

2015 JMGBL Awards Application

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| Submission Date | 2015-06-24 16:12:41 |
| This application is for: | Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award |
| Project Title | Growing a Very Special Community Garden in Spartanburg County |
| County/Counties | Spartanburg |
| Staff Contact | Marcia Murff |
| Job Title | PR and Development for Spartanburg Parks |
| E-mail Address | marcia.murff@spartanburgparks.org |
| Phone Number | 864-494-1801 |
| Please provide a summary of your entry (no more than 100 words) to be used in a handout for the awards competition and included in press releases/publications. You may either type the summary in the text box or upload it as an attachment below. | <p>A garden of wellness opportunities, planted by and for the Baby Boom generation, is thriving in Spartanburg County. Inspired and informed by a decades-old vision, Spartanburg has cultivated an unprecedented degree of intergovernmental and public/private cooperation directed towards improving the quality of life for the county population's growing percentage of 50+ citizens. Spartanburg County government has played a leading role in positioning Spartanburg County to become what the American Association of Retired People describes as an "Age Friendly Community" and is equipping Spartanburg to deal with the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by an aging population.</p> |
| Presentations may include more than one speaker; however, each speaker should be aware that the 10-minute time limit is strictly enforced. Please list the name, title, and e-mail address of each speaker: | <p>Marcia Murff, PR and Development Manager for Spartanburg Parks, Marcia.murff@spartanburgparks.org</p> <p>Mitch Kennedy, City of Spartanburg Community Services Director, mkennedy@cityofspartanburg.org</p> <p>Kristie Oliver, Recreation Coordinator for 50+ Wellness, Kristie.oliver@spartanburgparks.org</p> |
| Will any of the speakers need accommodations (wheelchair accessibility, etc.) during the awards competition? | No |
| To submit these attachments online, please upload Microsoft Word or PDF documents below. | Barrett Lawrimore Document 6-24-15.pdf |

Spartanburg Seniors

Very Special People Doing Very Special Things



Town of Cowpens



South Carolina Association of Counties: Barrett Lawrimore Regional Cooperation Award

Barrett Lawrimore Regional Cooperation Award
Growing a Very Special “Community Garden” in Spartanburg County

Benefit/Importance of Project

1. Why was this project undertaken?

The project was undertaken to avert a disaster, capitalize on an opportunity and respond to an identified need. Spartanburg County’s governmental partners in this regional project include the cities of Chesnee, Cowpens, Pacolet, Woodruff and Spartanburg as well as several Spartanburg school districts.

To fully understand the situation, some context and history is required.

A large and beautiful flower garden can start with a single seed. If the seed is planted in fertile ground and receives adequate rainfall and nutrients, it will grow into a flowering plant. If cultivated and nurtured, the plant will replicate through the spread of its seeds and the garden will expand. However, if the plant is neglected or doesn’t receive adequate rainfall or nutrients, the plant will wither and die.

The seed was a senior center unlike any in South Carolina. It was planted by volunteers in Chesnee, a former textile town adjacent to Cherokee County and near the Cowpens Revolutionary War Battlefield. The VSP Center, as it was known, was housed in one of the town’s newest and most beautiful buildings, built within a park-like setting, including an upscale interior featuring multi-purpose classrooms, gathering space and an indoor exercise facility. “VSP” originally meant “Very Special People,” but the letters have also become shorthand for Very Special Places and Very Special Programs.

From the beginning, more than a decade ago, the VSP philosophy recognized that senior adults have earned respect and deserve places and programs that are welcoming and inclusive and which are responsive to customer needs and desires. The philosophy also recognizes that senior adults have skills and abilities gained over a lifetime, which they are eager to use on a volunteer basis, in order to “pay their own way” to support and/or provide worthwhile activities at “their” community center. The VSP Center did not provide social services. Rather, the center encouraged seniors to take responsibility for improving their quality of life, to adopt proven wellness practices and to remain active in community life. The unique feature of the Center was not its high quality appearance and furnishings; it was the utilization of volunteers in the Center’s governance and programming.

The Center was the brainchild of Nancy Ogle, then-Executive Director of Senior Centers of Spartanburg. Ms. Ogle, now a bright-eyed, active “80-something,” cobbled together funding from the S.C. Lieutenant Governor’s Office on Aging, other public and private agencies as well as substantial business and individual contributions.

More than one Lieutenant Governor, upon visiting the Center, has called it a model for such facilities. And yet, like the aforementioned flowering plant, the Center suffered through a period of shortage and almost died in FY 2013/2014.

One can trace Spartanburg County’s involvement to a conversation about the Center between a County Councilmember and the County Parks and Recreation Director. A plan was developed, not only to keep the VSP Center alive, but to redevelop the park adjacent to the center. Then, after several weeks of discussion among staff members, elected officials and community leaders, the County Administrator formed a partnership with the Spartanburg County Foundation to develop what came to be called the “Senior Wellness Initiative.”

Through this initiative, the plant that sprouted years ago has regained its health and has quickly blossomed into a diverse and evolving garden of wellness opportunities for the 50+ generation.

2. What is the significance of this project to your community as a whole? How does it relate in importance to the other problems in your community?

Research on the issue of aging led to the realization that the aging of the “Baby Boom” generation will have substantial implications for Spartanburg County, as well as communities across the country.

The Baby Boom generation is the term used for persons born during the period 1945 – 1964. The youngest of the Baby Boomers turned 50 in 2014. It is estimated that, in ten years, more than 25% of Spartanburg County residents will be age 65 or older. The project was undertaken to help equip Spartanburg County to deal with the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Baby Boom generation and the fact that all seniors, regardless of generation, are living longer and leading more active lives.

Any problem or opportunity that impacts 25% of a county's citizens, many of whom are active in community life and who participate in the political process, is significant.

The significance of this project to Spartanburg County government is best expressed in the Mission Statement adopted by the Spartanburg County Council:

Mission: Spartanburg County provides a foundation for a superior quality of life for residents, unlimited opportunities for business, and an exceptional learning environment for education through purposeful planning, investment, and use of resources.

"Quality of life" is a term that can mean many things to many people. It is Spartanburg County's belief that an adequate system of enjoyable wellness opportunities is vitally important for the county's large and growing census of 50+ citizens.

3. How much of the county's population is benefited by the project? In what specific ways are different groups of citizens within the county better off than before?

It is difficult to count how many people are impacted by the initiative because of how the program approach has developed. Spartanburg County did not get engaged in this initiative to win an award or document achievements for grant applications. Instead, the County focused on creating a supportive climate where public/private cooperation could flourish. Part of that, quite frankly, was proving the County's good intentions to potential community partners.

