coverages tailored to meet a wide variety of local government exposures to loss, including emerging issues, liabilities and risks.



Online training through the VRSA Online University and Public Safety Academy, as well as through webinars and virtual engagements.



Technology and Data Analytics to assist members in analyzing and reducing losses, meeting OSHA requirements and strategic decision making.



Professional staff holding 79 designations singularly devoted to providing outstanding customer service to our members.



VRSA

Virginia Risk Sharing Association

So many screens, so little time

THERE WAS A TIME (say, anytime before March) that the idea of attending, much less planning and producing, a virtual conference would have sounded like something I'd prefer to skip. I spend enough time parked in front of a computer as it is, why would I want to substitute the opportunity to go to a new setting to be with people for the all too familiar experience of sitting at my desk looking at a screen?

Oh, right. The pandemic.

When VML realized that an in-person annual conference wasn't in the cards this year we went through all the stages of grief. We denied the evidence that we couldn't have our conference in Norfolk as planned, then we got angry and threw our coffee mugs against the wall. Later, while shopping for new coffee mugs online, we reasoned that maybe we could bargain with the pandemic to go away for a few days in October; that wouldn't be too much to ask, right? When the futility of reasoning with a global pandemic became apparent, we got really sad; but only just for a minute. Then we put away the tissues and accepted the situation. We resolved to make the best of it by fully embracing the possibilities of a virtual event to make it a success.

In years past, working on the conference meant also being able

to look forward to spending time with our members and all the great people who help us make it happen. Without that light at the end of the tunnel, planning this year's conference seemed just a bit harder.

But the VML staff pulled together as a team to put everything in place as the clock ticked down to the first day of the virtual conference on October 7. And, just like an in-person event, it seemed like there would not be enough time to get everything finished and, also like an in-person event, when it finally started it wasn't the VML staff nor the folks helping us that made it a success – it was the attendees, speakers, sponsors and exhibitors all bringing their best selves to the conference. This year that meant not only participating and engaging each other, it meant embracing the “virtualness” of it all and overcoming the challenges of distance and technology to do what we always do: learn, socialize, get some work done and have a little fun.

So, thank you! Your conference was time well spent (even if it was spent in front of a screen).



Congratulations and thanks to the co-winners and co-runners up of our virtual exhibit hall scavenger hunt!

