

# VIRGINIA

TOWN & CITY

The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League

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## State of emergency

Get to know your state partners before disaster strikes



**Inside:**  
Innovation Awards  
call for entries





## Maintain Safety Data Sheet compliance with MSDSonline

- Effective July 1, 2016, **local governments may be fined** for violations cited by the Virginia Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSH).
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## About the cover

Governor Terry McAuliffe speaks with the press in the aftermath of the February 2016 tornadoes that devastated the Tappahannock region. In this month's cover story (page 8), learn the most important ways localities can count on their state partners in times of disaster. Photo courtesy of Va. Department of Emergency Management.

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## Features



### Restored memory

It was a leisure walk in the woods that led to a stunning discovery. See how the Town of Leesburg took a rare opportunity to help preserve a historic African-American cemetery.

By Keith Markel

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### Vietnam – Has it really been 50 years?

Yes. And Virginia towns have a ready-made opportunity to commemorate the event and honor those who served. This travelling exhibit is now on loan to your locality.

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### Five things you didn't know the state library does for you

The Library of Virginia provides a host of services to local governments – from records management to statistical research to aid to local libraries. So stop wading through mounds of data and get expert help!

By Jan Hathcock

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### 2016 Innovation Awards – Call for Entries

It's time to stand up and recognize those municipal projects that have made a real difference in the quality of life in your community. Formerly known as the Achievement Awards, the new VML Innovation Awards celebrate all you do to make your town a great place to call home. Enter today!

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# Blacksburg: rich in history, art and green technology

**T**HE VML EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE held its most recent meeting in Blacksburg, home of VML President and Mayor of Blacksburg Ron Rordam. With its wonderfully walkable downtown, this was the perfect setting for our gathering.

Our accommodations were at the Main Street Inn. As the name implies, this is a charming hotel right in the heart of Blacksburg's historic district. There is plenty of shopping and dining nearby and Virginia Tech is only a short five-minute walk away. For more information on this unique hotel, go to [www.hotelblacksburg.com](http://www.hotelblacksburg.com)

Upon arrival we were treated to a lovely reception and dinner at the Alexander Black House. This historic home was originally built in 1897 and was recently relocated and renovated. The first floor of the home features rotating art and cultural exhibits. You can learn more about the museum at [www.blacksburgmuseum.org](http://www.blacksburgmuseum.org).

After dinner we walked to the Virginia Tech campus and the Moss Arts Center for an amazing performance by Diavolo, a modern dance troupe ([www.diavolo.org](http://www.diavolo.org)). The Moss Arts Center is an impressive building that is operated in conjunction with the Institute for Creativity, Arts & Technology. In addition to housing a number of arts programs at Virginia Tech, the Arts Center is also home to a 1,260-seat performance hall. The performance hall opened in October of 2013 and features a full season of live performances including well-known singers, quality orchestral performances, theater, and more. For the upcoming performance schedule or for more information about the Moss Arts Center, go to [www.artscenter.vt.edu](http://www.artscenter.vt.edu).

Finally, our meeting was held at the Blacksburg Motor Company, a building that is on the National Register of Historic Places. Originally built in 1924, this commercial building was recently renovated for use by the Town of Blacksburg. The renovation focused on both the his-

tory of building and the use of sustainable development. Features include a geothermal heat pump, carpet made from 77% recycled materials, refurbished tin ceilings, rain gardens, and much more. For these efforts, Blacksburg Motor Company received a Platinum LEED certification. For more information on the renovation of this building, go to [www.blacksburg.gov](http://www.blacksburg.gov).

Thanks goes out to our gracious hosts Ron and Mary Rordam. Your hospitality was lovely and we really enjoyed getting to know Blacksburg a bit better. 



**The Alexander Black House was built in 1897. Today it features rotating art and cultural exhibits.**

**Montross manager Reamy to retire**



- Reamy -

After more than 20 years of service to the town of Montross, **Brenda Reamy** announced she will retire as town manager on May 31. Mayor Joseph King praised Reamy's many accomplishments including recent revitalization and beautification projects in the town. The new town manager will be Patricia "Trish" Lewis.