Based on research conducted by public health officials, Spartanburg County recognized that a large percentage of Spartanburg County citizens have documented health and wellness issues, arising from obesity and other factors. To help impact this problem, the County refocused its parks and recreation services. This renewed focus is emphasized in the Parks Department's Mission Statement: "Your Partner in Community Wellness."

Spartanburg County, working principally through the Parks Department, addressed wellness (defined as "the quality or state of being healthy in body and mind, especially as the result of deliberate effort.") for the 50+ generation in a variety of ways:

- Continued to provide existing services to 50+ citizens and expanded those services, based on feedback from participants.
- Continued to manage community centers in the cities of Woodruff, Pacolet and Inman where 50+ wellness programs are held. The department selected programs based on participant feedback. The department also began using non-traditional venues, like conference centers and meeting rooms at sports parks, as well as churches and businesses, as program venues.
- Embraced the concept of multi-use/multi-generational parks and installed fitness improvements (sometimes called "adult playgrounds) such as outdoor exercise equipment (currently in five parks) and in-park fitness trails (nearly 5 miles completed, at this writing).
- Involved the department in Spartanburg agencies and organizations serving the 50+ generation for conversation and the building of inter-agency cooperation, providing supportive services where necessary. The Parks Department is now a key player in a number of networking groups such as Upstate Senior Network, Adult Interagency Council, Elder Abuse Committee/DSS Advisory Team and a monthly senior service provider networking breakfast.

- Developed a comprehensive website where citizens can look for and find parks and recreation assets across the County, regardless of what agency operates the facility. The website also promotes Parks Department programs and includes a long list of links to agencies and organizations that provide wellness and other services to the 50+ generation.
- Assumed ownership of the VSP Center in Chesnee (renamed the Chesnee Community Center: A Very Special Place), began funding operations and maintenance, formed a VSP Advisory Committee, upgraded the kitchen (with a grant from Spartanburg Regional Hospital), upgraded the exercise facility and began charging market-competitive fitness program fees to the exercise facility. (In all the community centers managed by the Parks Department, no membership fees are charged, but fees are used to cover the costs of some programs.)
- Began management of the recently-completed Timken Community Center in Cowpens (also tagged as a Very Special Place); formed a VSP Advisory Committee, worked with the VSP Foundation (discussed later) to purchase equipment and begin operation of a fee-based indoor fitness center.
- Worked closely with the Town of Pacolet to develop a new community center using the VSP philosophy. This center is now under construction and will be managed by the Parks Department when the building is completed in 2016.
- The increased attention to 50+ Wellness is demonstrated in the Parks Department program statistics:
 - The number of citizens who've requested the monthly 50+ Wellness program guide (delivered by mail and email) has increased by 165%.
 - The participant-driven "Daytrippers" recreational travel program has doubled in size.
 - A number of regular programs have been added, such as outdoor fitness programs, FFF (Food/Fun/Friends) Dining Club, pickleball and senior softball as well as art, sports and dance instruction, Fourth Friday Dance Nights, Senior Enrichment Day (a multi-agency education and networking conference, drawing 263 exhibitors, speakers and participants) and the Spartanburg Area Senior Sports Classic.
 - Total customer program hours have risen more than 27% in one year, from approximately 55,000 to more than 70,000 hours.
 - Utilization of volunteers has also grown, both in number of volunteer hours and locations where they are employed. Volunteers serve in the community centers, the Parks Department office, at special events, with youth recreation, and at partner locations.

One of the Parks Department's greatest achievements is the promotion of partnerships. When Spartanburg County began work on this initiative, the County had one partner: Senior Centers of Spartanburg County. The number of partnerships is now pushing 100 agencies and organizations. The partnerships take many forms, ranging from sharing information, providing classes/programs for one another, collaborating on a class/program/service, promoting each other and cooperatively marketing to 50+ audiences, etc. Partners include hospitals, educational institutions, private business, nonprofits, senior living facilities, other parks and recreation agencies, municipalities, school districts, State- and Federal programs/agencies, and others.

The focus on promotion of partnerships and collaboration has made the documentation of accurate customer participation rates almost impossible, since there are so many agencies involved, delivering so many programs and services.

The number of partners continues to grow. The Parks Department has explored renovations to the community center that the department operates in Woodruff and has begun discussions with the Middle Tyger Community Center and the not-for-profit Boiling Springs Community Park about facilitating programs for the 50+ generation in those locations. The department is also working closely with the City of Spartanburg to upgrade their two community centers to VSP standards.

4. What degree of success did the project attain? What major objectives were achieved?

The following major objectives have been achieved:

- The project documented a model for the development, construction and operation of new and the renovation of existing community centers that serve the needs of active 50+ adults. This model provides the operating policy of the community centers that are designated "Very Special Places," and sets the expectations for the development of future community centers.
- The project converted an existing 501(c)(3) foundation, the VSP Foundation, into a vehicle for developing and organizing as well as providing challenge grants to and monitoring implementation of new Very Special Places.
- The project led Spartanburg County Council, through its budget process, to formalize the practice of Parks Department operation of community centers. In general, either the County or another entity may build or own community centers. If the owning entity is not the County, that entity may contract with the County to provide management, operations, and maintenance of the center. Having the County play this role sustains the center's operations. If a center remains open and is well-maintained, many community agencies have a reliable venue to provide beneficial services. Based on current experience, the cost to the County for operations and maintenance at each community center is about \$120,000 per year. This expenditure is partially offset – in varying degrees – by program fees. However, Spartanburg County leaders recognize that the provision of community centers is a public service and that it is unlikely that a community center can ever "break even," particularly when it serves people who are on a limited budget or fixed income.
- The project developed an inventory of community assets, in the form of organizations and services available to the 50+ generation and publicized the inventory on the Parks Department website: <http://spartanburgparks.org/50-partner-agencies>.
- The project developed job descriptions and the Parks Department hired an experienced professional who is dedicated to providing Parks Department services to the 50+ generation, while also promoting inter-agency cooperation in service delivery. The position is assisted with part-time staffing. This function is expected to grow in the future.
- The Parks Department began reaching out to other agencies, organizations, businesses and individuals to form partnerships
- The Parks Department began a park enhancement program aimed at the creation of "multi-function/multi-generational parks," which have enhanced accessibility as well as adult exercise facilities like fitness trails and outdoor exercise equipment to complement existing sports fields, playgrounds and community centers.

Project Effort/Difficulty

1. What did your county have to do to accomplish its objectives?

In a word, Spartanburg County had to ACT. Spartanburg County government, by design, is a limited service operation focused on core services like law enforcement, public works and infrastructure development. The County's elected leadership tends to be fiscally conservative.

Yet, a challenge arose and Spartanburg County was uniquely suited – by virtue of the staff resources available – to bring stability to and foster improvement in an important facet of Spartanburg's quality of life.

