

NEWS RELEASE

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ORANGE COUNTY RECIPIENT OF TWO VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES 2013 ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Orange, VA – Orange County is pleased to announce its receipt of two Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Awards, which recognize model local government programs. Orange County was awarded the highest honor for Best Achievement Award for Project M.I.T.I. in the Criminal Justice/Public Safety Field. This project was deemed best achievement of all twelve award winning projects and selected from a pool of 38 submissions. Orange County was also awarded an achievement award for its regional collaboration associated with the Coffeewood Canines Program.

Project M.I.T.I. was conceptualized after the Orange County Department of Fire and EMS committed to creating a video that depicted the Rappahannock EMS Council's new guidelines in June of 2012. Following production of this video, the County realized what a valuable tool it had stumbled upon. With an increased need for innovative training opportunities, and with very little investment, Assistant Chief Tom Joyce headed the project to produce a number of informative emergency medical services training videos. All of the production work is done in house with the assistance of Firefighter/EMT Tim Bullock. This low-cost, high-tech training approach has been shared with twelve other EMS organizations and three other hospital groups. It has also been featured in world renowned EMS publications.

Orange County was also recognized for a different kind of training program – a canine training program. The Orange County Animal Shelter is an open-admission municipal facility handling an average of 2,200 animals yearly. The canine population often consists of predominately large breeds lacking in basic obedience and social skills, making them more difficult to place in lifelong homes in a timely manner. The Animal Shelter partnered with Coffeewood Correctional Facility to create a training program in 2009, in which inmates trained as canine handlers work with dogs to help with their social and obedience skills. These inmates have even trained several unruly retrievers for service as therapy dogs. In turn, the presence of the dogs at the Correctional Facility has reinforced positive traits in their human companions such as patience, perseverance, teamwork and problem-solving. To date, in excess of 200 dogs have been rehabilitated and adopted through this initiative.

Orange County Administrator Julie Summs stated, "We are delighted to be recognized for our local programs and initiatives, and we could not be more proud of the staff at Orange County who make these programs possible. Receiving a distinction such as Best Achievement is truly an honor and raises the bar for future programming."

For more information on the County's recognition by VACo, please contact Julie Summs, County Administrator, at (540) 672-3313.

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