

2024 Awards Competition – ENTRY SUMMARIES

J. MITCHELL GRAHAM MEMORIAL AWARD

Beaufort County

Beaufort County's Women's Leadership Summit began in June 2023 as an annual event featuring presentations, discussions, and networking opportunities for women leaders from various sectors. The program is an expansion of Beaufort County's Emerging Leaders group, established in 2021 to support career development, relationship building, and community service among employees. By providing engagement opportunities, the program strives to attract, develop, and retain emerging leaders in county government.

Chester County

To coordinate multi-agency responses to critical incidents, such as school shootings, Chester County established a planning group of 10 agencies and 50+ members. Mutual aid agreements with neighboring counties were established, and an online and mobile app using GIS data to enhance operational planning was developed. The app provides real-time situational awareness, supports over 30 incident types, and is used by various emergency services. It facilitates coordination and optimizes allocation of resources to effectively manage emergencies.

Florence County

The Miracle League of Florence County, which began in 2014 with 17 participants, has expanded to nearly 300 athletes aged 3 to 87. This growth prompted the need for a dedicated facility, leading Florence County and its volunteer-led board to develop specialized amenities. Initial projects included a specialized baseball field, and recent additions comprised an all-inclusive playground and a second field with a soccer design to support a new program. These expansions have made the Miracle League Complex a notable facility in the state.

Georgetown County

Georgetown County's Midway Fire and Rescue Department developed a new Firefighter Ability Test to address firefighter safety and readiness. The test replaces an older version and includes 11 job-related tasks designed to simulate real firefighting challenges. Implemented without additional costs to the county, the project utilized existing resources and a local donation. The test aims to improve firefighter preparedness, promote health and fitness within the department, and reduce injuries and illnesses.

Lancaster County

In November 2023, the Lancaster County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) introduced "LCSO Serves," an initiative aimed at improving interactions between law enforcement and the community. This program, the first of its kind in South Carolina, focuses on enhancing communication and understanding. The LCSO collaborated with the DiJulius Group, known for customer service training, to provide comprehensive training for all staff. The initiative involved internal committees in its development and established an "Always and Nevers" list of guidelines for interactions. A "Day in the Life" video was produced to highlight deputies' daily routines and promote understanding. The program also includes leadership guidelines to align practices with agency values, setting a new benchmark for law enforcement in the state.

Orangeburg County

The Orangeburg County Library System collaborated with the Tri-County Health Network and MUSC of Orangeburg to create a grant funded resource referral system that impacts underserved populations. A licensed social worker known as a Library Resource Associate operates from the main library to address social determinants of health while reducing the stigma associated with social services. By utilizing public libraries as accessible community hubs that offer social and healthcare services, including telehealth, this project illustrates the potential of existing library infrastructure to support community well-being in rural South Carolina.

Pickens County

The Public Employee Service Corps (PESC), established in collaboration with the United Way of Pickens County, provides a platform for staff to volunteer for community service beyond their official duties. Originating from efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic, where employees assisted with community needs, PESC has since expanded to projects such as tutoring, outdoor cleanup, and clothing donations. Approximately 4,000 citizens have benefited. In 2024, county human resources introduced guidelines allowing employees up to 8 hours of volunteer pay annually to participate in PESC activities during work hours. PESC promotes teamwork and collaboration among employees.

Richland County

The 2023 Richland County calendar project featured 12 local organizations, each associated with a national initiative for a specific month. The county invited these organizations to host events during their designated months, resulting in a series of community activities throughout the year. The project was promoted through social media, newsletters, and local media coverage, and included proclamations from county council members to formally recognize the organizations. This initiative highlights the organizations' missions and enhances community engagement in Richland County.

BARRETT LAWRIMORE MEMORIAL REGIONAL COOPERATION AWARD

Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, and Horry Counties

The S.C. Area Cooperative was established to ensure reliable 9-1-1 service across its region and meet public expectations for consistent emergency response. Formed under a Master Cooperative Agreement in 2018 and amended in 2023, the partnership includes Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston and Horry counties; the City of Goose Creek; and the Town of Summerville. The agreement includes automatic and mutual aid, disaster recovery, resource coordination, information sharing, and technology integration. The program has provided backup call-taking and dispatching during emergencies, and it aims to maintain 9-1-1 service continuity with the integration of various technologies and procedures.

Berkeley County

Berkeley Outdoor Life was established in partnership with the Berkeley Soil & Water Conservation District and Berkeley County to ensure recreational opportunities throughout the county and promote tourism. The outdoor recreation program consists of the Berkeley Blueways, Walkways, Bikeways and Gameways with the website www.BerkeleyOutdoorLife.com. Averaging over 14,000 visitors per month, the website provides details on 25 kayaking trails, 23 walking and hiking routes, and 20 bicycling routes, along with information on camping, fishing, boat ramps, public hunting, and golf courses.

Beaufort and Charleston Counties

Charleston and Beaufort County Coroners established a framework for sharing resources and investigative tools, aimed at improving data standardization and communication between the counties. Supported by grant funding, the initiative enhances the capacity to manage mass fatalities and provide services to over 630,000 residents. The collaborative effort addresses challenges such as inconsistent data standards and limited investigative resources, which can delay death investigations and the issuance of death certificates, particularly in cases involving natural disasters, the opioid crisis, or mass fatalities.

Colleton and Dorchester Counties

The Splash into Safety program, launched in summer 2023 by Colleton and Dorchester County parks and recreation departments and partners, addressed water safety in rural South Carolina, where pediatric drowning rates are high. The program provided water safety education and swimming lessons to 335 children aged 5-11, using a portable pool system to reach rural communities. Sessions covered topics such as sun safety, life jacket use, and water safety techniques. The program also offered adult beginner swimming lessons. Local organizations and a media campaign supported the program, which aimed to create a sustainable model for addressing public health concerns and reducing pediatric drownings in rural areas.

Lancaster County

The Lancaster County Sheriff's Office launched Project Knock Knock to address underage drinking through direct engagement and education. Deputies visit high school seniors' homes to discuss the risks and legalities associated with underage drinking with students and their families. Although the program was temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, evaluations indicated a 22.8% decrease in 30-day drinking rates and a 23.5% reduction in binge drinking among high school seniors. The initiative also contributed to changes in community perceptions of law enforcement.