The Senior Wellness Initiative, which was initiated by the County Administrator, working in concert with the Spartanburg County Foundation, involved nearly 30 community leaders in a task force representing higher education, health care, local governments, human service agencies and foundations. The Spartanburg County Foundation, with the assistance of Spartanburg County, hired a professional facilitator (at a cost of \$25,000) to conduct a "community conversation" about opportunities in promoting

senior wellness. Before beginning work, the task force adopted a Mission Statement and Vision Statement.

Mission: To involve local governments, institutions of higher education, non-profit and business leaders in the Spartanburg community in a focused initiative to (1) replicate the VSP model in Spartanburg County Parks Department facilities, (2) identify and meet emerging needs of the 50+ generation and (3) develop a coalition of 50+ generation leaders to serve as consultants to and volunteers at the newly-formed VSP sites.

Vision: Spartanburg County will retain and attract retirees with an integrated system of service and active involvement in identifying, designing programs for and providing information to meet the changing needs of new and current seniors.

After months of intensive meetings, research and study, which began in early FY 2013, the first stage of the project concluded and implementation began with the Parks Department's hiring of a coordinator dedicated to providing staff leadership to the program.

2. What challenges occurred during the project? Were there any community concerns?

The Parks Department had to break out of its traditional "box" of supporting youth-oriented sports and recreation programs to fully embrace an under-served and growing population.

The County Council, challenged to fund and provide core county government services, had to define a feasible role for the County, in support of a new initiative.

There was also a problem with defining the project so that it was well understood by all the parties involved. There were complications with people who saw the piece of the project in which they were interested or involved, to the exclusion or de-emphasis of the other parts. There were also people in existing agencies that saw Spartanburg County's interest as potential competition to their own program. The County had to essentially prove its good intentions and continually state that the challenges and opportunities of Spartanburg's growing 50+ generation were too great for one agency to handle alone. The County officials involved tried to emphasize that, by working together and pooling resources, all programs would become stronger. There's plenty of work to do.

For some participants, the terminology proved to be an impediment. For many, the word "senior" tends to evoke images of nursing homes or static congregate dining programs where low-income people consume meals funded by the Federal government. Spartanburg's focus has been on active seniors, a group that is not defined by age, but by interests and abilities. The Parks Department's programs, for example, serve seniors who enjoy river kayaking, competitive sports and visiting theme parks while also enjoying social interactions at instructional classes and dances. But, the facilities operated by the Parks Department also host congregate dining organized by not-for-profit organizations in the community.

Oddly enough, some of the greatest discussions involved what to name the initiative. Seniors, you see, do not like to be called "seniors" because that word seems to connote old age and infirmity. Through research and much discussion, the term "50 plus" or "50 plus generation" emerged as being the most descriptive and least offensive terms. VSP, with its various meanings (Very Special People, Very Special Place, Very Special Programs) came to be defined as a set of quality standards for community centers serving the 50+ generation as well as the programs provided by and for those citizens.

3. What were the nature and extent of the county government's efforts to alleviate the problem(s)? How difficult was it to accomplish the project's goals and/or objectives?

The County Administrator, Deputy County Administrator and Parks Department Interim Director were all members of the Senior Wellness Initiative Task Force. Later, the Recreation Manager (who is responsible for oversight of all recreation programs) and, when hired, the Program Coordinator were also

heavily involved. Other Parks Department staff members have been involved in program implementation.

While there were challenges, detailed elsewhere in this paper, and though the effort involved in the "community conversation," research and development of planning documents was significant, and though there were "nay-sayers" that voiced their opinion, there was no fundamental opposition to the concept. The time was simply "right."

4. What challenges did the project present during its undertaking? Were there any community concerns?

The largest challenge was getting past some skepticism of the agencies and organizations that serve the 50+ generation. Spartanburg County, with all of the financial challenges associated with County government, is relatively well-funded in comparison to the existing not-for-profit organizations and agencies that serve the 50+ generations. Questions as to the County's motives and intentions surfaced. As cooperation has continued and as positive developments have occurred, such concerns have lessened and all but disappeared.

5. Was financing the project an obstacle? Were there any unusual factors inherent in financing the project?

Funding, at some point in the life of any local government program, will always be an issue because there are too many competing priorities for the funds that are available. Fortunately, in the formative stages of this program, Spartanburg County had adequate resources within its Parks Department staff and its Parks Fund, to get the program off the ground. At the current level of effort, the program is financially sustainable.

The County now operates two community centers that meet the VSP standards. Another one is under construction, slated for completion in 2016. (It will replace an aging community center now operated by Spartanburg County). Five other community centers can likely be renovated or revised to meet VSP standards; development of these centers is being discussed. However, given the current economy and other priorities, it is anticipated that development of new centers will be a slow, incremental process.

Thankfully, the project also developed a funding model, which includes:

- Grant funding from the Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging,
- Challenge grant funding and organizational/grants-writing and technical assistance from the VSP Foundation.
- Local fund-raising from the community that the center will serve. (Local communities and their leaders must have "skin in the game.")
- Grant funding through Federal agencies, such as Community Development Block Grants and the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as from local foundations.
- Operations and maintenance funding by Spartanburg County, where needed.

5. Did any agencies, citizen groups, or other organizations assist your county with this project? Did they present any complications to the accomplishment of your objectives?

The project included nearly 30 community leaders representing education, health care, local governments, human service agencies and foundations. In addition, there were three community focus group convened to seek citizen input and one focus group convened to seek input from human service agencies. While the input was invaluable, the wide variety of viewpoints represented, together with the complexity of the subject, presented a degree of complication. While questions were asked, no opposition to the concept and the leadership of Spartanburg County in the program ever emerged.

6. Are there any unresolved problems or other goals left to tackle?

As noted above, the development of VSP centers will be an ongoing challenge. It is estimated that Spartanburg County's population needs about 12 - 14 VSP community centers, serving identified population centers having high concentrations of senior adults. Two are operating now. A third is under construction. Three current community centers have potential for upgrading to VSP standards. The City of Spartanburg has decided to refine its two community centers to incorporate the VSP concept.

That leaves a deficit of 4-6 community centers. Finishing the county-wide "VSP system" will probably require a decade or more.

Given the disconnected state of services for the 50+ generation in Spartanburg when the Senior Wellness Initiative began, the Spartanburg County government has paid little attention to documenting customer participation numbers (outside those of the Parks Department) and program outcomes. Instead, the County's strategy was to generate activity, communication and cooperation, hoping to build a nutrient-rich, public service-oriented environment where good, creative and exciting ideas can take root and grow.

