

VIRGINIA

TOWN & CITY



Inside:

All Innovation Award winners

Annual Conference recap

Community Health and President's Award

Lynchburg's Live Healthy website and campaign transforms the community





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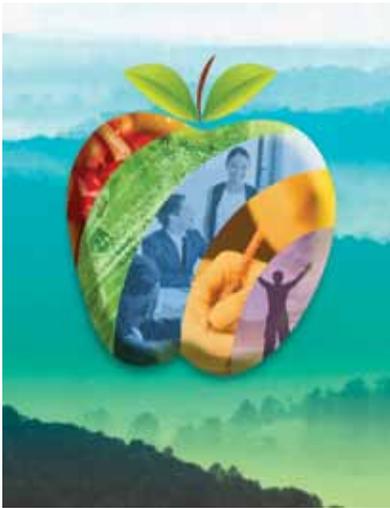
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About the cover

For transforming the health of city residents, Lynchburg’s healthy living campaign was awarded VML’s new Community Health Innovation Award and the 2017 President’s Award. Find inspiration from their success and that of the five other category winners.

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Highlights from Williamsburg

A recap of events at the 2017 Virginia Mayors Institute and the VML annual conference, held Sept. 30 through Oct. 3.

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Conference success sets stage for a great upcoming year

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE who participated in the Virginia Mayors Institute and VML Annual Conference. The in-person interaction of local government officials, speakers, and vendors is one of the biggest benefits. Members and businesses sharing exciting new programs and services gives participants ideas to implement in and improve their own communities. Many of you also valued this feature of the event, expressing a desire for more time to share issues and ideas at the next conference, a goal VML shares and will work to fulfill. If you have other ideas or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The conference also represented a change in VML's leadership, with Dr. Patricia Woodbury installed as the new president. I am very excited to help implement her lifelong-

learning initiative. As we demonstrate at events such as the conference, learning does not end when an individual completes high school or college. Education or training, whether for career or personal needs, benefits the individual and the greater society. Learn more about Dr. Woodbury and her platform in a future *Virginia Town & City* issue.



- Woodbury -

The Executive Committee also welcomed two new representatives at the conference: At-Large Member Bridge Littleton, a council member for the Town of Middleburg, and Urban Section Chair Shannon Kane, a council member for the City of Virginia Beach. Look forward to profiles on Mr. Littleton and Ms. Kane in VTC as well.



- Littleton -



- Kane -

At the VML Annual Business meeting, VML finalized its legislative program and updated its constitution, both of which are available on vml.org. I encourage you

to review the issues contained in the legislative program with your legislators. If you have questions or need more information, contact a member of VML staff.



See more photos from the conference beginning on page 9.

I left Williamsburg feeling motivated and excited about working with our members to improve life in Virginia. However, those feelings are tempered by recent challenges facing citizens and local governments across the United States.

How can VML assist our fellow towns, cities, and counties in need and the people they serve?

This question was sparked by a mayor who approached me Sunday at the conference to ask how VML could help hurricane victims in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The next morning, we woke to news of the Las Vegas massacre. In the weeks since the conference, wildfires in California have caused tremendous loss of life and devastation.

I have yet to come up with an idea that the organization can embrace, however I encourage all of us to personally help the victims of these tragedies in whatever way that we can. Giving money, donating blood, and volunteering our time are always good options and truly make positive impacts to those in need.

Being a local official is not an easy task in good times or bad. Thank you for your dedication to your jurisdiction and the betterment of the citizens of this Commonwealth. 



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- Nov. 15-18** NLC City Summit, Charlotte, N.C.
- Dec. 13** Leadership Academy transportation webinar
- Dec. 22** Deadline for “If I Were Mayor” essay contest
- Jan. 3, 2018** Finance Forum, Richmond
- Jan. 31, 2018** VML Legislative Day, Richmond

Farmville names Davis town manager

The Town of Farmville has hired **C. Scott Davis** as assistant town manager.



- Davis -

Most recently, Dr. Davis served as director of planning and community development for the City of Colonial Heights. From 2009-2015 he served as mayor of Colonial Heights after having served as councilman for six years. He has held various positions at Richard Bland College of William and Mary, including director of advancement and alumni relations and chief of police. Dr. Davis earned his Doctor of Law and Policy (LP. D.) from Northeastern University. He earned a Master of Public Administration degree from Virginia Commonwealth University, where he currently serves as an Adjunct Instructor.

Roanoke taps Texas manager for top position

Robert S. Cowell Jr. was appointed city manager of the City of Roanoke on Sept. 5. Cowell came to Roanoke from the City of Amarillo, Texas, where he had served as deputy city manager since 2013. He also served in a variety of leadership roles elsewhere in Texas and in communities



- Cowell -

in the Midwest. Cowell received a B.S. from St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo. and an M.S. in urban planning from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. He is a credential manager with the International City/Council Management Association; an AICP certified urban planner with the American Institute of Certified Planners; and a CNU-A accredited member with the Congress for the New Urbanism.

Newport News names new library director

Sonia Alcantara-Antione has been named director of libraries and information services for the City of Newport News. Alcantara-Antione has more than 10 years of experience in library management, educational programming, and community services in Virginia Beach and Baltimore. She began her new position Sept. 18, replacing former director Izabela Cieszynski who retired earlier this year after 34 years of service.



- Alcantara-Antione -

New director for Norfolk library

Lynn Clements is the new executive director of Norfolk’s Slover Library. Clements comes to Norfolk from Virginia Beach where she served as the director of aquarium and museums for more than 15 years. Clements previously served as the chief executive officer of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Center and its Foundation.

Warner appointed Bedford manager

The Town of Bedford has appointed **Barrett (Bart) Warner** as town manager.



- Warner -

Warner, who has been acting town manager, came to Bedford as director of planning and community development in 2000. Prior to that, he served as assistant planning director and planning director for two communities in North Carolina. He also has been an adjunct professor of political science at Central Virginia Community College. A native of Richlands, Warner is a graduate of Virginia Tech and received a Master of Public Administration from UNC Charlotte.

