

2026 Awards Competition Entry Summaries

J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Entries

Bamberg County's *Keep Bamberg County Beautiful Cigarette Litter Prevention & Recycling Program* represents a commitment to cleaner public spaces, environmental education, and a healthier, more beautiful community. A new cigarette-disposal infrastructure was implemented throughout the community, and educational outreach materials were distributed to local businesses, schools, and community organizations to increase awareness of the environmental impacts of cigarette litter and the importance of proper disposal.

Beaufort County developed a residential food waste diversion program that utilizes an in-vessel composting system. The program is unique in that it combines resident collection, education, data tracking, and in-house compost processing into a single county-operated system that is practical and scalable. By diverting food waste and producing on average two tons of compost every two weeks, the program reduces dependence on landfills, improves environmental stewardship, and creates long-term value for taxpayers.

Berkeley County created system that converts opioid overdose death investigations into coordinated prevention strategies, community action, and meaningful systems change. Led by the Berkeley County Coroner's Office, the Berkeley County Overdose Fatality Review (BC OFR) is comprised of 25 community partners, representing healthcare, treatment, law enforcement, EMS, social services and more. Confidential multidisciplinary reviews are conducted to examine how an overdose death occurred, where intervention may have been possible, where services or systems failed to connect, and what practical actions could help prevent another loss. This sustainable county model transforms lessons learned from tragedy into prevention, collaboration, regional leadership, public education, and policy-informed action.

Florence County has developed a program to solve an issue facing all 46 counties in South Carolina – the “silver tsunami”. This refers to a high percentage of valuable employees and leaders that could potentially retire soon. In 2025, the county established the Florence County Institute, a nine-month training program designed to enhance the leadership qualities of county managers and supervisors. Eighteen employees selected by county leadership opted to participate in the program. Participants received leadership training, resources, certification on completion of the program, and special recognition during a council meeting.

Greenville County addressed real property fraud and fraudulent deed activity, which is an increasing concern for property owners nationwide. The register of deeds office modernized its property alert notification program to provide property owners with a proactive, customized tool to monitor activity affecting their real property records. Through this free service, citizens can register to receive email notifications when a document is processed in the register of deeds office that matches certain search criteria. While a recording office cannot prevent an individual from attempting to submit a fraudulent document, providing timely information allows property owners to quickly identify unfamiliar activity and take appropriate action when necessary.

Horry County Fire Rescue (HCFR) implemented a prehospital blood program to improve outcomes for patients experiencing life-threatening hemorrhage, one of the leading causes of preventable death. By carrying low-titer O-positive packed red blood cells and plasma on frontline emergency response units, HCFR can begin life-saving blood transfusions in the field, often minutes to hours before a patient would otherwise receive blood products at a hospital. The importance of this program to the community cannot be overstated. Horry County encompasses more than 1,200 square miles and serves a growing population, millions of annual visitors, and numerous rural areas where transport times to definitive care can be significant. The ability to administer whole blood before hospital arrival bridges a critical gap in care and provides patients with the best opportunity for survival and recovery.

Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Entries

Beaufort and Jasper Counties have taken a regional approach to conservation. The Beaufort County Green Space Program seeks to preserve land, protect critical habitat and natural resources, and provide opportunities for public recreation. The program's unique ability to protect land beyond a county's jurisdictional boundaries allows conservation to be achieved at a broader scale, with benefits realized across a region rather than limited to political borders. The Beaufort County program made history in 2024 by contributing to the conservation of Gregorie Neck, located in Jasper County. Two recent projects, the Buckfield and Chelsea Tracts, preserved land within three counties. Through collaboration with landowners, local land trusts, municipalities, neighboring counties, state and federal agencies, and national conservation organizations, the program has helped to protect over 10,000 acres of land in and around Beaufort County.

Marion County's *Take Flight: Aviation Education & Career Program* is a collaborative partnership between local high schools in two counties and the Marion County Airport. The program is designed to introduce students to hands-on learning experiences and career opportunities in the aviation industry. It connects students directly with aviation professionals, airport operations, and industry partners to help them explore careers in areas such as piloting, aircraft maintenance, aviation management, air traffic control, airport operations, emergency services, and other aviation-related fields. The goal of the program is to create pathways to aviation careers for high school students while strengthening relationships between high schools, the airport, and the local community.