**Lynchburg promotes Svrcek to city manager**



- Svrcek -

Lynchburg's City Council has selected Deputy City Manager **Bonnie Svrcek** as the next city manager. Svrcek will succeed Kimball Payne, who will retire June 30. Svrcek was appointed as deputy city manager in 1999. Prior to that role, she served as assistant town manager in Blacksburg. Svrcek will be the first woman to serve as a city manager in Lynchburg.

**Lanford promoted to Allegheny County Administrator**



- Lanford -

**Jon Lanford**, who has been serving as interim county administrator, was appointed to the job full time in May. Lanford replaces John Strutner, who retired at the end of last year after 38 years of public service. Lanford served as assistant county administrator since 2007 and then took over as interim. He began work for the county in 2003 as the county engineer and also served as director of public works. Before that, he worked for two state agencies and in the public works department of Botetourt County.

**Harrisonburg hires assistant director of public transportation**



- Gatobu -

Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT) will expand with the addition of an assistant director. **Gerald Gatobu** joins Harrisonburg after working in transportation planning for Albemarle County and the Virginia Department of Transportation for the past 10 years. Gatobu has a master's degree in Urban Planning and undergraduate degrees in Computer Information Systems and Business Administration Commerce. He is also a Certified Planner (AICP) through the American Planning Association.

**Miskovic honored for service to Model General Assembly**



- Miskovic -

Governor Terry McAuliffe presented **Phil Miskovic** with a Virginia YMCA Service to Youth award at the opening session of the Virginia YMCA Model General Assembly held April 14 in Richmond. Miskovic is a council member in the town of Crewe and an emergency planner for the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. The award is given to volunteers in recognition of significant and sustained service to the YMCA Model General Assembly.

**Biggs named town manager of Christiansburg**



- Biggs -

**Steve Biggs** will become town manager of Christiansburg on July 1. Biggs replaces Barry Helms who announced in December his plan to retire in June. Biggs has more than 30 years of experience in town administration and served nearly two decades as town manager of Clayton, North Carolina. Prior to Clayton, Biggs served four years as town manager in Aberdeen,

North Carolina, and six years as assistant to the town manager and planning director in Wendell, North Carolina.

**Van Diest named clerk of the year**



- Van Diest -

Winchester's Deputy Clerk of Council **Kari Van Diest** received the Virginia Clerk of the Year Award from the Virginia Municipal Clerks Association in April. A Certified Municipal Clerk, Van Diest has served as Deputy Clerk of the Winchester Common Council since 2007. In this position, she serves both the Common Council and City Manager and is a member of the City of Winchester's Senior Management Team. Van Diest was a key player in the recent implementation of the City's new agenda management software and in training the staff to use the system. Van Diest is a member of the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC), and the Virginia Municipal Clerks Association since 2008. She is currently working toward earning the Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) designation.

**Homewood named to Planning College of Fellows**



- Homewood -

Norfolk's Planning Director **George Homewood** has been named to the prestigious American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) College of Fellows for his outstanding achievements in urban planning. Employed for the past two years as Planning Director of Norfolk, Virginia, Homewood previously served as Assistant Planning Director in Norfolk, Director of Community Development in New Kent County, Virginia, Chief Planner in York County, Virginia and Assistant Planner in James City County, Virginia. Additionally, Homewood is the President of the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association. Homewood was one of 61 inductees into this year's College of Fellows.

### Altavista appoints new police chief

**Michael Milnor**, a retired senior investigator with the Campbell County Sheriff's Office, will take over as police chief of Altavista in June. Milnor will take the reins from Mike Jones, who has been serving as interim police chief. Milnor joined the Campbell County Sheriff's Office at the age of 19. Since the 1980s, he worked as an investigator, going undercover with the state police drug task force and as Campbell County's first director of public safety. He coordinated the FBI's local drug task force, served as an interim sheriff in Campbell County.

### James City County promotes Purse and Vinroot



James City County has announced the appointments of **Jason Purse** to Assistant County Administrator and **Rebecca Vinroot** to Director of Community Services.

- Purse -

Purse started his employment with the county in 2005 as a planner and was promoted to Zoning Administrator in 2013.