Going forward, data collection will be an important task. The Spartanburg Community Indicators Project has offered to assist. Customer data will be useful for all partners, to further enhance communications build more cooperation and facilitate joint service planning.

Project Originality/Innovation

1. Justify the uniqueness of this project. What makes it different from other projects designed to achieve the same objective?

To our knowledge, no other community in South Carolina has tackled the problems and opportunities represented by the aging of the Baby Boom generation in such a wide-ranging and comprehensive fashion. To our knowledge, no other community has had the foresight to build a supportive infrastructure, comprised of the public and private sectors, to sustain the effort going forward.

The typical government program begins in the minds of bureaucrats, who write difficult-to-decipher plans citing goals, objectives, budgets, timelines and measurements of success. Usually, the plans are devised without the input of or participation by the very people the plans seeks to help.

Spartanburg County's approach essentially turned that philosophy upside down. The Spartanburg County Parks Department (and its partners) no longer delivers program content to program participants. Instead, the Parks Department (and its partners) listen to potential customers and arrange programs and activities to fit their needs and interests, delivered by the department itself, by volunteers or through a wide array of community partners, with the active participation of the customers.

Also, the Spartanburg County methodology recognizes that a County government, working alone, could not hope to provide the level of services necessary, given the growing population of 50+ adults and the financial challenges that face county governments. Spartanburg County sees this approach as a way to work with other public and private agencies and organizations, leveraging available county funds, to provide the maximum possible benefit to citizens of Spartanburg County.

2. Do you know of any other similar programs in South Carolina? If so, how is your program different?

There are multiple senior centers across South Carolina, operated by Councils on Aging, private agencies, special purpose districts, cities and counties. Most of them, based on our research, tend to function as adult day care facilities, offering free or subsidized meals and some level of exercise and social interaction. Spartanburg County leaders understand the need for such programs. However, the

VSP program is different because it targets active people and seeks to keep them active, with physical activity, social interaction, education, volunteerism, etc.

3. What innovations were required in accomplishing your objectives?

From the first meeting of the Task Force, it was emphasized that the Senior Wellness Initiative could not become the creation of a local government program to serve up services to uninvolved and reluctant participants. Spartanburg community leaders sought a different approach using the unique tools available to both the public and private sectors. The program design was also highly inclusive. A recurring theme was "there's plenty of work to be done...no one is trying to 'take over'...we need everyone's help...we don't care who gets the credit."

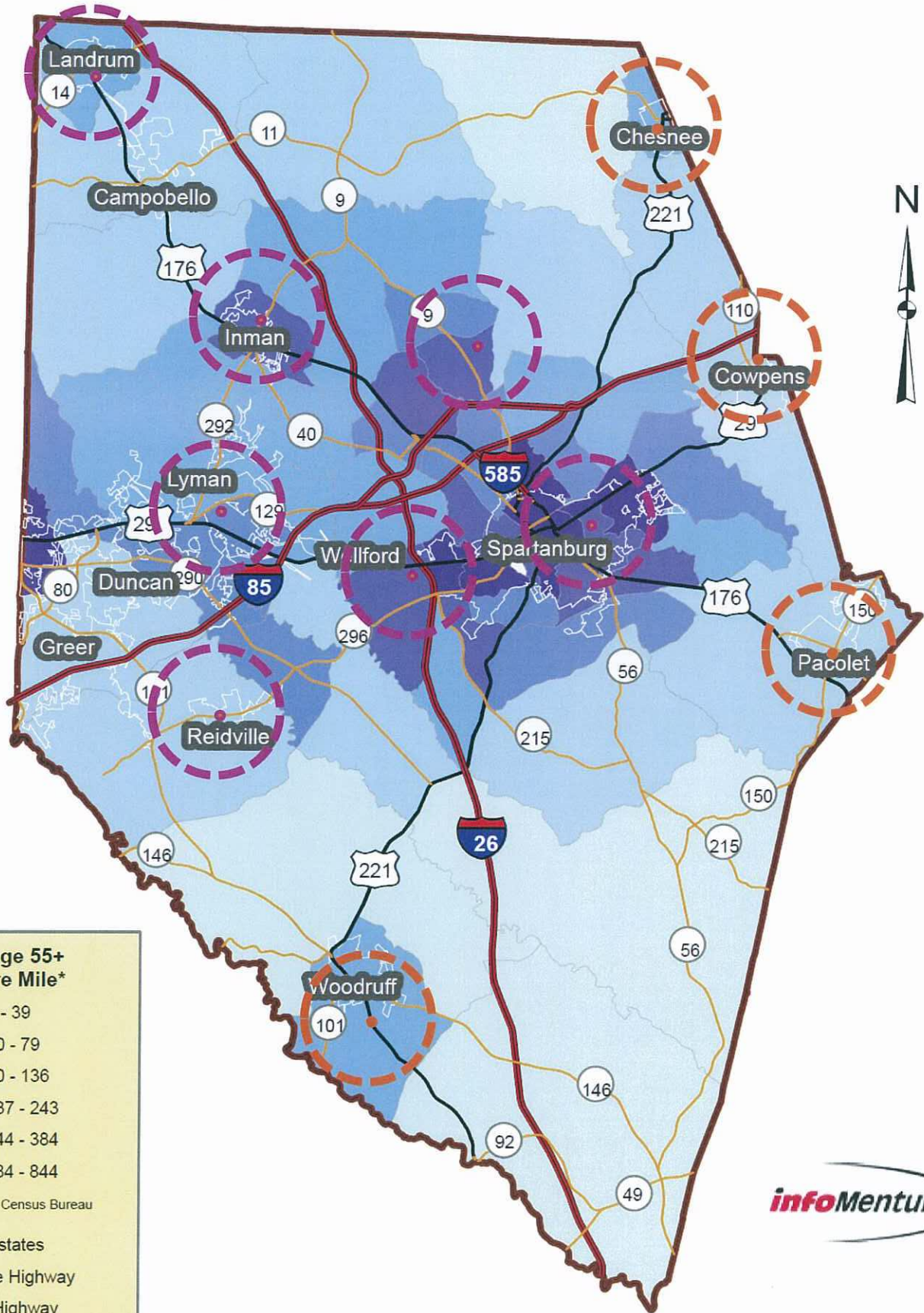
Spartanburg County – like the state's other 45 counties, is challenged by a need for improved infrastructure, funding State-mandated services plus combating crime and other community ills, all while keeping property taxes and fees low. The financial challenge of providing core services is one of the reasons that Spartanburg County and its partners injected a heavy amount of private-sector involvement and innovation into the Senior Wellness Project.