Co-Winners

Travis Haynes
Councilman, City of Galax

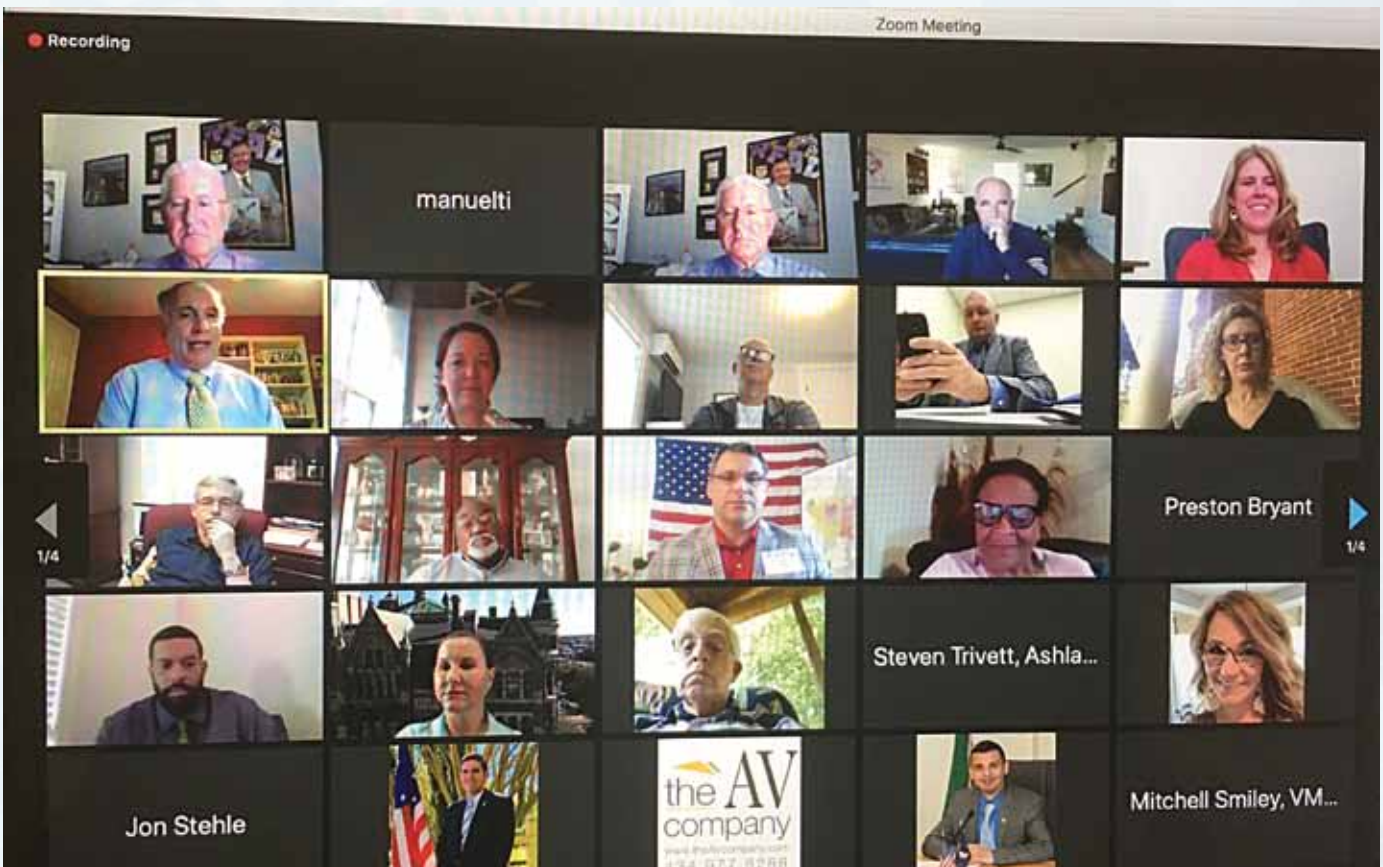
Shayla Rickard
Councilor, Town of Middletown

Co-Runners Up

Michael Stallings
Manager, Town of Smithfield

Julia Blackley-Rice
Clerk, Town of Warsaw





Champion Awards

Locality: City of Falls Church

Category: Public Safety

Recognizing: Lt. Ed Lancaster,
City of Falls Church Police Department

Lt. Lancaster worked overtime without extra pay to build protective barriers and a sanitizing station in the police parking garage. As the police department's Safety Officer, he has instituted a weekly "Text Check" on all employees. Every Sunday since March, Lt. Lancaster brings the day shift lunch and the night shift dinner which he pays for himself. On top of these and numerous other acts of kindness, Lt. Lancaster has continued to do a fantastic job as the Threats Assessment Officer.

Locality: City of Falls Church

Category: Communication

Recognizing: City's Public Information Office

During the COVID-19 pandemic the two employees of the Public Information Office worked tirelessly to ensure the health of safety of the community at large. These employees went above and beyond to develop a foundation for the community that is reliable, expedient, and easy to use. New methods developed include establishing a central source for information located on the website homepage to show graphs and information from the Governor, increased professional connections with the Fairfax Health Department, newsletters, meetings, and live streams.

Locality: City of Falls Church

Category: Business and Economic Stability

Recognizing: City of Falls Church Economic
Development Office

Working virtually, the three staff members of the Economic Development Office continued to work hard on many projects including creating liaisons with local businesses, working with police to improve safety, working closely city council, promoting businesses, and keeping streetlights on to honor emergency workers. Using allocated funding, the staff created emergency grants, produced "Grab and Go" banners for the city, increased the part time staff, added hand sanitizer stations, and a developed a series of messaging tactics.