Woodbury elected chair of Hampton Roads transportation commission

Councilwoman **Dr. Patricia Woodbury** has been elected chair of the Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads, the governing body of Hampton Roads Transit (HRT). Her term began July 1 and ends June 30, 2018. Hampton Roads Transit is the public transit provider for Hampton Roads and runs daily bus, light rail, ferry, express bus, and paratransit services for six regional cities – Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach. Dr. Woodbury was first appointed to serve on the TDCHR Board in 2008.



- Woodbury -

Petersburg hires deputy city manager

Darnetta K. Tyus has been named deputy city manager and director of community affairs for the City of Petersburg. Tyus most recently served as the manager of community outreach and engagement for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) in Washington, D.C. She holds a BS in commerce with a major in accounting from DePaul University and a MBA with a focus in finance from Keller Graduate School of Management.



- Tyus -

Amherst manager becomes administrator in Madison

The Madison County Board of Supervisors has selected **Jack Hobbs** as county administrator. Hobbs had served as the town manager for the Town of Amherst since 1992. Hobbs holds a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from Virginia Tech, a Master of Business Administration from The College of William and Mary, and a Master of Engineering in systems engineering from the University of Virginia. He is certified as a credentialed manager by the International City/

County Management Association (ICMA) and is a graduate of the University of Virginia’s Senior Executive Institute. Hobbs is licensed as a professional engineer in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Hobbs succeeds Dan Campbell, who retired Sept. 1.

Interim managers announced

Charles E. Dane has been named interim city manager in Hopewell, following the retirement of Mark Haley.

Amherst has selected **Peter Huber** to be its interim town manager. Huber retired in 2016 after 15 years as Pulaski county administrator.

Retirements

Dan Campbell, county administrator in Madison, retired Sept. 1. Hopewell City Manager **Mark Haley** also retired Sept. 1. **Bernie Caton**, legislative director for the City of Alexandria, is retiring after 22 years of service.

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New app helps Leesburg visitors explore

THE TOWN OF LEESBURG has a new walking tour app for iPhone and Android smartphones. The “Tour Leesburg” app guides visitors to various historic sites in downtown Leesburg and provides historical information about each site, along with historical images and maps. Users can follow the tour directions, visiting each site in numerical order, or opt to find sites near them using the map feature. In addition, users can choose to listen to recordings of each site’s information, rather than reading the text. Currently, there are two tours available on the app. Two additional tours are under development. Developed by Karleen Kovalcik, an intern with the Thomas Balch Library, the Tour Leesburg app uses the OnCell digital storytelling platform. The app is free from the App Store and Google Play.

New trail adds to attractions in downtown Hopewell

A NON-PROFIT GROUP has developed a master trail plan calling for a 22-mile trail from Chesterfield to City Point in Hopewell. The first leg of the trail planned by the Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR) will be in Hopewell and connect City Park and the downtown area to the City Marina.

This initial phase will stretch approximately 1,700 feet and offer beautiful views of the confluence of the Appomattox and James Rivers as well as native flora and fauna of the region. Educational outposts will provide learning opportunities for all ages in an interactive environment. The project also includes an extension of the existing City Park pier as a prominent fishing outpost.



The newly renovated City Park Playground will tie directly into the planned Hopewell Riverwalk providing further connection to downtown. The added recreational waterfront amenities will attract visitors from the region and continue to spur the waterfront and downtown development in the City of Hopewell.

The General Assembly, FOLAR, Hopewell City Council, and the Hopewell Manufacturer’s Association have pledged funding to the project. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

For links for more information, visit www.vml.org/vtc-resources.

Richmond on a roll with bike share launch

RICHMOND HAS A NEW bike sharing program, which Mayor Levar M. Stoney launched August 29.

RVA Bike Share is a public-private initiative for which plans have been in the works since 2012. The city was awarded a \$1,064,000 federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant in 2014 to start the program, supplementing \$280,000 in capital improvement funds made available by the city.

Richmond teamed up with Canada-based Bewegon Technologies Inc., an industry bike share leader, to supply

the bicycles and docking stations. The equipment will be maintained by Corps Logistics, a Baltimore-based firm owned and operated by military veterans.

The initial phase includes 220 eight-speed bikes and 20 docking stations located throughout the city. A second phase will double the fleet and include the addition of electric-assist bikes, helpful for the city's hills.

One-way trip and daily passes are available as well as weekly, monthly, and yearly memberships. For more information, visit rvabikes.com.



International cities adopt Norfolk resilience programs

THE CITY OF NORFOLK'S INNOVATIVE long-range planning and effort to encourage resident participation in flood reduction has caught on with two global powerhouses. The City of Sydney, Australia is using Norfolk's Vision 2100 process and the City of Paris, France is replicating Norfolk's Retain Your Rain program.



The cities made the announcement during the annual Urban Resilience Summit in New York City. Nearly 500 urban resilience leaders from cities around the world participated. The summit represented the largest gathering of urban resilience practitioners sharing innovative ideas and discussing potential solutions to common problems such as financing infrastructure and building resident cohesion. As one of the first 100 Resilient Cities, the City of Norfolk served as an advisor to new cities in the network, including Washington D.C. and Toronto.

"Norfolk continues to demonstrate its leadership in resilience. We believe our challenges present unique opportunities to build a stronger, more connected, collaborative, and creative community. It is gratifying to see that our efforts leave a path for others to follow," said Doug Smith, Norfolk city manager.

Adopted in November 2016, Vision 2100 designs the coastal community of the future. Vision 2100 provides a long-term strategy to address the challenges of sea level rise, infrastructure needs, and population growth. The American Planning Association Virginia Chapter recently recognized Vision 2100 as the 2016 Outstanding Planning Project in the Commonwealth.

Retain Your Rain uses small-scale green infrastructure projects on individual properties to hold rainwater where it falls. Retain Your Rain projects include rain gardens and rain barrels to help reduce the amount of water that flows into the stormwater system and reduce flooding on streets and in neighborhoods.

For links to more about Vision 2100, Retain Your Rain, and Norfolk's Resilient Strategy, visit www.vml.org/vtc-resources.

