

Model Practices

In South Carolina

Exemplary Programs, Policies and Achievements
Of South Carolina Counties



*A South Carolina Association of Counties
President's Initiative*



South Carolina
Association of Counties

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Introduction

The South Carolina Association of Counties is pleased to present the first edition of *Model Practices in South Carolina: Exemplary Programs, Policies and Achievements of South Carolina Counties*. This publication is an initiative of 2008-2009 SCAC President Greg Pearce.

Model Practices in South Carolina showcases thirteen innovative and award winning projects of South Carolina counties. The programs presented range from simple, unique ideas that maximize limited resources to major collaborative efforts that tackle complex issues.

SCAC would like to thank the excellent staffs of the counties whose programs were selected for inclusion in this publication. We hope that the efforts and innovations described will serve as an inspiration and a model to build from as counties seek solutions to the considerable challenges of local government.

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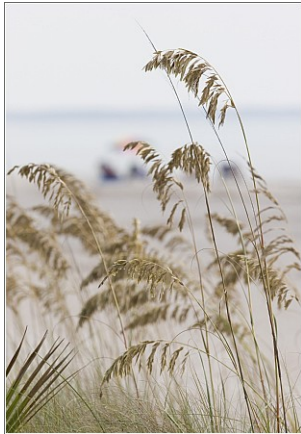
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Conservation and Environmental Programs



Landfill Gas-to-Energy

Greenwood County

Winner, J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition, 2007

To meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's order to reduce emissions at its municipal solid waste landfill, Greenwood County partnered with Methane Credit LLC, a renewable energy developer, to develop the Landfill Gas-to-Energy (LGE) project. The LGE project captures and converts the landfill's methane emissions into BTU gas for resale. Methane Credit determined the feasibility of the project and identified a nearby industrial client who is willing and able to use BTU gas.



Methane Credit will also finance and develop the project. The industrial client, FUJIFILM Greenwood, will invest \$200,000 in their facility to accommodate the use of the BTU gas. The county entered into a 20-year agreement to sell methane gas from the landfill to Methane Credit, who will then sell the converted gas to FUJIFILM Greenwood. All parties in the collaboration feel that the project will be successful. Benefits of the collaboration are:

- Reduction of harmful greenhouse gases;
- Reduction of air pollution;
- Generation of revenue for the county;
- Creation of new jobs;
- A reliable energy source for a county industry; and
- Improved public welfare and safety.

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Mow Down Pollution: Central Midlands Lawn Mower Exchange

Richland and Lexington Counties
NACo Achievement Awards Entrant, 2007

In an effort to promote cleaner air in the Midlands, Richland County, Lexington County, the City of Columbia, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), the University of South Carolina, and Keep the Midlands Beautiful teamed up to host an annual Mow Down Pollution lawn mower exchange each year since the spring of 2007.

The Central Midlands Lawn Mower Exchange is a one-day event that has taken place on a Saturday morning in April for each of the past three years. During the exchange, Midlands residents are offered an opportunity to trade in and recycle their gasoline powered lawn mowers in exchange for deep discounts on the purchase of environmentally friendly electric mowers from the Neuton Lawn Mower Company. Approximately 400 lawn mowers have been exchanged since the program began – resulting in annual emission reductions of 19 tons per year for carbon and 37 tons per year for volatile organic compounds (a precursor to ozone).

Although much attention is given to the environmental impact of automobiles, most citizens are unaware of the potential impact of off-road sources like lawn and garden equipment. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, lawn and garden equipment is the leading source of off-road air pollution in the United States. The lawn mower exchange highlighted the fact that residents can improve air quality in our community by making simple changes in their everyday lives.

The Central Midlands Lawn Mower Exchange was the first event of its kind in the state of South Carolina. To date, the Lawn Mower Exchange has been successfully replicated across the state, with similar events being held in the following regions: Charleston; Greenville and Spartanburg Counties; Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties; and York, Chester, and Lancaster Counties.

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Rain Barrel Initiative

Richland County, 2009

The East Piedmont Resource Conservation and Development Council and the Richland Conservation District sell rain barrel systems to county residents for collection of roof rainwater. The rain barrel attaches to a gutter's downspout, allowing roof rainwater runoff to be collected and stored for later use. Residents can then water plants and gardens with recycled water, as needed.



Collecting rainwater for gardens is a smart idea, no matter what the motivation. Plants like rainwater, because it's naturally soft and free of chlorine and other chemicals. If drought is a problem, collecting rainwater is a good way for residents to deal with watering restrictions. Additionally, residents on the city water system stand to save a considerable amount on their monthly water bills.