Locality: City of Falls Church

Category: Continuity of Operations

Recognizing: COVID-19 Planning Team

The COVID-19 Planning Team consists of various departments such as human resources, housing and human services, parks and recreation, library, IT staff, and OEM.

Each department brought a unique aspect to the team to help keep the community happy, safe, and happy. Human resources focused on creating a better sick leave program. Housing and human services protected PPE and payments. Parks and recreation opened summer camps. The library became a city-wide resource for everyone. IT staff became the new essential workers as the entire city went virtual. Lastly, OEM provided structure and organization.



Locality: City of Fredericksburg

Category: Education and Youth Initiatives

Recognizing: Jennifer Casarotti

On March 16 when schools shut down, Parks and Recreation knew that the kids needed a way to stay entertained while staying home safe. So, Jenny Casarotti created "Camp@Home" – a program for K-5 children focused on art, nature, STEM, crafts, and physical activity. 200 boxes with twenty-five different items in them were sent out with instructions, supplies, and a special t-shirt. Jenny hosted a remote

program five days a week going through the boxes and demonstrating how to make what was inside. With her "out of the box" thinking, Jenny helped to provide a unique experience for the community.

Locality: City of Fredericksburg

Category: Continuity of Operations

Recognizing: City's IT Department, Attorney, and
Clerk of Council

In response to health restrictions surrounding gatherings, the IT Department, Attorney, and Clerk of Council developed and implemented solutions to ensure that the City Council and others could meet remotely while aligning with the proper FOIA guidelines and the Records Retention Act, meet public comment protocols, allow reasonable authentication of participants, and offer a non-digital means of participation. All done while making it replicable for other boards. The safety and flexibility that this provides the organizations continues to be very significant.

Locality: City of Fredericksburg

Category: Economic and Business Stability

Recognizing: Fredericksburg Department of
Economic Development and Tourism

The Department of Economic Development and Tourism has been responsive to the needs of the community amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been done through launching a new website, putting together a COVID resource page, running small grant and business programs, continued the weekly YouTube series "Freehling Finds," blog posts, revamped the visitor center, and designed a line of face coverings.

Locality: City of Fredericksburg

Category: Risk Management

Recognizing: Executive Leadership Team, Safety and
Risk Management, and Public Facilities

The City of Fredericksburg pulled together a team to identify and implement efforts to limit the risks of COVID-19. To follow CDC guidelines Public Facilities quickly implemented cleaning and sanitization of high touch surfaces throughout the day and provided hand sanitizing stations throughout the building. The City Manager closed all city buildings to the public and created a staggered work schedule. The Safety and Risk Managers toured all city buildings and developed assessments based on the work zones and how social distancing regulations had been implemented.

Locality: City of Fredericksburg

Category: Public Safety

Recognizing: Fredericksburg Fire Department

The operations of the Fredericksburg Fire Department have continued unaffected by the pandemic because of various department measures including things such as no outside work allowed, adjusting staffing, daily health screenings, and vehicle decontaminations. City wide emergency actions included the declaration of local emergency, recommendation of limiting technology use, and daily COVID briefings from the Fire Chief. The staff accepted all the challenges as necessary to run smooth during a challenging time.

Locality: City of Hampton

Category: Communication

Recognizing: City of Hampton Mayor, City Manager and Marketing and Outreach Department

The City of Hampton is known for its citizen engagement. However, as COVID hit, it became evident that there needed to be a dramatic shift to virtual channels. Mayor Donnie Tuck, City Manager Mary Buntin, and the Marketing Outreach team began to host frequent Facebook Live updates on COVID and city operations. The first Facebook Live video occurred on March 17 with 1,430 engagements. Live question and answers quickly became extremely popular with a panel of fire fighters, police officers, schools, council members, and the health department. Besides COVID updates this platform was used to conduct a series titled “Standing in Solidarity” to address racial justice, police bias, and inequality.