Roanoke County Fire & Rescue receives \$1 million grant

ROANOKE COUNTY HAS RECEIVED a \$1 million grant from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The grant will allow the hiring of 11 additional firefighters over a three-year period with Roanoke County funding 25 percent in the first two years and 65 percent in the final year. Roanoke County Fire & Rescue has for many years been challenged in meeting staffing levels while faced with increased needs for service. The department will utilize the 11 positions to ensure adequate emergency response capabilities. A recruit school scheduled to start in January 2018

will provide training and the new personnel will be assigned to stations beginning in May 2018.

The grant is part of the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Response (SAFER) program. For a link to more information about the SAFER program, visit www.vml.org/vtc-resources.





Counting down to 2020

U.S. Census Bureau needs your help

By Kelley Hope

THE DECENNIAL CENSUS is coming and April 1, 2020 is the big day. A true census count has multiple benefits for local governments, such as the allocation of federal funding. In 2015, more than 130 programs used Census Bureau data to distribute \$675 billion in funds. Census data also helps your community plan for future needs.

To prepare for the event, the United States Census Bureau is seeking your help.

Ensure the bureau has all addresses in your locality

Local governments can assist with the census preparation by reviewing addresses. Called the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Program, this effort ensures an accurate address list to reach every living quarter and associated population for inclusion in the census.

If your government lacks the resources to participate in LUCA, you can arrange for a higher level of government, such as a county, or an organization, such as a regional planning agency or council of governments, to conduct your review.

Dec. 15, 2017 is the deadline to register to participate in the LUCA Program. Training workshops on the process are underway now. The Census Bureau will mail materials to registered participants in Feb. 2018.

Encourage citizen participation

Another way to ensure an accurate tally of your citizens is by forming a complete count committee. This volunteer

group plans and implements outreach efforts to publicize the importance of the 2020 Census and encourage citizens to participate. A locally-formed committee is ideal for coordinating activities that will uniquely address the special characteristics of your community.

The committees work best when they include representatives from government agencies, education, business, religious organizations, and the media.

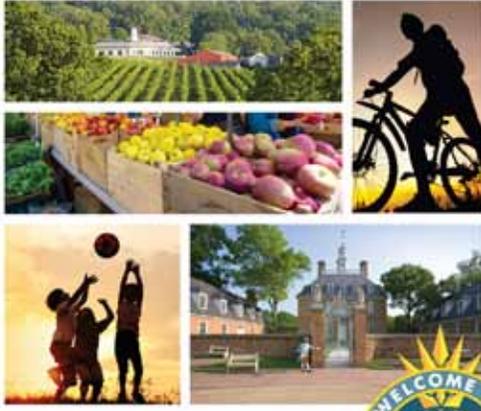
Your locality may wish to create a committee to increase the response rate for residents and make sure your community's data is accurate for the next ten years. The Census Bureau recommends complete count committees be formed by 2019. Find sample resolutions at vml.org/vtc-resources.

Census results affect a number of federally-funded programs, such as Title 1 grants to school districts; Head Start early childhood development programs; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food grants; public transportation; road rehabilitation and construction; and emergency aid. Ensure your locality gets an opportunity for federal dollars with an accurate census count in 2020.

For questions about the 2020 census, contact Ronald Brown, partnership specialist for the U.S. Census Bureau regional office that includes Virginia, at ronald.e.brown@census.gov or 215-704-4081. You also may visit www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/luca.html. 

About the author: *Kelley Hope is one of VML's communications specialists and editor of Virginia Town & City.*

Building Healthy Communities



VML Annual Conference
October 1-3, 2017

Highlights from Williamsburg

HUNDREDS OF GOVERNMENT representatives and vendors met in historic Williamsburg in October to celebrate successes and learn from each other. Against a beautiful Colonial backdrop, attendees examined challenging issues to improve their communities and tackle problems they face. From the results of the post-event survey, the biggest advantage attendees gain is information. Other notable benefits mentioned were networking opportunities and communication about funding, budgets, and the economy. Thank you to all who gave time to participate as attendees, speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors.



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1. Outgoing President Bob Coiner received a plaque award for his service from incoming President Dr. Patricia Woodbury. **2.** (L to R) Roanoke Vice Mayor Anita Price, Lexington City Manager Noah Simon, ACLU of Virginia Executive Director Claire Guthrie Gastañaga, Portsmouth Chief of Police Tonya D. Chapman, and Fredericksburg City Attorney Kathleen Dooley share approaches for managing discussions and activities relating to controversial topics. **3.** The Colonial Williamsburg Fifes and Drums led the crowd to the Capitol on host city night.



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1. The welcome by Thomas Jefferson, portrayed by actor Kurt Smith, at Sunday's opening session delighted attendees. **2.** Fredericksburg Councilor Charlie Frye Jr, Immediate Past President Ron Rordam, City of Virginia Beach Council Member Rosemary Wilson, Outgoing President and Mayor of Gordonsville Bob Coiner, and City of Virginia Beach Council Member Shannon Kane enjoyed beautiful weather and good company on host night. **3.** Russell Dudley shared changes to the Virginia Department of Transportation revenue sharing program. **4.** Senator Thomas K. Norment Jr. spoke on the success of short-term rental legislation in the 2017 General Assembly session, revving up the audience with his defense of local government authority. **5.** Jane Sulzberger, director of the Lifelong Learning Society at Christopher Newport University, was the featured speaker at the Women in Local Government breakfast. **6.** Senator T. Montgomery Mason discussed the upcoming 2018 General Assembly session. **7.** Ches Helmick (L), Galax council member, and Michael DeMarco, Fairfax council member, took a break to video blog about issues in their communities.



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1. Town of Dumfries Council Member Brian Fields (L) and Herndon Council Member Sheila Olem played a friendly round of Family Feud in the Town Section meeting with host Bob Zoldos, mayor of Lovettsville. **2.** Katrina Washington, National League of Cities, shared ways NLC benefits local governments. **3.** Jodi Manz, policy advisor for the Secretary of Human Resources, spoke on the opioid epidemic in Virginia. **4.** Douglas Noble, Vienna council member, compared traffic impacts from roundabouts and signals. **5.** Marvin Collins, Williamsburg city manager, listened as David Coe described how Colonial Behavioral Health improved services to members of the military and their families.