- Vinroot -

Vinroot has worked for the county in the Division of Social Services since 2008, beginning with the position of Children's Services Act (CSA) Coordinator. Vinroot became the Deputy Director of Social Services in 2011.

## Capital Project on the Horizon?

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## News & notes

# Rehabilitation, swimming pool code classes held

BUILDING OFFICIALS and inspectors were updated on the requirements relating to the rehabilitation, alteration and repair of existing buildings at the 2016 mid-year meeting of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association in Charlottesville. Conference participants also learned about swimming pool

and spa code requirements.

Lobbyist Joel Andrus reviewed the actions of the 2016 legislative session relating to building officials and Guy Tomberlin, past president of International Code Council, reported on national code activities. Tomberlin is chief of the residential branch in the Fairfax

County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

VBCOA's annual school and conference will take place September 18-20 at the Great Wolf Lodge in James City County. For more information, go to [vbcoa.org](http://vbcoa.org).

## Danville advances propane powered fleet

CITY OF DANVILLE LEADERS dedicated a propane autogas fueling station last month that will service a growing fleet of propane-powered vehicles. So far, the fleet includes eight light-duty service trucks, one sport utility vehicle and one mass transit bus.

With the use of propane, the city is achieving a greener fuel initiative while saving on costs.

Administrative Division Director Barry Doebert said the first alternatives studied were electric drive vehicles and compressed natural gas-powered vehicles.

“We looked at running our sedans and light duty trucks on electricity, but it was prohibitive because of the low mileage that each charge provided,” Doebert said. “To use compressed natural gas, we would have had to spend \$1 million to install a fueling facility. That was just too cost prohibitive.”

Doebert and his staff then explored the use of propane and found the start-up costs were reasonable.

The city began purchasing conversion kits at a cost of about \$7,500 per vehicle. The fueling station was installed in November at a cost of \$30,000.

Last month, Danville Transit placed into service its first propane-only-powered mass transit bus. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation provided the money to purchase the bus.

Transportation Director Marc Adelman said a second propane-powered bus is scheduled to arrive this summer.

“Over the next three years, it is possible that more than half of the Danville Transit fleet could be propane-powered vehicles,” Adelman said. He added that propane-powered vehicles are much quieter than their diesel vehicles and require less engine maintenance.

*Contributed by Arnold Hendrix, Public Information Officer of the City of Danville.*



Currently, the city is purchasing 200 to 300 gallons of propane a week at \$1.10 a gallon. That price is 35 to 40 percent less than the current cost of gasoline.

Later this year, the city plans to install an 18,000-gallon tank in order to purchase propane in bulk. By purchasing in bulk, the cost of propane will drop to 60 cents a gallon or less.

The commitment to converting a portion of the city's fleet to propane began after a lengthy investigation into powering vehicles with alternative fuels. Public Works

## Harrisonburg homes saved by StoveTop FireStops

THE HARRISONBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT (HFD) responded to two separate incidents this month that could have quickly turned into tragic situations. In both cases, food was left unattended on the stove and caught fire. Both homes had a StoveTop FireStop installed above the stove, which released a fire suppressing powder. This device prevented significant damage to the structures and potential

injuries to the residents.

HFD has received three separate grants to purchase StoveTop FireStop devices and installed them in homes for city residents. Since installing these devices, HFD is aware of at least 15 incidents in which the devices worked and saved the home.

## Two York County breweries receive Tourism Growth Funds

BRASS CANNON BREWING and The Virginia Beer Company, both in York County, are the latest recipients of the Virginia Tourism Growth Fund (VTGF) program. The Virginia Beer Company is receiving \$43,000 and is expected to create five full-time and six part-time jobs. Brass Cannon Brewing is receiving \$15,000 and is expected to create five full-time jobs.

The addition of both breweries is expected to add a new dimension to the Greater Williamsburg tourism experience and help increase visitor spending to other local dining, retail, lodging and attractions.

The craft beer industry in Virginia has an estimated economic impact of more than \$1 billion and supports 8,900 jobs. With 142 breweries and counting, Virginia has become a magnet for craft brewers.