Locality: City of Harrisonburg

Category: Communication

Recognizing: Harrisonburg COVID-19 Rapid Response Team

The COVID-19 Rapid Response Team has distributed vital information to thousands of residents with messaging in various languages created for specific the communities. This included going door to door in neighborhoods with spikes, placing flyers in lunch bags, sending direct mailers, and providing interpreters at the Virginia Department of Health testing sites. Languages included Spanish, Arabic, Kurdish, Russian, Swahili, and French. Team members are Paul Helmuth, Michael Parks, Amy Snider, Jessica Newman, Welcoming Harrisonburg Council, Erin Stehle, Katie Caler, Brianna Petit, Charles Grubbs, Vice Mayor Sal Romero, Mayor Deanna Reed, Ande Banks, and Eric Campbell.

Locality: City of Harrisonburg

Category: Continuity of Operations

Recognizing: Harrisonburg City Manager’s Office

With municipal buildings closed, the city quickly implemented a new secure virtual meeting process to ensure public meetings continued in a safe and accessible manner. When it became obvious that communication between residents and city officials was vital, a call-in system with a caller que was implemented to continue to allow residents to speak during public hearings and public comment period.



A two-person team of city staff manned the phones to ensure the system ran smoothly. Staff members are Pam Ulmer, Amy Snider, Eric Campbell, Ande Banks, and Michael Parks.

Locality: City of Harrisonburg

Category: Economic and Business Stability

Recognizing: Harrisonburg Economic Development - Brian Shull and Peirce Macgill

Harrisonburg has a vibrant diverse business community- bolstered by the state’s first Culinary District. However, when COVID-19 hit Harrisonburg shops were forced to close and students were forced to go home destroying the thriving business community. To combat this devastation, the Disaster Loan Program went into effect with a zero-interest loan available for businesses. Harrisonburg also made the decision to forgive every dollar of loan funding to alleviate stress from the community.

Locality: City of Harrisonburg

Category: Public Safety

Recognizing: Harrisonburg Fire & Police Departments

When the City of Harrisonburg started experiencing a rise in COVID-19 cases, the Harrisonburg Fire and Police Departments jumped to action to connect with residents to make sure they had everything they needed. Both departments masked up and went door to door with care packages. Mayor Deanna Reed pushed a daily campaign asking for hand-made masks, one part of a series of efforts to support residents. Department members include Paul Helmuth, Travis Kari-cofe, Erin Stehle, Katie Caler, Brianna Petit, Mayor Deanna Reed, Charles Grubbs, Don Klotz, Mike Gangloff, and Michael Parks.

Locality: City of Harrisonburg

Category: Education and Youth Initiatives

Recognizing: Chief Eric English, Lt. Charles Grubbs, Don Klotz, Mike Gangloff, Erin Stehle, Eric Campbell

The Harrisonburg Police Department created a Community Convoy which goes through a different section of Harrisonburg every week blowing horns, blaring sirens, and waving to the happy kids and other community members. As popularity grew, teachers and staff from local schools got involved as a way to see students after the sudden end to the school year. The Community Convoy was even used as a graduation ceremony for the seniors.

Locality: City of Harrisonburg

Category: Community Health

Recognizing: Eric Campbell, Ande Banks, Amy Snider, Gerald Gatobu, Paul Helmuth

A unique collaboration was created between the City of Harrisonburg, James Madison University, homelessness service agencies, and local hotels to develop and implement emergency homeless shelters and a hotel isolation program for potentially ill homeless individuals. With cold weather on the horizon and the continuation of COVID, this collaboration continues to serve a critical function.

Champion Awards

Locality: City of Petersburg

Category: Economic Business Stability

Recognizing: Darnetta Tyus

The Deputy City Manager of Petersburg, Darnetta Tyus, is responsible for the overall management of one of the CARES Act programs to benefit the Petersburg business community. Close to 200 businesses applied for assistance. The city distributed one-time grants based on need ranging from, \$500 to \$5,000. Through a series of eligibility criteria, the city has provided much needed assistance to the business community.