1. Town of Kilmarnock Town Attorney Paul Stamm Jr. (L), Council Member Keith Butler, Deputy Town Manager Susan Cockrell, and Mayor Mae Umphlett enjoyed the fellowship of host city night. **2.** Lisa Schenk shared information about VML Insurance Programs in the conference exhibit hall. **3.** Dubby Wynne, Go Virginia Board chairman, gave an update on the business community's role in promoting regional cooperation and jobs. **4.** VML's new president Dr. Patricia Woodbury, council member, City of Newport News, pictured with her husband Gerard Woodbury, shared her vision for the coming year at Monday night's banquet. **5.** Emily Brock, director of the Government Finance Officers' Association's Federal Liaison Center, spoke on the Affordable Care Act. **6.** Sydney Daigle, HEAL program manager, led a panel sharing healthy eating and active living policies and practices from several Virginia localities. **7.** Dr. Cliff Morris, keynote speaker, and Executive Committee Member Christina Luman-Bailey, vice mayor of Hopewell, took a minute to chat before Tuesday's closing general session.



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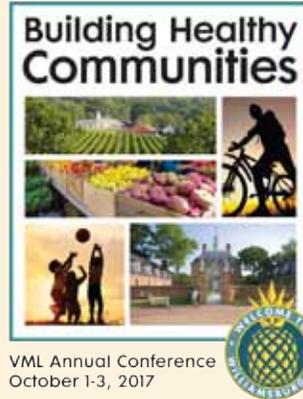
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Conference presentations available online

Presentations from many sessions at the 2017 Virginia Mayors Institute and the VML annual conference are available to view online at vml.org. Whether you attended the events or not, you are sure to find something interesting and new. Such as these nuggets:

- Adjusted for inflation, state per pupil K-12 funding is lower in 2017 than in 2006.
State/local fiscal relationship: What local governments need
- In 2014, fatal drug overdose became the leading cause of accidental death in Virginia.
Addressing the opioid epidemic in Virginia
- Unless there is an exemption provided by statute and the public body specifically and correctly invokes that exemption, every meeting shall be open to the public, and all public records shall be available for inspection and copying upon request. FOIA dictates “liberal construction” generally and “narrow construction” of exemptions, i.e., disclosure is favored.
FOIA 101 (Mayors Institute)
- An estimated 11-20 percent of veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have PTSD in a given year.
Becoming a military friendly clinic
- By 2021, state transit capital funding will drop by 44 percent.
The transit fiscal cliff: the potential loss of state transit funding and what it means for localities

2017 Annual Conference Planning Committee

VML also thanks the members of the planning committee who helped develop the program.

Patricia Woodbury, council member, City of Newport News - Chair

Tony Ambrose, council member, Town of Windsor

Brian Fields, council member, Town of Dumfries

Joshua Gooden, council member, Town of Elkton

Joseph Goodman, council member, Town of Pulaski

Phil Miskovic, council member, Town of Crewe

Jon Stehle, council member, City of Fairfax

Benming Zhang, council member, City of Williamsburg



Monday night's banquet entertainment The Deloreans.

Legislative program adopted

VML members adopted the 2018 VML Legislative Program on Monday, Oct. 2, at the conference business meeting. The program, available online at vml.org, reflects VML's positions on potential legislative issues and will be shared with legislators in advance of the 2018 General Assembly session.

Announcing the winners of the 2017 VML Innovation Awards

VML AWARDS have a distinguished history as the most prestigious local government awards in the state. The statewide competition emphasizes innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, public participation, and service to citizens. A sixth category, Community Health, was added to last year's program to reflect VML's focus on this topic in 2017. One category winner is also chosen to receive the President's Award.

Nearly 70 projects competed for honors this year. The six winners are:

Community Health Award AND President's Award

City of Lynchburg for Live Healthy Lynchburg, a collaborative approach to improving citizen well-being

Communications Award

City of Danville for reimagining ways to communicate using Facebook Live

Working with Youth Award

City of Danville for the Dan River Twins children's book

Economic Development Award

County of Roanoke for the Explore Park Adventure Plan

Infrastructure Award

Town of St. Paul for the Community Synergy regional wastewater treatment plant expansion project

Public Safety Award

Town of Ashland for addressing issues surrounding long-term residency in motels

The awards were presented Oct. 2 at a banquet at the VML Annual Conference in Williamsburg. The stories of each project in the pages that follow may provide inspiration to communities in Virginia and beyond.



The Judges

The judges panel was made up of three experienced local government officials.

James P. "Jim" Council is a past VML president and was mayor of the City of Franklin for 16 years.

Mary H. Hines represents the Northern District on the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board. She served on the Arlington County Board and School Board.

Edythe Kelleher is a former vice mayor of Vienna. She is the executive director of the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation.



Improving health through existing community resources

IN 2012, LYNCHBURG was named one of the most obese cities in the Nation. Mayor Joan Foster and two local pediatricians took that dubious honor as a challenge, forming Live Healthy Lynchburg (LHL) to encourage health in every citizen, at every gathering, every day.

Citizens access information about the program and general health via a website that funnels them to the program's four sub areas.

"Work Healthy" focuses on healthy workplaces and programs. It is led by the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (formerly the Chamber of Commerce).

Central Virginia Health District and the Local Food Council oversee the "Eat Healthy" initiative, which addresses healthy food availability and preparation.

Central Virginia YMCA leads the "Play Healthy" component to promote active living.

"Pray Healthy" focuses on spiritual well-being and is coordinated by Centra Health's Office of Pastoral Care.

One of the largest programs run by LHL is the 100 Mile Challenge. This running and walking challenge leads up to the Virginia 10- and 4-Miler Races. In 2011, the first year of the challenge, only 200 people participated. This year, more than 1,500 people logged miles to prepare for the September races.

The website and umbrella model can be and has been benchmarked by other communities in the Commonwealth and around the country.



