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Virginia Municipal League Announces Winners of the 2015 Achievement Awards in Local Government

Richmond – The Virginia Municipal League is pleased to announce the winners of its annual achievement awards for excellence in local government. The statewide competition recognizes innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, increased citizen participation and improved services to citizens.

There are seven awards given annually: five in population categories, a Communications Award and the President's Award, which is the top honor.

The awards will be presented VML Annual Conference banquet on Tuesday, October 6, 6:30 p.m.

This year's winner are:

President's Award (top honor) The Town of Halifax for the Banister River Gateway Project

Through this project, the Town of Halifax created a welcoming and informative entry into the historic Halifax County courthouse town. The Gateway includes a canoe/kayak launch area complete with pervious parking, stone walkways, landscaping, decorative lighting, and signage all in keeping with the historic character of the town. The gateway project was designed in concert with the Virginia Scenic Byway 360 Bridge Replacement project completed by VDOT in 2012, the designation of the Banister River as part of the Virginia State Scenic River System in 2013 and the inauguration of the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway in 2014.

Population under 5,000 The Town of Shenandoah for its community computer center

Last year, the Shenandoah Computer Center served 3,400 residents in a town with a population under 5,000. The Computer Center provides computer skills classes, technology seminars for small businesses and genealogy workshops. In 2013, the center provided classes to assist displaced workers from the closing of a local plant. The center also provides a full service print shop.

Population 5,000 – 10,000 The Town of Marion for a downtown economic revitalization program

Through the Pop-Up Marion program, the town provided start-up grants and a small business boot camp, which led to 19 new businesses and 87 new jobs in this small southwest Virginia town. After the Great Recession of 2008, the downtown vacancy rate grew to 17%. Since the Pop-Up Marion program, the vacancy rate has fallen below 5%, making it one of the most successful towns in the Virginia Main Street Program.

Population 10,000 – 35,000

The City of Fredericksburg for a gun give-back program

Fredericksburg's gun give-back program created an innovative alternative to a state regulated, buy-back program. As a motivator for the gun give-back, a local philanthropist offered a \$100 donation to charity for every gun turned in. Gun donors could choose from four charities to support. A total of 60 guns were turned in to be destroyed and \$6,700 was raised for four local charities. Several donors expressed heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to remove a gun from their home without the worry of it making its way back into the community.

Population 35,000 – 90,000

The Town of Leesburg for Dept. of Utilities customer service enhancements

The Leesburg Department of Utilities launched a new online service that helps residents to conserve water and save money. The online service allows customers to monitor their daily water usage, so they can better manage their water consumption. Customers can also sign up to receive automatic alerts when their water usage is higher than normal. This helps to identify potentially costly leaks and save customers thousands of dollars.

Population 90,000 +

The City of Portsmouth for an Area Report Card

Through this project, the City of Portsmouth created a quantifiable, data-driven method to assess calls for many types of city services – from fire and EMS to waste management to the city assessor – and is using that data to identify parts of the city needing more attention.

The Communications Award

The City of Virginia Beach for rebranding of the Virginia Beach Landfill and Resource Recovery Center
Through this project, Virginia Beach Waste Management Division changed the name of its landfill, adding Resource Recovery Center to its name, as part of a campaign to show residents the wider array of items they can recycle and donate at the facility. The campaign employed TV coverage, social media and other outlets to educate the public about discard options. In 2014, in addition to the traditional paper, glass and plastics recycling, the center recycled 230 tons of electronics and nearly 120 tons of household hazardous waste.

About the Virginia Municipal League

The Virginia Municipal League is a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan association of city, town and county governments established in 1905 to improve and assist local governments through legislative advocacy, research, education and other services. The membership includes all 38 cities in the state, 160 towns and eight counties.