Locality: County of Goochland

Category: Education and Youth Initiatives

Recognizing: Goochland County Public Schools - School Librarians

When schools closed in March, Goochland County School Librarians, with the support of administrators and the Transportation Department, created the Goochland County Public Schools Summer Bookmobile. This program helped get books into students' hands. The bookmobile makes six stops each trip in coordination with the county sponsored free food service. Children who visit the bookmobile select up to three books to keep for free and an icy pop!

Locality: City of Portsmouth

Category: Community Health

Recognizing: Franklin D. (Frankie) Edmondson

In April 2020, the Portsmouth Commissioner of Revenue recorded a special message asking the community to continue to stay engaged with local leaders during the pandemic. Community Health Commissioner Edmondson encouraged the community to keep safe and healthy as well. In doing so, Edmondson positioned his office as a resource and point of contact. This heartfelt message provided much needed assurances and comfort to the community.

Locality: City of Portsmouth

Category: Communication

Recognizing: Office of the Commissioner of the Revenue, Portsmouth, VA

The Office of the Commissioner of Revenue sent out COVID-19 resource and recovery packets with a fact sheet, information on relief from penalties and interest, instructions on how to apply for an economic injury disaster loan, and a personal message from Commissioner Edmondson.

Locality: City of Portsmouth

Category: Continuity of Operations

Recognizing: Office of the Commissioner of the Revenue

Commissioner Edmondson empowered his office to make special appointments with Department of Motor Vehicles customers and taxpayers so they could complete necessary transactions when otherwise not able to do so. This was made possible through customized office schedules and a willing team.



Locality: Town of Middleburg

Category: Economic and Business Stability

Recognizing: Town Council

The Town Council introduced the Restaurant Support Program in which participating restaurants agreed to remain open at least four days a week for two meal periods for the entire month. In return, these restaurants received grants and had vouchers for their

business distributed throughout the community. As a result, 13 of the 19 participating restaurants had Business Support Grant funds in hand the first week of April. Overall, the Town invested nearly \$400,000 in community support during the first two months of COVID-19.

Locality: Town of Vinton

Category: Risk Management

Recognizing: Town of Vinton Safety Committee

The Town of Vinton Safety Committee engaged Senior Safety Consultant Edward Shelton and Public Safety Specialist Gary Dillon to conduct a physical site assessment to determine workplaces vulnerable to violence. The town council implemented emergency funds to help improve security. The actions of the Vinton Safety Committee and the support of the Town Mayor, Council, and Manager have shown a committed approach to building a lasting culture of safety.

Locality: Town of West Point

Category: Economic and Business Stability

Recognizing: Town of West Point, Town Council, Town Manager, and Town Staff

The Town of West Point created the "Helping Our Pointer Economy" (H. O. P. E.) initiative which offers a \$50 voucher book to each household to help alleviate financial stress. The town reimbursed the business after a purchase was made with the voucher. Households that did not need the vouchers were given the chance to donate theirs to a local non-profit that provides food and support to the West Point community.

Locality: Town of Woodstock

Category: Economic and Business Stability

Recognizing: Katie Mercer

Katie Mercer, Woodstock's Director of Marketing and Events, worked overtime to launch several social media campaigns highlighting citizen and visitor access to local businesses. Among her many contributions, she also worked with the Woodstock Enhancement Promotions Committee to create safe and fun activities for families, served on the Small Business Grant Committee, coordinated a COVID-19 safe drive up fireworks display for the Fourth of July, and, with the Community Development Office, worked with small businesses on an outdoor furniture and outdoor heater loan program.