Both non-profit and for-profit private sector businesses are eligible to apply for VTGF grant awards. Eligible

projects include new or expanded facilities or venues for lodging, recreation, entertainment, dining, cultural, or destination retail products or services designed to attract travelers to the Commonwealth.



Visitors enjoy the outdoor patio at The Virginia Beer Company.

## If you had to pay municipal volunteers

LIKE MANY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, Chesterfield County relies on an extraordinary force of volunteers. Last year, approximately 4,000 volunteers dedicated 142,000 work hours valued at \$3.5 million to the county. Residents

served in variety of roles including bilingual library volunteers, makerspace volunteers, gardeners, nature center volunteers and water quality monitors.



County Administrator Jay Stegmaier (front right) accepts an honorary check in the amount of \$3.5 million from county volunteers to represent their dedication and time to the county.

## Four more localities named to Main Street Program

FOUR MORE COMMUNITIES have been designated by Governor McAuliffe as members of the Virginia Main Street Program. The town of Wytheville, the cities of Danville and Lexington and Gloucester Courthouse in Gloucester County were chosen for their readiness to implement programs and services for the defined downtown district, the target area of responsibility.

With the new designations, there are 29 designated Virginia Main Street communities.

In 2015, \$18.8 million was invested in VMS districts through rehabilitations, façade improvement projects, and critical upgrades to make downtown aesthetically inviting, socially exciting, and economically thriving. Local governments invested more than \$19 million in public projects

that improved their downtown districts. New business openings, business expansions, and relocations in Virginia's designated Main Street communities realized a net gain of 800 jobs.

Since 2010, private investment in Virginia Main Street Districts has topped \$167 million.

New VMS communities receive intensive direct services from Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) staff and key consultants, including market analysis, marketplace development, capacity building, design assistance, organization development, economic restructuring strategies and façade renderings for redevelopment projects.

## Could Waynesboro have America's best tasting water?

THE CITY OF WAYNESBORO was honored in April at the Virginia Rural Water Association (VRWA) Annual Conference with the "2016 Best Tasting Water" Award. Samples from municipalities and service authorities across Virginia were judged based on clarity, bouquet (odor) and taste. This was the first year the city entered the contest and will represent the Commonwealth of Virginia in the Great American Water Taste Test in Washington, D.C. next February.

Waynesboro draws its water from wells and springs located within the city limits and is treated at the city's water treatment plant through a membrane filtration system.

Due to the natural purity of the water, only chlorine and fluoride are added to the water as required by the Virginia Department of Health. The water is then distributed to over 21,000 citizens, businesses and industries located within the city.

Individual staff members at the city's wastewater treatment plant were also recognized by the VRWA. Tony Reed was named Lab Technician of the Year and Donald "Brad" Williams was named Maintenance Technician of the Year for their hard work, professionalism and contributions in safeguarding public health and the environment.



Waynesboro water treatment plant, provider of the best tasting water.

# State of emergency

**How the Virginia Department of Emergency Management is boosting aid to localities before, during and after disaster happens**

By Dawn Eischen and Eric Miller

All photos courtesy of the Virginia department of emergency Management.

The February tornado snapped the crown of a large tree and it came rest upside down in a field across the road from woods that were inundated with debris.

# Emergency

**H**URRICANE SEASON officially begins June 1 and lasts until November 30, but now is the right time to prepare for them.

Whether the storm enters Virginia from the Atlantic coast or comes up through the Gulf of Mexico, there is the potential for widespread flooding.

“No matter how many storms are forecasted to impact the U.S. each hurricane season, it takes only one major tropical system to devastate an area,” says Dr. Jeff Stern, state coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

Now with six regional offices and double the staff in each of the regions, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) is poised to assist localities with resources before, during and after a disaster. The concept to have an increased regional VDEM presence came out of the success of Region 7 in Fairfax County, which has been operating out of an office with a four-person staff for several years thanks to federal grants. Previously, the regions had only a regional coordinator and a hazmat officer. Now each of the seven regional offices will have a planner, hazmat officer, and a disaster response and recovery officer serving under a chief regional coordinator.

