



SOUTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

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SCAC ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE ASSOCIATION'S 2020 AWARDS COMPETITION

South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC) held a Virtual Watch Party at 10 a.m. on Thursday, October 1 at the SCETV Studio in Columbia to announce the five counties that won awards in the Association's 2020 Awards Competition on August 26 at SCETV. SCAC also recognized 10 counties that presented entries in the COVID-19 Response and Resiliency Showcase, a new segment added to this year's competition that was not adjudicated. SCAC's Virtual Watch Party, like this year's Awards Competition, was livestreamed on Facebook and on SCAC's website at www.SCCounties.org

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, this is the first time that SCAC's Annual Awards Competition has not been held at Association's annual conference in Head Head Island.

LANCASTER COUNTY WINS 2020 J. MITCHELL GRAHAM MEMORIAL AWARD

Lancaster County won the 2020 J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award for its EMS Boot Camp.

"Lancaster County has taken an innovative approach to address the continuing shortage of qualified emergency medical technicians," said William E. Tomes, Fellow, Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities, College of Charleston, who headed the three-judge panel evaluating this year's competition. "Working with the local technical college and the U.S. Department of Labor, the EMS Boot Camp guides qualified applicants through a 12-week program of classroom, self-study, skills lab and direct experience in an ambulance to prepare participants to care for victims of sudden illness or injury.

"Graduates of the program are eligible to take state and national certification exams, and employment is guaranteed once they receive their certifications," Tomes added. "Five students graduated this year from Lancaster County's EMS Boot Camp, and all of them passed their National Registry exams. Now, this fast-growing county is fully staffed with EMS personnel who are committed to helping their county provide high quality pre-hospital care for residents and visitors."

This is the 48th year the SCAC has awarded the J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award. The award, named in honor of the late J. Mitchell Graham who served as SCAC president from 1969 to 1970, recognizes counties that address community challenges, implement operational improvements, or enhance their citizens' quality of life in a unique way.

BERKELEY, PICKENS AND UNION COUNTIES RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTION AWARDS

Each year for SCAC's annual awards program, county entries are grouped in the following categories: counties with populations under 50,000; counties with populations between 50,000 and 150,000; and counties with populations greater than 150,000. Counties compete and provide 10-minute presentations before a panel of judges during the competition.

Honorable Mention awards are presented when merited in each of the three population categories.

This year, in the category for counties with populations less than 50,000, **Union County** won an Honorable Mention for its Higher Education and Workforce Training Opportunities initiative.

"Through partnerships with local industry, the school district and colleges," Tomes said, "Union County leaders are enhancing the quality of life through a workforce training program and a new nursing program at the county's USC branch campus. The county's investment in its Community Scholarship Program enables residents to attend a local university or community college branch campus tuition-free and is helping remove many economic barriers for county residents."

In the category for counties with populations between 50,000 to 150,000, **Pickens County** won an Honorable Mention for enhancing the quality of life by transforming the county's animal control facility to a "no kill" pet adoption program.

"Prior to 2017, Pickens County was unable to offer animal adoptions," Tomes said. "As a result of county council's leadership and staff's commitment, more than 90 percent of animals have been saved through pet adoption and other programs, such as Service Dogs for Veterans and the Barn Cat program. Pickens County's special needs population and animals benefitting from the county's partnership with the county's Board of Disabilities and Special Needs is another successful aspect of the program."

In the category for counties with populations greater than 150,000, **Berkeley County** won an Honorable Mention for developing a robust manufacturing training program (ManuFirstSC™) in 2017 that supports local industries by providing residents who have little or no manufacturing experience with an innovative pathway to a long-term career.

"Berkeley County, which is committed to preparing its residents for manufacturing careers," Tomes said, "has expanded the offering to students in six of the county's high schools and uses industry fees to fully fund the program. It is also focused on helping smaller communities that have high levels of unemployment, and it is offering classes around the working hours of residents living in the community."

BERKELEY COUNTY WINS 2020 BARRETT LAWRIMORE MEMORIAL REGIONAL COOPERATION AWARD

Berkeley County won the 2020 Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award for its collaborative effort with the local school district that provides teens and young adults with special needs internship opportunities in county government to help them develop skills they will need for future employment. Due to this partnership, 80 percent of last year's class have found full-time jobs.

"Berkeley County is fiercely committed to building a solid and bright future for all county residents, and its leaders are proud that their county has become the first local government to pioneer this program in the Lowcountry.," Tomes said. "Student interns between the ages of 17 and 21, who participate in the program, are currently enrolled in a high school within the school district. Throughout the school year, they rotate among 12 different county departments where they are assigned work that exposes them to a variety of tasks and situations they are likely to encounter in a future job. This develops both their hard and soft skills for lifelong success."

This is the 23rd year the Association has awarded the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award. The award, named in honor of the late Barrett S. Lawrimore who served as SCAC president in 2004, highlights the critical need for regional partnerships, strategies and solutions. Competition for this award is open to two or more political subdivisions (counties or county partnerships formed with city, town, district or regional government organizations) that work together to complete an innovative project.

SCAC RECOGNIZES DORCHESTER COUNTY FOR WINNING LAST YEAR'S J. MITCHELL GRAHAM MEMORIAL AWARD

SCAC presented Dorchester County a permanent trophy at the Association's 2020 Annual Conference for winning the 2019 J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award. The county won last year's award for its online newsroom, the county's central communications hub, which was designed to improve the quality of information communicated to local residents and businesses.

JUDGING SCAC'S 2020 AWARDS COMPETITION

Judging this year's competition were: Head Judge—William E. Tomes, Fellow, Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities, College of Charleston; J. Milton Pope, Principal, Parker Poe Consulting; and Paula E. Sanford, Ph.D., Public Service and Outreach Faculty Member, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

ALL COUNTIES RECOGNIZED FOR PARTICIPATING

Tomes, who headed this year's panel of judges, briefly described all of the entries submitted in SCAC's 2020 Awards Competition when announcing this year's winners. Descriptions for the other entries, not already provided for the award winners, follow:

J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award Entries

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.

Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Award Regional Cooperation Award

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.

TEN COUNTIES RECOGNIZED FOR ENTERING COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RESILIENCY SHOWCASE

SCAC recognized in a livestreamed video the following 10 counties that presented entries in the COVID-19 Response and Resiliency Showcase: Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Dorchester, Georgetown, Horry, Kershaw, Lancaster, Pickens and Spartanburg.

SCAC, chartered on June 22, 1967, is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization whose membership includes all 46 counties in South Carolina. Governed by a 29-member board of directors elected each year by county officials at the Association's annual conference, SCAC is the only organization representing county governments in the state.

The Association provides a number of services, programs, and activities to county governments and their officials, including: research and technical assistance; education and training; legal assistance; policy development, advocacy, and legislative information; publications, including a magazine and newsletter; meetings and conferences; public information, including an annual directory and website; and financial services, including the S.C. Counties Workers' Compensation Trust and S.C. Counties Property & Liability Trust.

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