That same year, they also signed up Lynchburg for the Let's Move! campaign founded by First Lady Michelle Obama to reduce childhood obesity.

After four years, in 2016, the city achieved the highest level in the Let's Move! Campaign, meeting the requirements in all five of the Let's Move! focus areas. They are one of only 78 communities nationwide to earn the program's five gold medals.

The campaign also has helped residents lose more than 12 tons of weight.

Rather than creating new entities to address needs of the community, LHL taps into resources and organizations that are already actively working for solutions.

"Live Healthy" focuses on general health.



(L to R) Jeff Helgeson, council member; Heather M. Brown, director of human resources; Turner Perrow, council member; and Treney Tweedy, vice mayor.



Reimagining ways to communicate using Facebook Live

COMMUNICATION WITH CITIZENS is a necessary part of every government entity and finding the right tool that connects with one’s audience is a challenge. The City of Danville has achieved success live-streaming events on the Facebook page of River City TV, its government access channel.

From its start promoting National Night Out events through Facebook Live, Danville has expanded to cover city council, planning commission, and utility commission meetings. They employ Facebook Live for economic development announcements, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, police incidents, and severe weather events. They also hosted an interview with the city manager on the FY2018 budget. Views per video can number in the thousands and higher.

River City TV Facebook Live feeds not only fill the need to provide information to citizens, but also provide local media outlets with content. The city allows local media to embed or share their feeds on their websites and Facebook pages, creating a win-win for the City and the news outlet.

With a start-up cost of less than \$800 for a cell phone, stabilization case, and a tripod and no fee for Facebook Live,

the initiative is one of the most cost-effective tools in a community’s toolbox. It also has been a way to share positive news about the city and promote interaction with citizens.

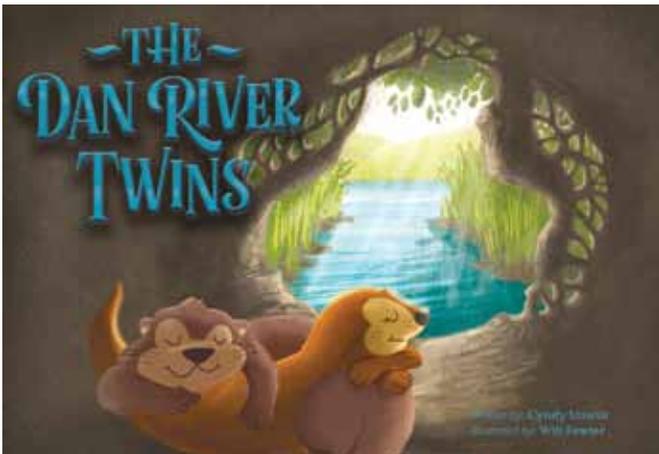
In the year since adding Facebook Live to its communication strategies, the number of followers to the City’s page has grown to 11,000, one-fourth of the city’s population. The page also has received 2.7 million video views.





Changing local perception of the Dan River

OTTERS IN THE DAN RIVER point are a positive sign of the ecosystem’s health. The perception of the river by residents of the area, however, can be negative — a result of the river’s history as a catalyst for industry, the muddy brownish appearance that follows a heavy rainfall, and a coal ash spill three years ago that made national headlines.



Staff decided to change the community’s perception through a children’s book, using two adorable otters as the main characters. In January 2017, Danville Parks and Recreation and the Danville Public Library released “The Dan River Twins.”

The book was distributed to every fourth-grade student in Danville Public Schools. Parks and Recreation and Library staff integrate programs and field trips and activities around the characters and locations in the book and install storyboarding along the walking trail that spans more than 10 miles along the banks of the river in the city. Students are invited to write the final pages of the book.

The project was funded by a grant from the Danville Regional Foundation. The project’s planning committee commissioned an author, graphic designers, and printer/publisher. They worked with a team of local teachers, non-profits, and experts in the field to develop the book and associated learning materials. Jason Bookeimer, community recreation division director for Parks and Recreation, came up with the concept and spearheaded the campaign.



(L to R) Larry Campbell Jr, council member; Lee Vogler, council member; Mark Aron, multimedia design manager; Ken Larking, city manager; John Gilstrap, mayor; Madison Whittle, council member; Bill Sgrinia, director of parks and recreation; Jason Bookeimer, community recreation division director; James Buckner, council member; and Gary Miller, council member.

Collaborating to fund and design a regional wastewater treatment plant

THE TOWN OF ST. PAUL had a forty-year-old wastewater plant that was compromised by its age and the amount of sludge it had accumulated. As equipment began to fail, it was becoming more and more difficult to find parts for repairs. In conjunction with the arrival of Dominion's Virginia City Hybrid Energy Center, it became apparent that sewer expansion for industry was necessary. The mayor and Council started discussing the need for a new sewer plant. However, for a small town with slightly less than 1,000 residents, such an endeavor was out of reach.

Instead, the town promoted the need for a new sewer plant to its neighbors, Russell and Wise Counties, as a regional improvement. The water and sewer authorities in the neighboring counties were receptive, as they were facing expansion and upgrade needs as well.

Leaders from the Town of St. Paul, representatives from Castlewood Water & Sewer, Wise County PSA, LENOWISCO Planning District, Cumberland Planning District, state representatives, and funding agencies cooperated to make the project a success.

Improving infrastructure and making sanitary sewer accessible to a greater area has generated economic expansion and provided sewer connections to residents that would otherwise be absent of wastewater service.

The total cost of the project was \$7.9 million. The Town of St. Paul secured grants and loans from USDA Rural Development, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Tobacco Commission. The Town also designed and constructed the plant, and owns and operates it. The debt service of \$2.35 million is also owned by the Town of St. Paul, but an



(L to R) Harry Kelly, council member; Tim Boardwine, council member; Greg Bailey, council member; Josh Sawyers, council member; Kyle Fletcher, mayor; Debora Baca, treasurer; and Glenda Lane, deputy treasurer.

inter-municipal agreement shares the debt service and cost of operations.

Thinking as a region rather than individual localities allowed an affordable debt service for each entity that would have otherwise been out of reach.