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www.nlc.org

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www.state.nokidhungry.org/virginia

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Virginia Institute of Government, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service



Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

Virginia Institute of Government

The Virginia Institute of Government (VIG) was established in 1994, by the Virginia General Assembly, to provide training, technical assistance, and information resources to its member local governments. Due to the changing needs of Virginia communities over the last quarter century, the Institute has expanded beyond its original mission. The goal of VIG is to become the central navigator for local governments to assist in building governance capacity and developing dynamic leaders at all levels.

www.vig.coopercenter.org

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VRSA

Virginia Risk Sharing Association

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www.visitloudoun.org

Visit Norfolk



Norfolk, Virginia is a city on the water, but never watered down. Built on character, by characters, we're a melting

pot of people, cultures, and ideas that welcome a challenge as freely as we welcome visitors to our one-of-a-kind community. We invite you to take a chance for a change. Find inspiration on our shores. Explore our neighborhoods. Share our love of art. Experience our local flavors. Walk in our history. And never be afraid to loosen your sails and go wherever the wind takes you — a little change will do you good.

www.visitnorfolk.com

VML/VACo Finance



VML/VACo Finance was established in 2003 by the Virginia Municipal League (VML) and Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) to address many of the financial needs of Cities, Counties, Towns, School Divisions, and Authorities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. We pool the resources of local governments in order to provide superior financial services at lower cost. Our programs are designed to benefit governmental entities of every size and financial strength, including the entire range of local governments represented within the memberships of VML and VACo, as well as the school divisions, authorities, and other governmental entities that provide essential services to their constituents.

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A Norfolk state of mind.

Share your local pride and holiday spirit with a handmade ornament!

LOCALLY CRAFTED ORNAMENTS at the Executive Mansion are back by popular demand. Please join us in celebrating what makes each Virginia city, town and county special.

Previously nearly 200 localities contributed stunning handmade ornaments to adorn the holiday trees at the Executive Mansion. Thousands of visitors from across the world toured the mansion and viewed the ornaments, learning about the diverse heritage of the Commonwealth's cities, towns, and counties.

The tree was so popular that the Governor and First Lady have asked VML to again collect local heritage ornaments from Virginia cities and towns. (Our friends at the Virginia Association of Counties will be collecting ornaments from counties.)

Each locality may submit one hand-crafted ornament that uniquely represents their community. You also may reuse an ornament sent previously if the ornament is still in displayable condition. The guidelines for making and submitting ornaments are below and have been slightly adjusted to previous years.

With the health and safety of all in mind this year we will not be physically hosting a holiday Open House. We encourage everyone to stay tuned to our social media pages to see their ornaments featured throughout the season. Please visit executivemansion.virginia.gov or follow @FirstLadyVA on Facebook and Twitter.

To participate

Step 1: Email Manuel Timbreza, mtimbreza@vml.org to confirm your entry. In the body of the email please note the name of your city, town or county along with the contact person who will be coordinating the project.

Step 2: Handmade ornaments may be submitted to VML no later than **November 17, 2020**. They can be mailed to:

**Virginia Municipal League
ATTN: Manuel Timbreza
P.O. Box 12164
Richmond, VA 23241**

2020 Ornament guidelines

- Each participating locality may submit **one** ornament.
- The Executive Mansion suggests a depiction of some unique feature that is specific to your community, such as a historic home, a noted person, a natural feature, an animal or plant from the region, etc. with the understanding the overall theme this year will be Home for the Holidays.
- The Executive Mansion prefers hand-made ornaments as opposed to purchased ornaments.
- The Executive Mansion has asked to keep the ornament for future use.
- Examples of materials that could be used for creating the ornament include clay, glass, shells, fabric, wood, found objects, and objects from nature.
- The ornament should be no larger than 6 inches in any dimension.
- Please no battery operated ornaments or any weighing more than 1.5 ounces or they will not be able to be displayed on the trees.
- The finished ornament should include the name of the locality, year and artist on the back or bottom.
- The artist/artisan should reside in or near the locality. Seek artists in your community at local colleges or societies or guilds for arts, woodworking, glass making, etc.
- Deadline for submitting the ornament is **Tuesday, November 17, 2020**.
- We welcome you to phone or email with any questions so that we can work with you on what we hope will be a fun and creative project that displays our Virginia pride. Please feel free to contact the VML or VACo office as appropriate or you may also contact the Executive Mansion at 804-371-2642 or executivemansion@governor.virginia.gov.