4. Who provided the creativity and imagination in your project?

The principle gardeners for the planting and cultivation of Spartanburg's Very Special Community Garden of Wellness Opportunities were:

- Nancy Ogle, the visionary who planted the seed of the Chesnee VSP Center, was an active participant in the Senior Wellness Initiative as well as a being a cheerful and supportive consultant to the Parks Department staff.
- The late Elaine Harris, Mayor of the Town of Pacolet, provided enthusiasm, a love for the older citizens of her community and a passion for the redevelopment of Pacolet, generally, and the construction of the Pacolet Village Center (A Very Special Place), specifically.
- Terry Cash, a local business person who specializes in private investments in real estate, long-term care facilities, and pharmacies, was the motivator for the project. A prime mover in founding of the VSP Center in Chesnee, Mr. Cash has long been actively involved in the Spartanburg community, serving on a variety of boards and commissions. He recruited the Senior Wellness Initiative task force and chaired the steering committee.
- The facilitator hired for the project, Dr. Linda Salane, a retired professor from Columbia College, was invaluable in helping Spartanburg leaders see things, not as they are, but as they should be.
- Katherine O'Neill, County Administrator and Jim Hipp, Deputy County Administrator, provided quiet behind-the-scenes leadership, called meetings to resolve issues when necessary and kept the Spartanburg County Council "in the loop."
- Mary Thomas, Chief Operating Officer of the Spartanburg County Foundation, helped fund and support the Senior Wellness Initiative Task Force, adding a wealth of valuable experience to the process of forming the end products.
- Jim Campbell, Interim Director of Parks and Recreation, provided the "nuts and bolts" organization of the program.
- Kristie Oliver, Recreation Coordinator II, serves as the tireless, self-starting, partnership-building, make-things-happen backbone of the program.

2010 Density of Population Age 55+ Spartanburg County, South Carolina



**Persons Age 55+
Per Square Mile***

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Lightest Blue | 6 - 39 |
| Light Blue | 40 - 79 |
| Medium Blue | 80 - 136 |
| Dark Blue | 137 - 243 |
| Very Dark Blue | 244 - 384 |
| Darkest Blue | 384 - 844 |

* 2010 Census, US Census Bureau

- Interstates
- State Highway
- US Highway
- Municipalities
- County Boundary



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Updated 1 hour ago



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Low cost Summer wellness programs for residents 50...



Studio Session: Luke Combs



Low cost Summer wellness programs for residents 50 and older

Updated Tuesday, June 23, 2015

From Pickle Ball to cooking classes, Spartanburg Parks offers many wellness programs to those 50 and older, many of them at low or...

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Moments of the Week



Ultra Selfies of the Week
Updated: May 22, 2015 11:14 AM EDT

Our viewers share their favorite selfies of the week, brought to you by The

UltraSkin Wax Center. www.ultaskinwaxcenter.com

Studio 62 Salutes Moms
Updated: May 08, 2015 11:27 AM EDT

We feature pictures of your mom for Mother's Day.

UltraSmile Moment: Merry Falls and Cascade Lake Dam

Updated: May 04, 2015 11:28 AM EDT

JG brings you this UltraSmile Moment of the Week from Merry Falls and Cascade Lake Dam near Brevard, NC-

-brought to by our friends at The UltraSkin Wax Center in Greenville.

Hot Event of the Week



Former Byrnes star Prince Miller hosting skills camp
June 13
Updated: May 29, 2015 11:19

AM EDT

Former Byrnes, UGA star Prince Miller tells us about his new project, Miller Sports Academy and his summer skills camp happening June 13-14 at Upward Star Center. Register Now: http://www.millersportsacademy.com/summer_skills_camp

Kidding Around: Free and cheap summer activities

Updated: May 29, 2015 11:12 AM EDT

Bethany Winston with Kidding Around Greenville is here with information about free and \$1 outdoor movies, free bowling and skating and more. Get

more

info: <https://www.facebook.com/events/475976939221811/?ref=98or> or www.kiddingaroundgreenville.com

Hot Event: Hey Look! Music Festival Saturday featuring 14 bands

Updated: May 28, 2015 11:13 AM EDT

Photo Galleries

Pics: Spring flowers around the upstate
Updated: Apr 27, 2015 8:44 AM EDT



JG shows you what is making him smile right now! Bright Spring colors around the upstate.

Pics: Cathedral of Junk, Austin

Updated: Apr 21, 2015 8:33 AM EDT

JG takes you on a visit to the unique attraction, The Cathedral of Junk in Austin, Texas. For more info on Vince Hannemann's

collection: <http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/7816>

Pics: Imagine Upstate Festival

Updated: Apr 06, 2015 8:47 AM EDT

JG checks out the 1st Imagine Upstate Festival in Downtown Greenville. www.imagineupstate.org

Spartanburg County installing fitness equipment in parks

By FELICIA KITZMILLER

felicia.kitzmiller@shj.com

Published: Saturday, February 14, 2015 at 4:49 p.m.

Tyger River Park visitors can now pack more fitness into their time, and visitors to four other county parks soon will have the same opportunities.

On Friday, crews finished installing seven pieces of stationary fitness equipment along the 1.25-mile walking trail at Tyger River Park. Each station offers users several exercising options, at varying levels of difficulty. The stations are evenly spaced along the path, and used together provide a workout for all major muscle groups.



ALEX HICKS JR./alex.hicks@shj.com

Spartanburg County Parks Department is installing stationary fitness equipment along the walking trails at Tyger River Park. The park staff and others checked on the progress of the project on Thursday.

"You could technically do this 1.25-mile walk and get a total body workout," said Jon Woodsby, recreation manager for the Spartanburg County Parks Department.

Similar equipment is set to be installed at four other parks – North Spartanburg, Old Canaan Road, Woodruff Leisure Center and Cleveland Park – by the end of February. The fitness trails at those locations are considerably shorter than the one at Tyger River Park, so the equipment will be clustered together in one location, Woodsby said. While the specific equipment and exercises will vary among the locations, they will all have multiple exercises, varying levels of difficulty, and be accessible for people with disabilities, Woodsby said.

County Councilwoman Jane Hall, who visits the park regularly to walk with her dog, said the fitness equipment correlates with the countywide initiative to help people become more active and healthy, reducing the occurrence of heart disease, diabetes and other conditions that hamper quality of life.

"My goal is to get the people who are walking in the cemeteries or on the open road and get them in here in a safe environment," she said.

The walking trail and fitness equipment are also part of a strategy by the parks department to ensure every county park offers something for everyone, Woodsby said.

"That's just terrible to me, to have a park beside people's houses and nothing for them to do," he said.

Installation of the fitness equipment at all five parks is expected to cost \$151,000, Hall said. The money was not originally budgeted, but was set aside as various projects came in under budget.