Addressing issues surrounding long-term residency in motels

IN 2014, THE TOWN of Ashland, population 7,500, had 14 motels or hotels with a combined 1,000 rooms. Although once constructed to serve overnight guests traveling through town on I-95 or U.S. Rt. 1., well over half of the locations then catered to long-term residents. Several ranked in the top-5 for the highest calls for emergency service in town. The vast majority involved domestic assaults, disorderly conduct, narcotics violations, and other situations that led to social disorder. These calls also usually resulted in assaults on police, rescue, and fire personnel. Town staff also understood that families and children lived in these motels and were victims of the conditions around them.

Town staff, faith leaders, human service providers, and citizens embarked on an 18-month journey to adopt local ordinances restricting long-term residences in motels, improving



health, safety and welfare inside these structures, and breaking the cycles of poverty in town.

In 2015, the town adopted a robust, modern lodging code to limit long-term stays and mandate health, safety and wellness standards.

In 2016, when the new lodging ordinance went into effect, calls for service declined to the smallest percentage of calls to motels in over a decade. The town has recouped nearly 244 hours of police staff time. Ashland Open Door, a non-profit formed in 2016, helped 32 families (119 individuals) move from motels into apartments or single-family rental homes. A companion economic development initiative has attracted commitments for two new hotels to be built on the site of three currently blighted structures.

Council's direct involvement in almost every public meeting held on the topic contributed to the initiative's success. Media attention played a key role in public engagement, with more than 20 individual articles, television stories, and op-ed pieces produced.



(L to R) James Foley, mayor; Joshua Farrar, town manager; and Steve Trivett, vice mayor.



Creating an opportunity for adventure tourism

EXPLORE PARK was a living history museum adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway that closed seven years ago. Roanoke County took over the property in 2013 and reopened it as a passive recreation facility. But the county knew it had more potential.

Between 2015 and 2016, Roanoke County developed a master plan to spur economic development through adventure- and recreation-based tourism on the property. Roanoke County worked with community partners as well as government stakeholders including the National Park Service, County of Bedford, Roanoke Valley Resource Authority, and the Virginia Recreation Facilities Authority.

The county decreased the cost of developing the plan by taking on the community feedback and survey components of the project. The consultant group with whom they worked described the county's approach as "one of the most comprehensive community outreach efforts" they had ever experienced.

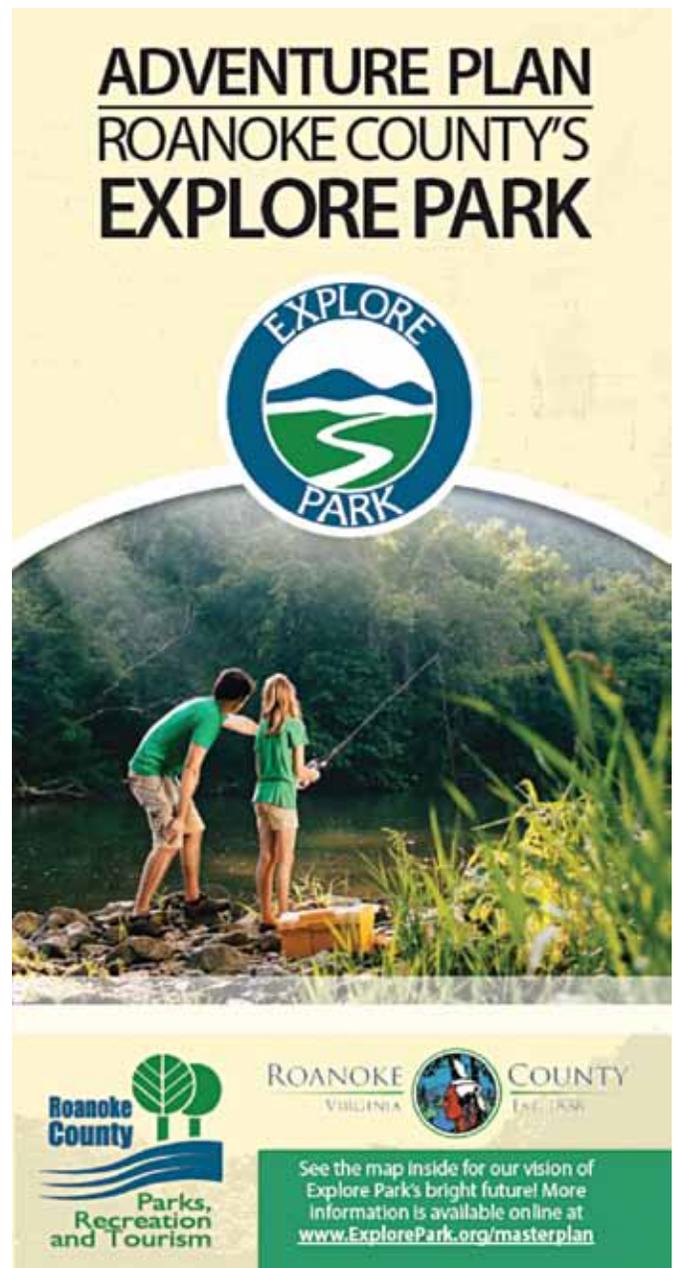
In August 2016, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors adopted the Explore Park Adventure Plan, which included a business plan and an environmental study. It has maps, descriptions, renderings, and conceptual placements of desired

attractions. A phasing report depicts a timeline for planning, design, and construction of amenities within the park over the next 20 years.

These efforts have already yielded positive returns for Roanoke County. A request for proposals to develop the park generated substantial interest from local and national businesses.



Doug Blount, parks, recreation & tourism director.



Congratulations to these award recipients



2017 VIRGINIA HEAL COMMUNITIES

The HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) Cities & Towns Campaign provides free technical assistance to municipal leaders to adopt policies and practices that create healthy, prosperous communities by making it easier for residents and government employees in their towns and cities to eat healthier and move more. HEAL is a project of the Institute for Public Health Innovation in partnership with the Virginia Municipal League and funded by Kaiser

Permanente, founding partner. For more information, visit the HEAL Cities and Towns website at www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org and contact Sydney Daigle, HEAL Cities and Towns Campaign Manager, at 202-747-3512 or at sdaigle@institutephi.org.