Rain barrels are good for the environment because they reduce water runoff. When it rains, in many cases, roof rainwater travels down gutters and runs off of our lawns quickly, before it can be absorbed. The problem becomes worse with urban sprawl. By capturing rainwater and releasing it slowly, water is used as needed and returned to the environment at the rate nature intended.

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Community Service and Outreach Programs



Operation Spring Break

Orangeburg County

NACo's Acts of Caring Award Winner, 2006

Operation Spring Break was developed in 2000 in collaboration with the Office of Emergency Services and the local American Red Cross. The program offers college, high school and middle school students an opportunity to make a difference in their communities by donating their time and energy during spring break.

Student projects include:

- Compiling information packets on emergency preparedness and safe-living in manufactured homes, and distributing these materials to over 2,000 mobile homes;
- Traveling to the homes of meals-on-wheels recipients to replace or install smoke detectors;
- Developing a traveling carnival to teach children of low-income residents about safety;
- Cleaning up yard debris for elderly and handicapped residents after a devastating ice storm;
- Participating in programs and events hosted by the Office of Emergency Services.

Operation Spring Break has continued annually and has touched the lives of an estimated 25,000 individuals. The project changes each year to address the needs of the community. Annually, between 60 and 80 students participate in the program.

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Hispanic Outreach Program

Calhoun County

Honorable Mention, J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition, 2006

An E-911 Hispanic outreach program alleviated emergency mitigation concerns for the Calhoun County's Hispanic population and led to the development of a new EMS translation device that is used by many South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia counties.

Like most of the Southeast, Calhoun County has experienced a large increase in the Hispanic population. Along with this growth have come new challenges to the delivery of emergency services. Increasingly, 911 calls are being received from callers speaking little to no English, and field personnel are facing communication problems as well.

To alleviate the communication problems associated with language, Calhoun County has implemented a six-part Hispanic outreach program with both traditional and innovative technological solutions. These include:

- Hiring a graduate assistant from the University of South Carolina School of Public Health to assist the Emergency Services Director with research, interviewing, writing and interpretation;
- Launching a public awareness campaign to make the Hispanic community aware of the county's desire to serve all of its residents and guests;
- Making a special effort to reach "silent" segments such as migrant workers;
- Training emergency personnel to handle language and cultural obstacles;
- Writing a plan to ensure consistency in the event of a major incident; and
- Deploying new portable translation technology to be used by emergency workers for communication with Spanish speaking citizens.

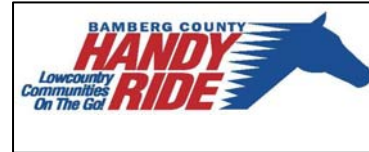
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Allendale - Bamberg Cooperative Transit System

Allendale and Bamberg Counties

J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition Entrant, 2007

Allendale and Bamberg Counties offer cost-effective public transportation to residents by utilizing unoccupied seats on local human service agency vehicles. For a small fee, residents can reserve a ride on the Allendale County Scooter or the Bamberg Handy Ride. Participating agencies allow non-agency clients to use unoccupied seats if they live within five miles of an established route. The county pays the agency a per mile fee to offset the cost of the ride.



The public requests rides through a local mobility manager, who matches requests to available seats on vehicles participating in the county system. Allendale and Bamberg Counties have combined resources by sharing a local

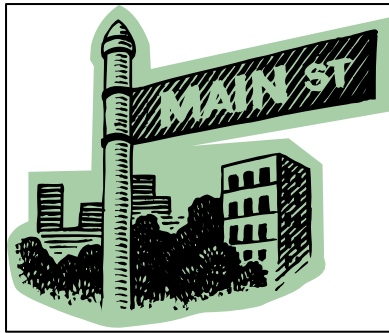


mobility manager. This partnership received state and national recognition as a cost-effective solution for rural transit issues.

Both systems were developed with leadership from the Lower Savannah Council of Governments and are operated in cooperation with local government, local agencies and the Lowcountry Rural Transit Authority.