Thank you for helping us showcase the best of our Commonwealth!



CITY OF NORFOLK

CARES T.E.A.M. helps former prisoners realize a better life

A YEAR AGO, AFTER he returned to Norfolk from a prison sentence, Thomas Hurtt lived in a homeless shelter. With no plan and no prospects, he headed to Norfolk's Department of Human Services to apply for food benefits and to attend a job fair.

That day changed his life.

"They informed me of the prisoner re-entry program," Hurtt said. "To reduce recidivism, give people a chance coming out of incarceration to apply skills."

Within weeks, Norfolk's Prisoner re-entry CARES T.E.A.M. connected with Hurtt.

CARES T.E.A.M. staff enrolled Hurtt in classes to prepare his resume, hone his interview skills, brush up on decision-making skills, and complete a personality assessment. Completing that course meant Hurtt qualified for funding to enroll in classes at Tidewater Community College to earn his commercial driver's license.

He graduated, passed his licensing test, and landed a good-paying job as a dump truck driver that will provide him benefits and a plan for retirement.

"My lifestyle didn't always serve to plan for the future," said Hurtt, who is 54, with a graying beard around an impish grin. He credits the

CARES T.E.A.M. staff with helping him "get prepared to be structured. To be responsible for being somewhere on time. To check my level of commitment – how bad did I want it. It helped refocus my determination to change my direction."

The acronym T.E.A.M stands for the benchmarks that the prisoner re-entry program helps its clients to reach:

1. **Transition forward**
2. **Engage more**
3. **Achieve independence**
4. **Move beyond**

From pilot site to statewide use

Eleven years ago, Norfolk became a pilot site for a new statewide partnership between the Virginia Departments of Social Services and Corrections intended to reduce recidivism by providing support services and a roadmap to success for people returning to their communities following justice system involvement.

Madonna Flores, the family services supervisor who oversees Norfolk's CARES T.E.A.M., said the effort began by restructuring and tapping into existing resources.

"Staff would go with probation officers to the prisons," Flores said. "And they would get to know the people ahead of time to improve the transition home."

Now, re-entry programming is mandated statewide. The moment someone arrives in prison, steps are taken to begin preparing them to return home. This shift in philosophy – from punishment to preparation – has paid off. In February, the state Department of Corrections announced that Virginia's recidivism rate of about 23 percent was the lowest in the United States for the fourth year in a row.



(L-R) Family Services Supervisor Madonna Flores, and Self Sufficiency Specialists Sheila London and Jason Ewers.

Flores said the program is ready to expand, to support even more people who need the services it provides. The definition of "justice-involved" has grown to include those not only just returning home from incarceration but also people who were released from incarceration in the more distant past. The CARES T.E.A.M. also serves adults with child support cases who are non-custodial parents, as well as youth and young adults who are transitioning out of foster care.

Because the unit is housed within the Department of Human Services, Flores and her staff can connect clients with a full network of supports.

"We will be here if you need help," Flores said.

As part of this expansion of services, Flores and her team recently added the CARES – Career and Readiness Employment Services – to their group's name.

Norfolk leads the way with meaningful life changes

Jessica Lee, the reentry services administrator for the Department of Corrections (DOC), observes that Norfolk, with one of the the longest-running and largest re-entry programs in the state, has led the way with a broad array of services and community connections.



Program participant Keri Ingram.



Program participant Thomas Hurtt.

“There’s a level of embracing the returning citizen in Norfolk that starts from the top down,” Lee said. “The DOC and the leadership in the agencies have made it clear: we are going to support this population and welcome them home.”

Keri Ingram felt that support when she connected with Norfolk’s CARES T.E.A.M. Following misdemeanor convictions, she returned to Norfolk but struggled to find her footing. Then her therapist pointed her to re-entry services.

“People see a criminal background and think you are a bad person,” Ingram said. She sighed, and pushed back her long blond hair as she spoke. “I was applying for jobs...and feeling like I was dirt on the bottom of someone’s shoe.” Employers saw her conviction, she said, and passed. Her frustration mounted.