Platinum

Charlottesville
Warrenton
Williamsburg

Gold Level

Crewe
Hopewell
Lovettsville
Prince George County

Silver Level

Gordonsville
Lawrenceville
Leesburg
Richmond

Bronze Level

Bluefield
Haymarket
Middleburg
Staunton
Wytheville

HEAL Cities and Towns Campaign Members

Ashland
Big Stone Gap
Charles City County
Dumfries
Emporia
Falls Church
Galax
Glade Spring
Greensville County
New Market
Petersburg
Roanoke
Virginia Beach



2017 VML GREEN GOVERNMENT CHALLENGE RECIPIENTS

The Green Government Challenge is a friendly competition designed to encourage implementation of specific environmental policies and practical actions that reduce carbon emissions generated by both the local government and the broader community. Cities, towns, and counties can earn points for these actions. Many of these actions can save local governments money.

Platinum Level

175 points and above

Arlington County
City of Alexandria
City of Charlottesville
City of Hopewell
City of Lynchburg
City of Newport News
City of Radford
City of Richmond
City of Williamsburg
Town of Ashland
Town of Blacksburg
Town of Herndon
Town of Purcellville

Gold Level

150-174 points

Prince George County

Silver Level

125-149 points

City of Fairfax
Town of Vienna

Go Green Advisory Committee

Chair: Christina Luman-Bailey, Hopewell Council

Daryl Bishop, Trane
Lawrence Cummings, Trane
Erik Curren, Staunton Council
Carol Davis, Blacksburg
Bryna Dunn, Moseley Architects
Marshall Dreiling, AIA VA
Jay Fisette, Arlington County Board
Harry Gregori, Virginia UAS
Alleyn Harned, Virginia Clean Cities
Candy Hensley, Augusta County
Bob Lazaro, Northern Virginia Planning District Commission

Cooper Martin, National League of Cities
John Morrill, Arlington County
Bill Murray, Dominion Energy
Larry Land, VACo
Annette Osso, Resiliency Virginia
Speaker Pollard, Williams Mullen
Mike Polychrones, VML
Kristel Riddervold, Charlottesville
Najib Salehi, Loudoun County
William Skrabak, Alexandria
Skip Stiles, Wetlands Watch
Khoa Dinh Tran, Alexandria

2017 STAIRWAY TO SUCCESS RECIPIENTS

Stairway to Success is a friendly competition among VML member localities. The program seeks to increase local government's role in early childhood education, which in turn, builds a qualified, well-educated workforce. The competition awards points to localities for specific actions that enhance the early childhood experience.

City of Fairfax
City of Suffolk
City of Manassas
Town of Narrows

Town of Ashland
Town of Leesburg
Town of Orange



STAIRWAY TO SUCCESS

SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

2017 VML LEADERSHIP ACADEMY GRADUATES

The VML Leadership Academy, formerly Virginia Elected Officials Leadership Academy (VEOLA), is a continuing education program designed for both elected and appointed officials. Appointed officials must be employed by a locality in Virginia to participate in the Academy. The program offers courses across the state and online.

The purpose of the Academy is to provide an interactive curriculum of specialized instruction that will develop the knowledge and enhance the leadership abilities of those who serve the localities of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Certificates of the graduates were presented by VML's President Elect Anita James Price, vice mayor, City of Roanoke.



Local Government Basics Level:
James L. "Jim" Bradley, council member,
Town of Gordonsville



Advance Training Level:
Sean Polster, council member, Town of Warrenton

Talking the walk

Galax's Safe Routes to School program promotes healthy activity for the whole community



FALL BRINGS A RETURN to yellow school buses on Virginia roads. It also means more kids walking and bicycling on their way to and from school. This is particularly true in the City of Galax, which has a nationally-acclaimed Safe Routes to School program.

An international movement with federal recognition and funding, Safe Routes to School creates safe, convenient, and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools. Programs can be volunteer run or coordinated by paid staff from the local government, school district, public health department, or a local nonprofit.

Galax's Safe Routes to School program began in 2011, when City Council led the formation of a School Travel Plan and developed a team including the city manager, police department, engineering department, superintendent of public school division, chairman of the school board, and parks and recreation department.

The city was successful in receiving several small grants in 2011 to kick off its Safe Routes to School activities. With

a \$1,000 grant from the National Center for Safe Routes to School, Galax held a bike rodeo and bike training program. A \$2,000 grant from Prevention Connections, a state non-profit organization, helped them conduct walk-to-school events and offer incentives.

Later initiatives used Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) funds to resolve barriers and challenges for children to safely travel to school.

With no sidewalk in front of two of its schools, Galax pursued VDOT funds to develop infrastructure for walking and biking, creating sidewalks and safer streets. The city also applied for funds for traffic safety education and an engagement campaign to promote walking and bicycling.

In addition to seeing Safe Routes to School as an opportunity to improve traffic safety, Galax viewed it as an opportunity

Safe Routes to School creates safe, convenient, and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools.

Slow Down!



 **Keep our kids safe.**

LINDA MOCK

to support residents in making healthy choices about physical activity. As part of a walk audit in 2012, the city looked at rates of unhealthy weight among school-aged children. Walking one

mile to and from school each day equals two-thirds of the sixty minutes of physical activity recommended a day, helping kids achieve healthy weights. A critical component of the program's success is leadership from the city to promote safe walking and biking to schools and beyond. In 2014, the city formalized its vision when it issued a proclamation stating its commitment to growing a Safe Routes to School program and encouraging all citizens to participate in bicycling and sharing the road. "Early on, the city and school district saw connectivity and safety as mainstays of a viable Safe Routes to School program", said Keith Barker, Galax city administrator. "With all three Galax schools on a central campus, the city wants to assure the safety of all who are walking biking to the schools and link the schools with the entire community."

"If a community desires to re-establish neighborhoods, inject downtown areas with energy, and teach its citizens life-saving health habits, then Safe Routes to School is a good place to start."