“Improved staffing in the regional offices means a quicker response time and the ability to get resources to the areas that may be affected or have been affected,” said Stern. “The goal is to have better on-scene knowledge of the situation and what is needed so that those resources can be directed to the locality and even pre-staged nearby so we can bring them in quickly.



## Know how the state can assist your town

During a significant emergency or disaster, the regional staff communicates directly with watch officers at the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) in Richmond, where representatives from state public safety agencies are typically activated leading up to or following a governor’s state of emergency declaration. Agencies represented typically include the

Virginia Department of Health, Virginia State Police, Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Virginia Department of Transportation. In addition, the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) has partners at the VEOC from the private sector, such as Dominion Virginia Power and the electric cooperatives, and nonprofit and faith-based organizations with the Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. These partners and state agencies make up the VEST.

VDEM has also signed a memorandum of understanding with the localities that sponsor three all-hazards incident management teams and is in the process of assisting with a fourth incident management team (IMT) for Southwest Virginia. An IMT is a specialized team of emergency management professionals who have experience coordinating on-scene operations to support local objectives. “The role of the IMT is to help the localities make decisions,” said Williams. “We make some suggestions and listen to the localities and come to a consensus on what would be the best solution to a particular problem after an emergency or disaster.”

The other three incident management teams are the Central Virginia All Hazards Incident Management Team, the Hampton Roads team and the National Capital Region team. During an emergency or disaster, these teams are completely self-sustaining for a minimum of 48 hours. “We carry our own tents, food, water and fuel so that we are not a burden on the localities, but if they have lodging available, we’ll use it,” said Lee Williams, acting chief of incident management programs in the VDEM Special Operations Branch.

During such times, localities must be clear about the resources they need and what they plan to do with them. “Localities should know what the state can do for them,” said Jack King, director of VDEM Regional Support – East Division. This can include bringing in assets, such as a radio communications cache, which involves a satellite connection for rural areas with limited coverage or extra radios that are program-



Virginia National Guard assesses damage following flooding from 2015’s Hurricane Joaquin.



**Virginia National Guardsman deliver boxed meals for victims of the February tornado that destroyed homes in Tappahannock.**

mable so that everyone can talk on the same channel. Radio caches are useful when local radio systems have been rendered inoperable by severe weather or when there is a surge of outside emergency responders.

Resources can be strained during any disaster, but especially during widespread tornadoes and hurricanes, such as Hurricane Irene in 2011, which knocked out power to 2.5 million Virginia homes and businesses. Hurricane Ivan in 2004 spawned 40 tornadoes, a record single-day outbreak for Virginia. “Whether it’s a major hurricane or localized flooding, resources will go where they are most needed,” said Susan Mongold, VDEM deputy state coordinator for the Mission Support Bureau.

VDEM encourages sharing of resources among localities, such as swift water rescue teams, technical rescue teams, hazmat teams, and search and rescue personnel. “These teams are actually staffed by other state agencies, the localities or volunteer groups, but VDEM provides funding and training so they can be used as a regional asset,” Williams said.

## **Statewide tornadoes on February 24 - Regional coordination in action**

On Feb. 24, 2016, the Commonwealth experienced its deadliest tornado event in more than 50 years when eight tornadoes swept across 12 jurisdictions, killing five and damaging

more than 400 homes. The National Weather Service confirmed both Appomattox and Essex counties experienced EF-3 tornadoes with an estimated wind speed of 136-165 mph.

Gene Stewart, VDEM’s Region 3 chief regional coordinator, was on the scene in Appomattox County in less than two hours. Immediately after he was notified about the tornado, he called for an incident management team. During his drive from Rockingham County to Appomattox County, he also requested a radio communications cache because the county had lost part of its two-way emergency radio system and a search and rescue coordinator because a resident went missing after his home was destroyed by the tornado.

When Stewart arrived on the scene, he began working with local officials and emergency managers to plan ahead. He explained that they would see an influx of volunteers and donations and would need a volunteer manager, donations manager and building inspectors. They recruited 15 building inspectors from other jurisdictions who went on to examine more than 200 homes, churches and businesses that had been destroyed or damaged.