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Community and Economic Development Programs



Smart Growth Joint Planning Initiative

Jasper County

J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition Entrant, 2006

Jasper County's population is projected to increase 626 percent within 20 years. The county and its two municipalities, the City of Hardeeville and the Town of Ridgeland, were not prepared to handle high rates of residential and commercial growth. They lacked appropriate zoning or an understanding of the financial costs and benefits of growth. With no developer fees and minimal communication between the three governments, developer "jurisdiction shopping" was rampant. To combat these problems, the three governments implemented a unified plan to manage growth and ensure responsible development. The Smart Growth joint planning initiative included:

- Creation of three distinct planning areas and planning commissions, each with a distinct planning focus. To do this, Jasper County ceded planning and zoning authority in unincorporated areas to the municipalities;
- Creation of county-wide zoning to channel the majority of development in planned urban areas, thereby preserving the county's overall rural appeal;
- Development of a peak-hour traffic model to assist each planning area with transportation planning decisions; and
- Adoption of uniform permitting and developer fees for all jurisdictions, thereby forcing developers to pay for growth and eliminating developer jurisdiction shopping.

The success of the initiative led to the establishment of vested development rights, development agreements, voluntary development fees, the annexation of thousands of acres of property within the urban growth boundaries and the comprehensive rezoning of all property not included within municipal boundaries. As a result, Jasper County and the municipalities have dissolved the Joint Planning Commissions and the county has resumed the enforcement of all planning and zoning authority outside of municipal boundaries.

The Joint Planning Initiative has morphed into a larger intergovernmental planning initiative whereby county staff consults regularly with the municipalities to ensure that planning within the three jurisdictions proceeds cooperatively in the following areas: comprehensive plan development, zoning map development, transportation; storm water management, environmental preservation, affordable housing, cultural preservation of the community, emergency services, law enforcement, public health, education and recreation.

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Derelict Mobile Home Amnesty

Pickens County

J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition Entrant, 2007



Pickens County initiated a one-year amnesty program to assist county residents in the removal of run-down, uninhabitable mobile homes. The program offers the owners of uninhabitable mobile homes a cost-saving incentive for removal and disposal of the homes. Each mobile home is recycled, generating approximately \$268, of which \$250 is returned to the owner to offset transportation costs. Also, the owners may dispose of the mobile homes free of charge at the county landfill.

The project was a success for the county, with over 200 applications received by the building office. Of the total application received, 159 mobile homes were removed and disposed of in the county's solid waste facility. As a result, the county enjoys a 98-percent ordinance compliance rate for identified abandoned mobile homes. The Derelict Mobile Home Amnesty project:

- Provided an opportunity for owners to comply with the current county ordinance and avoid enforcement penalties;
- Beautified the county;
- Improved property values in neighborhoods;
- Allowed owners to reduce property tax payments on unlivable homes;
- Prepared unsightly property for other forms of development; and
- Created goodwill between property owners, county council members and staff.

The county plans to continue with the program by offering additional mobile home amnesty opportunities to residents in the future.

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Public Safety Programs



Jail Overcrowding Solutions

Lexington County

Winner, J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition, 2008

Rapid population growth in Lexington County brought additional crime, heavy court dockets and an exploding county jail population. The county was faced with a staggering cost estimate to alleviate jail overcrowding. County leaders formed a jail overcrowding committee to identify problems in the county's complex criminal justice system and implement cost-effective solutions.

The committee met monthly, while subcommittees met more frequently to identify key stakeholders and determine how their processes impacted the flow of inmates through the judicial process. Several key improvements were identified and implemented:

- A new computer application allowed law enforcement to expedite transmittal of case information to the solicitor's by delivering it electronically within 15 days of arrest;
- Lexington County improved its jail management software to provide detailed reports regarding the adjudication of cases;
- The solicitor's office vowed to reduce the number of days from incarceration to adjudication by 5 percent, and a Violent Crimes Task Force was formed to expedite complex cases;
- The committee established a monthly schedule for bondsmen commitments and bond escheatments;
- The clerk of court's office agreed to expedite public defender appointments for inmates incarcerated more than 30 days on general sessions charges;
- The clerk of court's office began accepting credit card payments for fines;
- Jail pleas were scheduled on a regular basis to reduce the needs for transporting inmates to the judicial center; and
- Municipal law enforcement agencies agreed to implement alternatives – such as issuing citations rather than incarceration for minor charges.

As a result of these improvements, Lexington County's jail population decreased by 20 percent from 2007 to 2008 – a cost savings of roughly \$4 million per year. Additionally, jail security improved, injuries to correctional officers decreased, and the reduced need for overtime improved the morale and retention of correctional officers.

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Ambulance Technician Program

Hampton County

Honorable Mention, J. Mitchell Graham Competition, 2007

Hampton County's Emergency Medical Service system was failing due to constant staff shortages. The county could not hire and retain enough qualified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and paramedics to provide quality services to citizens. At one point, the number of qualified staff dropped so low that ambulance transport services for the local hospital and nursing home had to be discontinued. Morale was low among the few long-term staffers because overtime increased in order to maintain the system.