Trey Glover, park operations manager, said there is no reliable data on how many people visit Tyger River Park when the ball fields are not in use, but he estimates daily traffic has increased about 20 to 30 percent since the walking trail was

completed this fall. He said he expects that to increase with installation of fitness equipment and warmer weather.

“It’s that old saying ‘if you build it, they will come,’” Glover said.

After many delays and cost overruns, Tyger River Park, which was opened in March 2012, is expected to be completed by this spring. The last component, four picnic shelters and a batting cage, are being added this winter. A grand re-opening is planned in April, during the annual Easter egg scramble.

Development of the 140-acre park has been arduous, but Hall said it has been a worthwhile endeavor.

“For the activity we’re seeing at the park, I don’t think we can say it wasn’t a good investment,” she said.

More from Felicia Kitzmiller: [Twitter](#) | [Articles](#)

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

JOHN YANCEY MCGILL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



POST OFFICE BOX 142
COLUMBIA, S.C. 29202
(803) 734-2080

August 21, 2014

Mr. Ridge Garland
VSP Club of Senior Centers
302 East Manning Street
Chesnee, South Carolina 29323

Dear Mr. Garland:

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting your senior center recently, and I greatly appreciate you taking time out of your day to discuss some of the concerns in your area with my staff and me.

Senior citizens are the "Greatest Generation." Throughout their lives, they have contributed more to society than we can ever imagine. Now, in their golden years, we have an obligation to express our appreciation and gratitude by ensuring, at the least, their most basic needs are met.

During my visit, we agreed to help your site with improvements. Enclosed, you will find a form that will help our office keep track of equipment that has been delivered to your center (or will soon be delivered) for use by seniors in your area. Please complete the form, and return it to our office in the envelope provided, along with any packing slip(s) and/or shipping receipt(s) from your delivered items.

I appreciate your hard work and dedication, and I look forward to visiting you again in the near future to see these improvements in use. Thank you for all that you continue to do to enhance the lives of seniors in your area.

Sincerely,


John Yancey McGill
Lieutenant Governor

Enclosure

JYM/hp



Junie L. White
Mayor
145 West Broad Street
Spartanburg, SC 29306
(864) 596-2033
(864) 596-2313
Junius502@bellsouth.net
www.cityofspartanburg.org

June 19, 2015

City of Spartanburg

To Whom It May Concern:

Relationships between cities and counties can sometimes become thorny, but I can honestly say that cooperation between the City of Spartanburg and Spartanburg County has never been better. Particularly in the area of parks and recreation, the city and county staff members work closely together in a number of programs, the most recent of which is the VSP concept for high-quality community centers serving the 50+ generation.

The City of Spartanburg currently operates two community centers that provide services to seniors. One of our City Councilmembers, Jan Scalisi, was an active member of the Senior Wellness Initiative that birthed the Very Special Places, or VSP, community center model.

It is the City of Spartanburg's intention to apply the VSP model to the community centers we operate and to take advantage of the network of community partners that the Spartanburg County Parks Department has developed.

Spartanburg City and County are working together in a true spirit of cooperation. And thus, Spartanburg citizens are better served.

Sincerely

Junie L. White
Mayor

"Time Well Spent"



The City of Woodruff

June 23, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

The Town of Woodruff is pleased to endorse Spartanburg County's application for the S.C. Association of County's Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award.

The Town of Woodruff works closely with Spartanburg County government in a number of ways, particularly in parks and recreation. The Spartanburg County Parks Department has operated the Woodruff Leisure Center, a community center where senior services are delivered, for many years. The services range from congregate dining... to group exercise...to exciting educational programs delivered by a network of community partners.

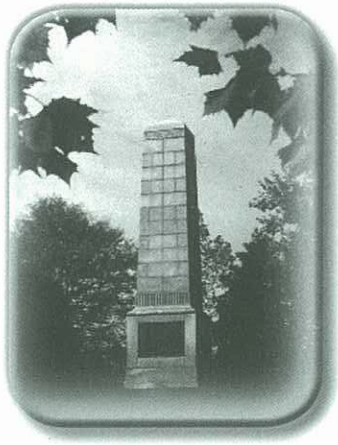
Most recently, Spartanburg County has expanded the services available near the center with installation of a .85-mile fitness trail located on City-owned land and the installation of an outdoor fitness center.

Active seniors in the Woodruff community have given the fitness trail and outdoor fitness center rave reviews. On a daily basis, one can see active seniors building their physical and mental health, remaining engaged in community life.

The City of Woodruff looks forward to the great things that will continue to develop from our close partnership with Spartanburg County. They are doing great things. It is my fervent hope that the S.C. Association of Counties will give them the recognition they so richly deserve.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Monroe Tillerson, AICP
City Manager



TOWN OF COWPENS

1776 – Historic American City – 1976

P.O. Drawer 1399 • Cowpens, South Carolina 29330
Phone (864) 463-3201 • Fax (864) 463-8559

June 17, 2015

South Carolina Association of Counties

Re: Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Competition

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation Department in support of its application for the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award 2015. As Mayor of the Town of Cowpens, I have been fortunate to work with the Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation Department in many capacities with great results over the years. However, in the last two years, we have been further blessed to work in partnership with Parks and Recreation in the management and administration of our Timken Community Center.

With the completion of the building in May, 2014, the Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation followed through on all of its promises to completely manage the day-to-day operations of the Center. The Department has designed and implemented a large variety of programming for children, adults and senior adults. The efficiency and cooperation of the Department has been greater than I could have ever imagined. Further, the Department stepped in when a local fitness center was unable to serve in the Center as planned, and has planned and is in the process of opening a fitness center for the community managed by the Department which will set the standard for community fitness for all ages in our Town.

We are proud of the great community spirit exhibited by the Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation Department and look forward to many more years of partnership with it.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Hamrick

Mayor



Donald Revis
Willie Crocker, Jr.
Sarah Isaac
Betty W. Littlejohn
Josephine McBeth
David Williams

COUNCILMEMBERS

MAYOR

Toni E. Kirby
TOWN CLERK

Robert Ivey, Sr.
CHIEF OF POLICE

To Whom It May Concern:

The Town of Pacolet is pleased to endorse Spartanburg County's application for the S.C. Association of County's Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award.

The Town of Pacolet works closely with Spartanburg County government in a number of ways, but we have really "connected" on the subject of services to the many 50+ residents who live in our community. The Spartanburg County Parks Department has operated the T.W. Edwards Center, a community center where senior services are delivered, for many years. The services range from congregate dining to group exercise. The people who frequent the Center come from Cherokee County and Union County as well as Spartanburg County.