An emergency operations center was activated in Appomattox and was staffed by local and surrounding county emergency managers 24 hours a day for two days and then 18 hours a day thereafter. Stewart continuously worked alongside the Appomattox County administrator and others after the tornado.

“You’re running on adrenalin. There’s so much that needs to be done. You don’t think about all the hours you’ve worked. One task after another task comes up and you just want to make sure it gets done,” Stewart said. “I would make suggestions and then I would let the local officials and emergency managers decide. I expressed to them early on that we needed to think about short-term and long-term recovery.”

That’s when he involved Amanda Reidelbach, VDEM’s voluntary and individual assistance branch chief. She helped set up a long-term recovery committee, which involved seeking volunteers from churches, the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity and Gleaning for the World.

“The other thing we knew would be a big issue was debris management due to all the homes destroyed and trees down,” Stewart said. In less than 24 hours after the tornado, local officials had obtained a 90-day permit from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to re-open an old county landfill that the county had closed after switching to a regional landfill.

During that first 24 hours, State Coordinator Stern and Curtis Brown, chief deputy state coordinator, visited the tornado-stricken Evergreen and Central Baptist Church areas of Appomattox. Counselors and comfort dogs arrived to provide emotional support to tornado survivors. A Central Virginia group of public information officers formed a joint information center and issued news releases and disseminated tornado recovery information on local social media accounts.

The impact to Essex County was also widespread. Following the tornado impact, VDEM sent an incident management team into Essex County, as well as radio caches, because the county had lost most of its two-way emergency radio communications system. VDEM provided Essex with a damage assessment aerial fly-over through the Virginia Volunteer Pilots Group, as well as drone footage of damage. The next morning, the Essex emergency manager used this information to total up survey damage, including isolated houses in heavily wooded areas, which might not be immediately accessible by vehicle due to downed trees and debris on roads.

# Preparing for hurricane season

## Local officials' checklist:

- Update your emergency operations plan.
- Pre-identify shelter locations and ensure staff is trained to operate the shelter.
- Participate in a tabletop exercise with your local emergency manager to go over hurricane plans and procedures. Include other local and state partner agencies, if possible.
- Develop a recovery plan to include short-term and long-term housing options, debris management, and volunteers and donations.
- Identify evacuation and flood zones. Encourage residents to know their storm surge risk and be prepared to move to higher ground, if advised to do so.

## Citizens' checklist:

- Talk to an insurance agent about flood insurance.**  
Most homeowner’s insurance policies do not cover flooding; renters and business owners also can get flood insurance. Go to [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov) or call 1-888-379-9531 for more information.
- Build a disaster supply kit for your home, office and car.**  
Items to include: cell phone backup power, batteries, flashlights, lanterns, bottled water, first aid kits, NOAA Weather Radios and portable generators. For a complete list of important emergency items, visit [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov).

## Create a family emergency communications plan.

1. Decide how and where everyone will meet up with each other, if separated.
2. Choose an out-of-town emergency contact for your family and give that person’s phone number to each family member.
3. Make a sheet of emergency contacts and post it in visible places in your home and workplace, rather than relying on smartphones or online contact lists.
4. Get a free emergency plan worksheet at [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov) or [www.ListoVirginia.gov](http://www.ListoVirginia.gov) or use the new Ready Virginia app.

## Sign up for text alerts/weather warnings that may be offered by your locality.

## Download the free Ready Virginia app for iPhone® and Android™.

Features include: National Weather Service warnings; customizable emergency plan; an emergency supplies checklist; the “I’m Safe!” text feature for updating relatives; and an interactive map to locate storm surge risks.



Individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs may need to take additional steps. Plan how you will handle power outages and/or an evacuation. See [www.vaemergency.gov/readyvirginia/getakit/disabilities](http://www.vaemergency.gov/readyvirginia/getakit/disabilities).

## Get to know your emergency partners

Training and exercises provide education, but so do actual disasters. “After every disaster, we learn lessons,” said Mongold.

“You learn from each event,” King said. “You tweak the system as you go, each time looking at what worked, what needs improvement and what didn’t work.”