— **Linda Mock, Galax's Safe Routes to School Coordinator**

Beyond the school yard

Safe Routes to School is more than a transportation safety improvement program for school-aged children. Since it started, Safe Routes to School has transformed into a way of life in this southwestern Virginia community of 7,000 residents.

Galax's Safe Routes to School Coordinator Linda Mock shared, "If a community desires to re-establish neighborhoods, inject downtown areas with energy, and teach its citizens life-

to support residents in making healthy choices about physical activity. As part of a walk audit in 2012, the city looked at rates of unhealthy weight among school-aged children. Walking one

mile to and from school each day equals two-thirds of the sixty minutes of physical activity recommended a day, helping kids achieve healthy weights. A critical component of the program's success is leadership from the city to promote safe walking and biking to schools and beyond. In 2014, the city formalized its vision when it issued a proclamation stating its commitment to growing a Safe Routes to School program and encouraging all citizens to participate in bicycling and sharing the road.

"Early on, the city and school district saw connectivity and safety as mainstays of a viable Safe Routes to School program", said Keith Barker, Galax city administrator. "With all three Galax schools on a central campus, the city wants to assure the safety of all who are walking biking to the schools and link the schools with the entire community."

In Galax, the Safe Routes to School program provides in-classroom bicycle and pedestrian education, which has reached 2,200 Galax Elementary stu-

Galax's Safe Routes to School program has distributed 450 free helmets to students.



LINDA MOCK

saving health habits, then Safe Routes to School is a good place to start.”

Galax reports more people walking and bicycling downtown, using “feet, not fuel” to traverse the city. Mock shared that shop owners have contacted her to request assistance installing bike racks for the increasing number of customers arriving at their shops on bike.

As a member of the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Cities & Towns Campaign for the Mid-Atlantic, a partnership between the Institute for Public Health Innovation and the Virginia Municipal League and funded by Kaiser Permanente, Galax was awarded a mini-grant to build on its community-wide walkability efforts.

The grant from HEAL supported the incorporation of the city’s arts community into walking and walkability. Using grant funds, wayfinding signs were installed at points of interest including near the trailhead of the New River Trail State Park. Decorative benches were added to provide respite for pedestrians as they stroll throughout the mountainous city.

The city proudly hosts Virginia’s first and only bike library, where people of any age can check out bicycles from the Parks and Recreation Department the way they would a library book. This makes bike riding accessible for people of all income levels and appeals to families and residents who may not use bicycling as a primary mode of transportation, rather as an opportunity for family bonding and spending time together in the city or its parks and nature trails.

As the city continues to grow its Safe Routes to School program and promote walkability throughout the community, it considers the needs of people walking and biking when funds are available for transportation projects. Planning for and identifying funding sources that support safe walking and bicycling has enabled Galax to provide neighborhoods with new

Making safe routes to school happen in your community

To get started with Safe Routes to School where you live, visit the Safe Routes to School National Partnership website at www.saferoutespartnership.org.

The Virginia Department of Transportation offers four funding opportunities to support communities’ Safe Routes to School efforts, including:

- \$1,000 mini-grants six times per year to jump-start Safe Routes to School activities.
- Walkabout mini-grants to conduct walk and bike audits around schools. Applications are available twice annually in the spring and fall.
- Grants between \$5,000-\$100,000 for education, encouragement, evaluation, and enforcement aspects of Safe Routes to School programs. This can also be used to fund a local Safe Routes to School coordinator. These non-infrastructure grants are available annually in the spring.
- Other infrastructure grants to support improvements to street and road design. Applications due November 1, 2017.

Find a link to these grants at www.vml.org/vtc-resources.



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LINDA MOCK

Galax hosts Virginia's first and only bike library, where people of any age can check out bicycles from the Parks and Recreation Department the way they would a library book.

or improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic signals that make safe walking and biking a reality.

Most recently, Galax will receive grant funding to finish sidewalk improvements in front of the elementary school and address a nearby intersection that was identified by both the city and parents through parent surveys as a deterrent to safe walking. The award will replace the existing traffic signal with a new signal that integrates pedestrian controls and crossing to help children walking to school.

Exemplified by Galax's experience, Safe Routes to School is an excellent starting point for cities, towns, and counties that want to get more people out walking and bicycling. With benefits ranging from improved traffic safety, physical and mental health, environmental and economic, Safe Routes to School is good for all communities. **VTI**

About the author: *Marisa C. Jones is the healthy communities manager for the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. She can be reached at (215) 510-2545 or marisa@saferoutespartnership.org*



LINDA MOCK



LINDA MOCK



THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE (VML) invites all Virginia seventh graders to join its essay contest, "If I Were Mayor," to tell others what they would do as mayor to make their cities, towns, and counties great places to live.

Promoting good local government is important to VML, and this essay contest provides students the opportunity to reflect on the important role of elected officials in their own city or town.

Regional winners from around the state will be selected. Winners will receive a \$150 cash prize and plaque. One statewide winner will also be selected and will receive a \$250 cash prize and plaque. VML will present the awards at each winner's local council meeting.

For more information, contact Sherall Dementi at sdementi@vml.org or visit www.vml.org/education/essay-contest.

Trey Mitchell of Lawrenceville, Va., was the 2016-17 statewide winner of the League's annual "If I Were Mayor" Essay Contest.



Virginia Municipal League

If I Were Mayor

ESSAY CONTEST

Contest Rules

- The contest is open to all Virginia students enrolled in the seventh grade during the 2017-2018 school year.
- Each entry must include a completed entry form stapled at the top of the essay. (Visit www.vml.org)
- Essays should be typed or clearly handwritten.
- Essays must be 200 – 500 words.
- Essays must address the subject of what the student would do if they were elected mayor.
- Only one essay may be submitted per student.
- Essays will be judged based on the following: originality, persuasiveness, understanding of city, town and county services, and proper use of composition and written expression.
- Essays must be received at the VML office by Friday, Dec. 22. Winners will be notified in February 2018.
- Essays will not be returned.
- VML retains the right to publish essays along with the names of each student.
- Submit entries to: VML, Attn: 7th Grade Essay Contest, P.O. Box 12164, Richmond, VA 23241.



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