2020 Awards Competition – ENTRY SUMMARIES

August 26, 2020
SC ETV

J. MITCHELL GRAHAM MEMORIAL AWARD

Berkeley County
The ManuFirstSC™ initiative was developed to support Berkeley County manufacturing industries by providing residents with an innovative pathway to a long-term career. The program is the first of its kind, pioneered in Berkeley County in 2017. Berkeley County continues to expand the program by bringing it into communities and high schools. To date, 1,090 people have been trained for manufacturing positions in the Charleston Region, including approximately 100 high school students and 400 other Berkeley County citizens.

Charleston County
Charleston County Public Library, like many organizations, closed its doors and sent its workforce home as the COVID-19 virus spread. What happened in the following weeks displayed the organization's innovation, responsiveness, and dedication to the community by creating the building blocks for future emergency situations. The library now has a strong operating model for continuation of service during future closures — whether from a resurgence of COVID-19, hurricanes, flooding, or other natural and public health disasters.

Lancaster County
Lancaster County's EMS Department responded to the statewide shortage of qualified EMTs by developing the first-of-its-kind in South Carolina EMS Boot Camp program. EMS Boot Camp is a 12-week program of classroom, self-study, skills lab, and direct observation on an ambulance that prepares qualified applicants to care for victims of sudden illness or injury. Upon successful completion, students are eligible for national and state certification exams. Once required certifications are obtained, part-time employment is guaranteed.

Pickens County
To save as many animals as possible, the Pickens County Animal Shelter successfully transitioned from an animal control facility whose sole purpose was removal of stray animals to a county-operated adoption facility. The adoption program enhances the quality of life for county citizens by matching them with pets that provide companionship and a sense of security, as well as better mental and physical health. This year, the project achieved a 100 percent "save rate".

Union County
Yearly census estimates show a trend of declining population across rural S.C. These negative trends can be attributed to quality of life challenges and lack of opportunity. Long term community impacts include economic development, workforce challenges, and increasing levels of poverty. Education and technical training are key factors in improving opportunity and quality of life. Union County partnered with local industry, the school district, and area colleges to expand access to post-secondary training for residents.

BARRETT LAWRIMORE MEMORIAL REGIONAL COOPERATION AWARD

Berkeley County
Project SEARCH prepares teens and young adults with special needs for success in employment opportunities. Throughout the school year, special needs students and interns work in various Berkeley County departments developing skills and training to prepare them for future jobs. The county works with Berkeley County School District to make this program possible in Berkeley County.

Charleston County
In 2019, Charleston County's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) launched the Dialogue to Change (DLC) project to expand community engagement to better inform and involve the public in improving the local criminal justice system. This project is an example of facilitating meaningful collaboration between community members and system leaders in justice reform. The DLC project identified community priorities, raised awareness of critical challenges, and brought the community together to find solutions. The results of this collaboration will help shape the county's criminal justice system to best meet the needs of the citizens.

Dorchester County
Dorchester County worked in partnership with the Lake Marion Regional Water Agency, Santee Cooper, and the Army Corps of Engineers to construct the Dorchester Reach, a critical water transmission line. The completion of the Reach provides a great opportunity to improve the quality of life for residents with the provision of clean, safe drinking water; reduction in the cost of insurance due to an improved ISO rating; job creation; and economic growth and prosperity in western Dorchester County.

Pickens County
Pickens County collaborated with municipalities and non-profits to establish the Community Crisis Task Force. The task force can be activated at any time for a swift response to threats towards the health and well-being of county residents. The task force was first deployed in response to a series of weather events and the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing the county to meet the public's immediate needs for public information, financial assistance, and food.

Union County

Union County, like much of rural SC, has struggled to maintain access to primary healthcare. In 2015, the financially fragile county hospital district declared bankruptcy. Union county negotiated a deal for the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System to assume operation of the county hospital, but many long-term primary care physicians retired leaving many residents without access to primary care. To alleviate the issue, Union County partnered with the SC DHEC and ReGenesis Healthcare to recruit a federal qualified health clinic to provide primary care to the underserved citizens of the community.