In addition, localities should beware of complacency after a disaster. “Initially, they may think they have the emergency situation under control. The primary problem may be solved, but there may be additional problems looming that are more obvious from the regional or statewide perspective,” Stern said.

Mongold suggested a new direction for partnership between local government housing authorities and emergency managers. “We realize the array of issues facing local elected officials is daunting, including the need to learn the plans for their localities’ emergency response,” she said. “Once a disaster happens, however, emergency management becomes a priority because of the connection between their citizen services and economic development.”

“Nothing, however, is better than sitting down with your emergency manager and developing a relationship of trust and understanding before disaster strikes,” said Ted Costin, director of VDEM Regional Support – West Division.

Also, it’s important for state and local government officials to invite each other to their meetings. “If you have a community meeting or board of supervisors meeting where you’ll discuss emergency management, invite VDEM’s chief

regional coordinators,” Mongold said. “We also want to have the regional staff where the localities are.”

VDEM maintains state emergency plans as blueprints for response to a variety of scenarios and assists localities in developing emergency operations plans. The agency also works with localities to help them design effective, long-range mitigation

**“Nothing is better than sitting down with your emergency manager and developing a relationship of trust and understanding before disaster strikes.”**

*- Ted Costin, director of VDEM Regional Support – West Division.*

plans to address hazards specific to their communities. This can help to mitigate or lessen future losses.

VDEM’s Training, Education and Exercise Division offers free training in emergency management, hazardous materials response, and search and rescue to prepare local responders to effectively manage disasters and their aftermath. The specialized search and rescue (SAR) training covers missions that may include downed or missing aircraft, missing individuals, distressed or sinking vessels or boating incidents, and major events that may result in victims being stranded or trapped in collapsed structures or fallen debris. SAR teams also use dogs and horses, when necessary.

For more information about the statewide training VDEM offers, visit [www.vaemergency.gov](http://www.vaemergency.gov). 

### About the authors:

*Dawn Eischen is External Affairs Director and Eric Miller is External Affairs Content Specialist for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.*



**A Virginia Emergency Support Team at work at the Virginia Emergency Operations Center during the aftermath of Hurricane Joaquin in 2015.**

# Time to call in the cavalry?

## How to run a mass care shelter – and when not to

OVER THE PAST YEAR, the city of Winchester has worked hard to update its Emergency Support Function (ESF #6) plan for mass care sheltering and prepare for a possible major incident that could cause a large number of people to need shelter. Hopefully, such an event never occurs in Winchester, but if it does, a new and improved plan is now in place, resources are on stand-by and staff are ready to respond, thanks to a series of functional exercises conducted in the last year.

It wasn't obvious that changes and training were needed until a major fire occurred in 2013 at a townhouse complex that displaced 20 families. All necessary city and local agencies responded according to plan, but it was done in silos with little inter-agency communication. In addition, social services and park staff quickly opened a mass care shelter at the recreation center only to find that no one needed overnight sheltering.

"We activated a number of staff and resources to open a shelter for the families affected," stated Amber Dopkowski, Winchester's Department of Social Services Director. "But during the process, we realized that what we were doing was not as efficient or effective as it could be and many important items such as security, storage and communication were not readily available had there been a need." During this event, it was also apparent that a mass care shelter may not be the best solution for all types of incidents due to the cost and time involved.

This unfortunate event started a conversation about the city's practices, plans, relationships and resources and how they all work together for the community during a time of need. "Our job as a local government is to be great stewards of our tax payers' dollars and to be there with the necessary services when needed," stated Emergency Management Coordinator Lynn Miller. "Thankfully, no one was injured during the 2013 fire, but the city was grateful for the lessons it provided."

Originally, the city's ESF plan for mass care, housing and human resources called for a shelter to be opened at the recre-

ation center in Jim Barnett Park and/or public school any time the city determines that a mass care service is needed for its residents due to a natural or man-made disaster.



Red Cross volunteer, Felicia Hart, shows supplies stored in the Red Cross truck that could be deployed for mass care events if needed.

Following the townhouse fire in 2013, emergency management and social services staff began brainstorming a better way to handle mass care in order to make the best use of resources and staff time. The city invited outside agencies such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and others to the conversation. The end result was a three-tiered sheltering program where steps are initiated based on the number of people affected.