To solve the problem, Hampton County implemented an Ambulance Technician Program to train EMTs in-house. The county hired five local residents interested in emergency medical service. Each ambulance tech signed an agreement with the county to begin intensive training immediately upon hiring. Once EMT certified, they would remain in employment with Hampton County for two years.

The program consisted of a six-month training and certification program. During the first two months, the techs took a South Carolina Department of Transportation first responder course and participated in third-person ambulance ride-alongs. The techs were then placed on units as staff and took additional courses in Certified Emergency Vehicle Operations and SC EMT-Basic. After approximately six months of on-the-job training, the techs took the State EMT-Basic exam and received their EMT certifications.

The program's successes include:

- Savings of \$16,000 per month in salary and fringe benefits by eliminating excessive overtime;
- Resumed transport services to the regional hospital;
- Improved employee morale;
- Offering career opportunities to five citizens with no prior training; and
- Providing a higher standard of emergency care at no additional cost to taxpayers.

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Billboard Emergency Notification System

Anderson County

J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition Entrant, 2008

Anderson County's B.E.A.S. (Billboard Emergency Alert System) provides life saving information to the public by sending emergency alerts to electronic billboards in the community through its Reverse E-911 notification system. The B.E.A.S. System enables Anderson County to quickly provide public emergency alerts for child abductions, evacuation notices, shelter information, imminent dangerous weather, and natural or man-made disaster situations.

In order to implement the project, Anderson County identified businesses with electronic billboards, educated about the system, and solicited their support. All identified businesses agreed to support the project.

Once the business community embraced the plan, the county developed standards for participation. When the county's director of emergency services issues an alert, business owners are notified through the Reverse 911 system. Alerts are cancelled by the same process.

The first use of B.E.A.S in Anderson County was very successful – 99% of participating businesses posted an electronic billboard alert.

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Volunteer Emergency Corp

Greenville County

Honorable Mention, J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition, 2007

Greenville County's Sheriff's Office and Emergency Management Office partnered with the S.C. Society of Professional Engineers to form the pilot Volunteer Emergency Corps (VEC). The VEC consists of a group of professionally trained volunteer engineers from a variety of disciplines that provide emergency management assistance.

Operating under the authority of the Greenville County Emergency Management Office, the VEC is included in day-to-day operations – providing technical resources that are not normally available to the county. The VEC provides expertise in all areas of the emergency management cycle: preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. This volunteer involvement has significantly enhanced local and regional disaster preparedness. Examples include:

- Preparation of pre-incident planning facility files for several area schools.
- Provision of Vulnerability and Severe Weather Sheltering Assessments for area schools.
- Recertification of commercial buildings for occupancy in the event of a disaster.
- Help in developing a plan for the Special Needs Board to install generators at key facilities after a major power outage.
- Development of a list of local businesses with mobile generators willing to assist in the community during future emergency power outages.

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Tax and Finance Programs



Riding on a Penny: Capital Project Sales Tax Horry County



On Nov. 7, 2006, Horry County voters, by a 61.4 to 38.6 percent margin, supported a One-Cent Capital Projects Sales Tax for roads. This tax went into effect on May 1, 2007, and increased the level of sales tax in Horry County by an additional penny on all retail sales, accommodations and prepared food and beverage.

By setting a clear mission and carefully identifying projects with criteria that met the stated mission, a 23-point project list was devised, prioritized and presented to county council. Horry County's successful passage of the penny sales tax involved several elements:

- Careful selection of projects to meet specific objectives. County Council stated that benefits of the capital sales tax road project should be for county citizens, rather than tourists and visitors to the county. Based on this objective, a list of projects was carefully devised and presented to council with a clear rationale for the selection of each project.
- Educating citizens about the benefits of the project. The county conducted a successful media campaign, letting citizens know the details of the road projects, the timeframe in which the projects would be accomplished, and specifically how citizens would benefit.
- Continual updates on the status and progress of the road project. The project budget, status of each project, meeting notices inviting citizen participation, and other key information is posted to Horry County's Riding on a Penny website.

Horry County is slated to receive \$425,539,087 over the seven-year life of the Capital Projects Sales Tax. Among the road projects to be funded from the penny sales tax are:

- Paving of dirt roads;
- Construction of grade separated interchange at intersection of local highways;
- Resurfacing and widening of roads; and
- Construction of an overpass.

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