More recently, Elaine Harris, our late Mayor, was a participant in the "Senior Wellness Initiative" which developed the VSP concept for facilities and services targeted to the Baby Boom generation. Mayor Harris' most cherished dream for the Town of Pacolet was a new community center, based on the VSP model, to replace the T.W. Edwards Center. That center is now taking shape within a historic textile building. It is expected to be open in early 2016. Again, Spartanburg County is working closely with the Town on this project, providing needed services in planning, grants-writing and project management. The Spartanburg County Parks Department will manage the new center when it is completed.

Spartanburg County's actions, directed to developing quality facilities and encouraging cooperation among agencies that serve the 50+ generation, is certainly worthy of recognition. Our hope is that Spartanburg County's optimistic viewpoint for the future of the growing number of 50+ residents can be replicated across the State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald A. Revis". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light-colored background.

Donald A. Revis
Mayor Pro-Tem



County of Spartanburg

Post Office Box 5666
TELEPHONE (864) 596-2526
FAX (864) 596-2232
koneill@spartanburgcounty.org

Spartanburg, South Carolina 29304

KATHERINE L. O'NEILL
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

June 24, 2015

South Carolina Association of Counties
Post Office Box 8207
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Members:

I am writing in support of the application for the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award for Spartanburg County's efforts by working through the parks department to partner with Spartanburg's municipalities as well as private entities, foundations and non-profits to ramp up the senior wellness initiative across Spartanburg County.

As County Administrator, I am proud to say Spartanburg County has a strong history of commitment to partnerships, especially for the benefit of our citizens. In this particular case, the County and its partners turned the process "upside down". We asked and listened to the 50+ citizenry to learn more about this ever-changing population we refer to as seniors. They had a lot to say. Their needs and wants are so vastly different from what we have seen in traditional offerings for "seniors." The conversations have happened, the plans are in place and the implementation is underway. Spartanburg is going to give seniors what they want – a place to exercise their mind, body and spirit.

I am very humbled by the dedicated participation of our municipalities, non-profits, foundations and private partners. This initiative will be realized because our community supports and applauds collaboration. It is for this very reason, Spartanburg County and its partners are deserving of this very meaningful and cherished award.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katherine O'Neill
County Administrator

Serving Seniors Since 1972

499 W. Rutledge Avenue • Gaffney, S.C. 29341



Your Local Area Agency On Aging

(864) 489-3868 • FAX (864) 487-2767

June 23, 2015

South Carolina Association of Counties

RE: Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Competition

To Whom It May Concern:

Senior Centers of Cherokee County would like to offer its support for Spartanburg County's application for the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award.

Senior Centers and Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation supports and encourages community partnerships that seek to build within the older population disease prevention and wellness as a lifestyle habit. The Timken Community Center in Cowpens, is a well-designed partnership that mobilizes at the community level the aging network, health care providers, and other non-profit agencies to implement low-cost evidence-based disease and disability prevention programs for older people.

We are happy to have been offered the opportunity to work with Spartanburg County in this effort. Senior Centers of Cherokee along with Spartanburg Parks and Recreation can assure you that the full range of senior services is available and accessible to our residents. Senior Centers of Cherokee County (a 501©3 agency) has a 40-year history of providing access to programs, meals and services that enable older people to remain independent, in their home and connected to the community. We wholeheartedly promise our support and available resources to this worthwhile proposal. We look forward to a successful partnership that will truly be a blessing in the community.

Sincerely,

Amy Turner

Executive Director

Enjoying the Journey!

Caman Group, Inc.
Post Office Box 280
Chesnee, South Carolina 29323
864-703-5100

June 18, 2015

South Carolina Association of Counties
Post Office Box 8207
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Re: Spartanburg County – Nominee for the Barrett Lawrimore Regional Cooperation Award 2015

Dear Members:

Please accept this letter in support of Spartanburg County's application to receive the Barrett Lawrimore Regional Cooperation Award for their vision to create and implement a public/private partnership focusing on Senior Wellness throughout Spartanburg County.

Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the American population with different expectations than the generations before them. The leadership at Spartanburg County recognized this opportunity and began to partner with local foundations, municipalities, community leaders and healthcare organizations to create something truly unique to engage this community asset. By creating an environment in county and city parks facilities, that historically were youth oriented, a proven senior program that existed in the Chesnee community could be expanded throughout the county. The VSP Center in Chesnee had been operating for a decade with phenomenal growth and state recognition for excellence by the Lt. Governor's Office on Ageing. By utilizing existing parks facilities for VSP certified sites Spartanburg County government provides a valuable service to seniors without additional taxpayer funding.

The Senior Wellness Initiative proves Spartanburg County is a leader in understanding the needs of an ageing population and doing something to address it. They have raised the bar in the way senior services can be expanded to meet demand without straining already stretched budgets. Please accept this endorsement for Spartanburg County to receive the Barrett Lawrimore Regional Cooperation Award.

Sincerely yours,



Terry L. Cash
President

Why Not Now?

consulting • training • coaching

1898 Calhoun Street, Number 8 Rainbow Row • Columbia, SC 29201 • 803-360-7349 • lindasalane@gmail.com

Memorandum

June 19, 2015

To: South Carolina Association of Counties

From: Dr. Linda Salane

Subject: Support for Spartanburg Senior Wellness Initiative

The Senior Wellness Initiative organized in Spartanburg County as a public-private partnership is a superb example of collaboration, community commitment and excellent implementation. Based on the VSP Club model first developed in Chesnee, South Carolina, the Senior Wellness Initiative is a network of 21st Century senior centers embedded in selected county parks facilities. Each center has an advisory committee of users who ensure that programs and services are relevant to the seniors living in that area. Moving away from cookie cutter senior centers, this model allows each center to have a distinct personality, program and approach while maintaining a focus on wellness in its broadest sense.

I was privileged to work with the Senior Wellness Initiative when it was first conceptualized. Through an agreement with the Spartanburg County Parks Department, the idea to develop senior focused programs to support and attract the large number of upcoming seniors had a home. Through the leadership of the Spartanburg County Foundation, the sponsoring organization collaborated with key stakeholders, senior service providers and donors. They engaged the community in a year-long dialogue to ensure that there was not a duplication of services but a networked collaboration to deliver programs to seniors.

The model is simple- use existing facilities to serve as a magnet for seniors in specific areas of Spartanburg County. The Spartanburg County Parks Department hired a program coordinator to facilitate program development, create and convene advisory committees and ensure coordination among senior centers.

The result is amazing. VSP Facilities have concentrated and purposeful attention to and programs for seniors. Seniors are engaged in planning and participate in large numbers. Programs are uniquely developed for specific populations. Senior services are networked through the County Parks webpage. Partner agencies like the hospital provide services and programs in geographic locations that feel like home to the seniors. It is literally a program where everyone wins!