“You don’t understand who I really am,” she thought. “I would be a huge asset to your company. Just give me a chance.”

Flores said Ingram’s refrain compels her and her team every day to show this population that someone cares about them beyond the mistakes they have made.

“We are just really trying to take the approach of letting people know they are not alone,” Flores said. “They still have worth, too.”

Jason Ewers, a Self-Sufficiency Specialist with the CARES T.E.A.M., is the case manager for both Hurtt and Ingram. He has worked with the City of Norfolk for about five years. For Hurtt, Ingram, and all his clients, Ewers says that it’s important to meet them where they are and to be truthful and honest. For each person it’s necessary to work to uncover their hidden talents, build on hard skills to identify what’s already there and what needs to be added to get to their desired destination.

Ingram, for example, enrolled in the Gateway Academy, which provided her with intensive courses in interview skills and refining her resume. It also began to rebuild her confidence.

“We have to do our best to stand out above the average and out of the norm,” Ingram said. She had education, skills and a strong work ethic, but Ewers and the team gave her more. “They gave us good verbiage. I knew my resume needed some love, but I didn’t know how much it needed until they revamped mine,” she said. “They teach you to be mentally sound. To recognize your surroundings and how others will perceive you. That it’s OK. You’re no different, no better or worse, you had a mishap. You can stand firm and sound and be confident...they brought back confidence. That’s huge.”

Ingram is now enrolled in classes to obtain certifications in information technology and computer support services. She is preparing to take her first certification exam. And, like, Hurtt, Ingram views the certifications as the first step toward good wages and benefits – and a future with promise. She owes that to Ewers and the prisoner re-entry CARES T.E.A.M., she said.

“Look what they’ve done,” Ingram said. “They don’t even take credit for it. They say we’re here, use us. And boy have I.”

“Sometimes it’s so easy to get caught up in the work in and of itself we don’t take the time to reflect,” Ewers said, “to step back and really look at those success stories where someone has put in the work and we can see real meaningful life change.”

Building resilience one person at a time

In September, Jason Ewers shared a moment with Thomas Hurtt that brought into focus his effort and all the services provided by the program.

Hurtt and Ewers had been working together for more than a year, and Hurtt was within weeks of obtaining his CDL. But a court fine in another state created an obstacle. Ewers was lamenting the setback when Hurtt stopped him.

“A year and one day ago I came home from prison with two pairs of undergarments and two pairs of socks and the clothes on my back,” Ewers said Hurtt told him. “And look at me now.”

This reminded Ewers why he does the work he does. “I complimented him,” Ewers said. “I told him that when I look up the word ‘resilience’, there’s going to be your picture.”

The CARES T.E.A.M.’s efforts make for better residents and employees. But they also make for stronger, safer communities.

“It’s never to excuse the crime,” Flores said. “But if we want employers to give them a chance then we have to give them a chance... this strengthens our families. When people feel a part of something, they are less likely to tear it up. They want to build.”

Kathryn Hall, the chief probation and parole officer for the City of Norfolk, said people who return to their homes and neighborhoods from justice involvement “don’t have a big ‘F’ for felon on their foreheads.” She observes that “they are in the same lines as everyone else at the grocery store and the gas station.”

“The people we supervise are neighbors and friends,” Hall continues. “They are people just like you and me who have made bad decisions. We all want people to be self-sufficient and productive.”

With career fairs, skills training, counseling, education support, resume help and good old-fashioned kindness and encouragement, the CARES T.E.A.M. at Norfolk’s Department of Human Services helps its clients toward a better life.

“At the end of the day people are people,” Ewers said. “Helping them identify their value and what they have to offer – that’s at the heart of it.”

About the author: Michelle Washington is a public relations manager for the City of Norfolk.

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Virginia Housing offers a variety of grant and loan programs to help local governments, nonprofits and developers revitalize neighborhoods and solve workforce housing needs.

To learn more about partnering with us, contact us at Resources@VirginiaHousing.com.