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RESILIENCY SHOWCASE

Berkeley County
From acquisition of protective equipment to continual communications to coordination with other agencies for testing sites and blood drives, Berkeley County took early action to ensure citizens and staff were prepared, informed, and safe. The county formed a task force, advanced remote access capability, enhanced safety to address pandemic concerns, and continues to monitor and mitigate spread of the virus. Leaders worked with staff to develop plans and methods to ensure businesses could operate through the pandemic in a safe way.

Calhoun County
The Calhoun County Museum provided vital emotional support during the restriction and isolation of the COVID-19 crisis by bringing the museum and other county programs into citizens' homes. The program was especially important to older residents and parents teaching from home. The museum provided non-stop service through Facebook, Zoom, its website, and telephone. Citizens from 20 South Carolina counties and 20 states connected to the museum and its historical information, genealogy, and audio-video presentations.

Charleston County
To help contain the spread of COVID-19 in Charleston County, staff launched a comprehensive mobile testing strategy. The measure focused on under-served areas with limited travel capabilities and internet access. The testing sites assisted both pre-registered patients and walk-up clients. The county collaborated with Fetter Health Care Network and completed more than 1,000 citizen tests for COVID-19 in its first week of mobile testing. Eventually, more testing sites were added and, as of June 26, more than 4,000 people were tested.

Dorchester County
Dorchester County's response to COVID-19 began with the formation of a COVID-19 Task Force. The group worked tirelessly with county council, elected and appointed officials, and department heads to develop mitigation strategies, including public messaging and contingency plans for COVID-19. The county's priority was protecting employees and citizens through safety and sanitation measures and effective public messaging. Team Dorchester County continues to use innovative ways to ensure continuity of government operations.

Georgetown County
When COVID-19 hit South Carolina, Georgetown County was in the difficult position of not having a county administrator. Still, the county's staff and the new administrator (who came on board in April) have handled the pandemic and all the challenges it presented in a way it is proud of, working diligently — and at times creatively — to protect the health and safety of residents.

Horry County
Like counties across our state and country, Horry County experienced significant impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With challenges unique to a rapidly growing community and tourist destination, strategic operational planning and communication were critical to maintaining the local economy while keeping the community healthy and safe. Horry County implemented technology improvements, new programs, and updated standards to meet the challenges of the pandemic.

Kershaw County
On March 7, 2020, the first patient in Kershaw County and the State of South Carolina tested positive for COVID-19, followed two weeks later by the first death from the virus. Immediately, Kershaw County became the epicenter and the face of the virus within the state. Within a matter of days, the county became one of the most impacted in America. The professional response to this pandemic is a testament to the Kershaw County staff and the community they serve.

Lancaster County
COVID-19 impacted every employee and government service in Lancaster County. The unprecedented nature of the pandemic, concern for the safety of employees and their families, the overwhelming amount of information from federal and state agencies, and the rapid spread of the virus mandated a deliberate, focused, and proactive approach to the crisis. County employees shouldered unique COVID-19 challenges and served the public by performing their duties with extraordinary professionalism, teamwork, compassion, energy, and resiliency.

Pickens County
KickStart Pickens County was the county's three-phase COVID-19 revitalization plan to ensure a gradual, intentional approach to reopening with consideration for public health and the local economy. As restrictions were eased to get back to a "new normal" after closures to the public, the county's careful plan allowed the county offices time to assess the needs to keep the public and staff safe as various facilities opened.

Spartanburg County
To meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Spartanburg County took a "OneSpartanburg" approach and benefitted from the teamwork and synergy that is created when a community and county unite for a common cause. This approach brought together community partners and subject matter experts from diverse backgrounds to respond to COVID-19.

Williamsburg County
Williamsburg County rose to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 crisis with strong leadership and creative solutions. Continuity of government services was the county's main concern. From county staff sewing masks and gowns for medical workers, to the Sheriff's Department taking responsibility for sanitizing public buildings, to members of the community donating items to meet the county's needs, county staff and citizens contributed in creative ways. "Williamsburg Strong" arose from hard work, flexibility, cooperation, and commitment.