It is a program that could be replicated throughout South Carolina and should be honored and highlighted as an example of excellence in senior programming.

Muffet Chapman, Chairwoman
Mike Kohler, Vice Chair
Colleen Keith, Secretary
Jason Lynch, Treasurer
Martin Cornelson
Trey Finney
Beth Hrubala
Jeffrey Lehrer
Judy McCravy
Tom McLeod
Tom Nederostek
Dr. Charles White

June 17, 2015

South Carolina Association of Counties
Post Office Box 8207
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Members:

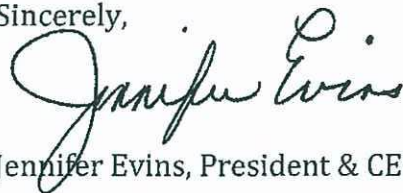
It is our pleasure to write this letter in support of Spartanburg County's application for the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award. As the lead arts agency for Spartanburg County, we collaborate in numerous ways, and appreciate the spirit of cooperation shown by Spartanburg County and their Parks Department not only with us but within our community.

Dr. Wes Alexander
Dr. Ashley Allen
Ingo Angermeier
William Barnet III
Bert Barre
Virginia Benintende
Dr. Fritz Butehorn III
Beth Cecil
William Cobb
Hon. J. Derham Cole Jr.
Julian Crawford
Christopher Crowley
Angelina Painter Eschauzier
Dr. Ron Garner
Hon. Jeff Horton
Julie Lowry
Hon. Shane Martin
Jayne Moorman
Dr. Chuck Morrow
Sharon Porter
Prema Samhat
Hon. Jan Scalisi
Jaime Wall
Pete Weisman
Vicki Yeatman

We are excited about the partnerships that have been developed, to serve more fully, the 50+ citizens. As is the trend across this state and the nation, our aging population is growing significantly. We must all work together to ensure the physical, social, and spiritual needs of this important segment of our population are being met.

We applaud Spartanburg County's initiative in this area and support the concept and implementation fully.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Evins, President & CEO



BALLET SPARTANBURG



Artists Guild
SPARTANBURG



June 17, 2015

SC Association of Counties
P. O. Box 8207
Columbia, SC 29202

RE: Spartanburg County application for Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional
Cooperation Award

To whom it may concern:

It is with great pleasure that the Upstate Family Resource Center provides this letter of support on behalf of Spartanburg County and their ever present spirit of support. It has been my experience since opening our doors in 2007 that Spartanburg County goes above and beyond not only in partnering, but also in seeking out opportunities to partner.

Over the last several years it has become apparent that our community of Boiling Springs in northern Spartanburg County has a need for Senior Services. Spartanburg County has been diligent in seeking out partnerships to provide these needed services. Recently, an opportunity presented itself for them to meet with a local private park facility to discuss a potential collaboration. I couldn't have been more excited and hopeful as we learned about Spartanburg County's partnerships in other parts of our community and what was being accomplished. This of course led to the discussion of potential programing possibilities and resources available to benefit seniors in our community. It was so obvious that Spartanburg County is poised and ready to partner to provide services.

Because of Spartanburg County's spirit of partnership and leadership in our community I am certain we will be successful in meeting this need in our community.

Sincerely,



Kelley Ezell
Executive Director



THE SPARTANBURG COUNTY FOUNDATION
Your Community Foundation

June 23, 2015

Ms. Marcia Murff
Public Relations and Development Manager
Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation
9039 Fairforest Road
Spartanburg, SC 29301

Dear Ms. Murff:

The Spartanburg County Foundation enthusiastically supports and recommends Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation to receive the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award for its work in ensuring Spartanburg County seniors have the support and resources to remain independent, healthy, active, and engaged in the greater Spartanburg community.

In 2013, The Spartanburg County Foundation began a partnership – the Senior Wellness Initiative - with Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation to address the growing needs of Spartanburg County's senior population. As a community partner, we are keenly aware of the health and well-being of our senior citizens in Spartanburg County. Data from the Spartanburg Community Indicators Project shows that since 2003, the percentage of seniors in the County population has increased annually, demonstrating that the median age of the county population is increasing. Further, the population is older in Spartanburg County as compared to the state and national median age, and it is increasing at a steeper rate.

The Senior Wellness Initiative is focused on creating VSP (very special places) Centers throughout Spartanburg County so that seniors continue to be engaged in the community. For the past two years, the Foundation has partnered with Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation to convene community leaders, funders, service providers, and seniors in the development of a vision, mission, and criteria for these VSP sites as well as the establishment of two pilot sites in Chesnee and Cowpens. I have had the privilege of being involved with this Initiative from day one and will continue lending my support moving forward.

I offer my absolute endorsement for this prestigious recognition and am happy to speak with the awards committee regarding our support for Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation and the pressing needs that are being addressed through this innovative Initiative. I may be reached at (864) 582.0138.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Thomas
Chief Operating Officer

MLT/jlm



KATHY DUNLEAVY
PRESIDENT & CEO

June 17, 2015

South Carolina Association of Counties
P.O. Box 8207
Columbia, SC 29202

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I provide this letter of support for Spartanburg Parks in their application for the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award.

Spartanburg Parks' senior wellness initiative has been a terrific example of collaborative work. As a health legacy foundation, one of our focus areas is Healthy Eating/Active Living. We enjoy a great relationship with Spartanburg Parks and are pleased that they lead by example and make sure all stakeholders are at the table.

Spartanburg has been chosen as one of five communities across the country to participate in the Way to Wellville Challenge. Five issues have been defined to work on for five years to improve the health and economic vitality of our community. A major reason we were selected was because of the collaborativeness of this community. All sectors work well together and individual agendas are put aside for the good of the group. We are pleased to have Spartanburg Parks as a partner.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Katherine A. Dunleavy'.

Katherine A. Dunleavy
President/CEO



**United Way
of the Piedmont**

June 24, 2015

South Carolina Association of Counties
Post Office Box 8207
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Members:

The United Way of the Piedmont is an entity created to provide services through partnerships and fundraising for worthwhile non-profits in Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union Counties. In leading this type of organization, it is truly heartwarming to see a governmental entity be the host of essential discussions and action on the segment of our population that many times is overlooked and underserved.

Our senior population is being recruited to voice their desires and needs for services, activities and programs. What a welcome change it is to see this type of grassroots effort...listening to those that will benefit from the initiative and giving them what they want.

I support Spartanburg County's senior wellness initiative. They have done an excellent job of bringing all to the table to create a master plan for the aging.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Eberhart". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Doug Eberhart
CEO

P.O. Box 5624, Spartanburg, SC 29304
Phone: 864-582-7556 or Toll Free: 866-345-3086
Fax: 864-582-9826
www.uwpiedmont.org