Here's how the tiered program works:

**Tier I – The American Red Cross will shelter 12-24 people** and/or engage four to six hotel/motel rooms. Lodging will not exceed three days unless authorized by Red Cross, which is responsible for all registration requirements during Tier I.

**Tier II – The city provides additional lodging.**

Once the Red Cross has filled Tier I, they will contact the city's emergency management and social services departments for assistance. The city will be responsible for providing four to six hotel/motel rooms for another 12-24 people. Lodging will not exceed three days unless authorized by the city.

**This tiered program makes better use of resources and accommodates smaller incidents where assistance is needed but it would be unnecessary to open a mass care shelter.**

**Tier III – Open a mass care facility.** When an event results in the need to shelter more than 24 individuals, the city's emergency management and social services departments will coordinate with Red Cross to open a mass care facility.

This tiered program makes better use of resources and accommodates smaller incidents where assistance is needed but it would be inappropriate and fiscally irresponsible to open a mass care shelter.

## A One-Day Mass Care Exercise

The other lesson learned after the townhouse fire was the need to improve staff training and build stronger relationships with local organizations that could provide assistance. City emergency management and social services staff soon began preparing for a series of seminars and table-top exercises that led up to a full-scale functional exercise on March 25. All agencies and staff that would be involved in responding to a mass care shelter incident participated, including the city's emergency management staff, 44 employees from Winchester social services department, Winchester police officers, Winchester fire and rescue EMTs, the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Organizers recruited local volunteers to act as residents.

The exercise was conducted in shifts so employees who would be deployed in three 12-hour shifts could practice as if deployed. Social services employees were notified of their deployment at the mass care shelter using the city's emergency notification system. Upon arrival, staff practiced the check-in and intake procedures established during the previous exercises; setting up cots; distributing food, answering questions and handling different scenarios developed by the planning committee.

After the exercise, which took approximately five hours and over 75 staff and volunteers to complete, everyone involved



**Volunteers acting as citizens in need of shelter talk with Winchester Social Services staff about the Red Cross cots and designated sleeping quarters.**

gathered together for a “hot wash” and discussed what did and didn't work. A list of suggested improvements was created, including:

- A building access plan needs to be developed with better control over who enters and exits the building and with what items.
- A designated room in the building for staff to decompress, relax, make personal phone calls and re-energize in order to have the mental readiness to continue serving.
- A plan for weapons control in the building.
- Color-coded arm bands for shelterees that inform staff of any special needs.
- More readily available assistance for shelterees with disabilities.
- Signage in multiple languages.

Thanks to the dedication of city of Winchester staff, the city is better prepared to respond to a major incident by using resources effectively and partnering with local organizations so that efforts are not duplicated or wasted. The improved ESF#6 plan and the mass care exercises have proven to provide more than just a better plan of action. Stronger relationships were created and an atmosphere based on teamwork was fostered, all for the greater good of the Winchester community. 

### About the author

*Amy Simmons is the Communications Manager for the city of Winchester.*



**Social Services staff (right) practice registering citizens during the March 25 mass care functional exercise.**

# STAIRWAY TO SUCCESS

SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



STAIRWAY TO SUCCESS is a friendly competition among VML member localities. The program seeks to increase local government's role in early childhood education, which in turn, builds a qualified, well-educated workforce. The competition awards points to localities for specific actions that enhance the early childhood experience. Participants will be recognized during an awards program at VML's Annual Conference on October 11 in Virginia Beach.

To download the application form, or for details, go to [www.vml.org](http://www.vml.org). For further information, call Mary Jo Fields at (804) 523-8524 or e-mail [mfields@vml.org](mailto:mfields@vml.org).



# Restored Memory

## Leesburg uncovers historic African-American cemetery

**Y**OU NEVER KNOW what you might stumble across in the woods. This was the case for Jim Koenig, a division manager for Loudoun County's Department of General Services, when he went for a stroll in a wooded area near the town's airport along Sycolin Road. On a fateful day nearly nine years ago, Jim came across something that had fallen off the community's radar for decades – the final resting place for over 55 citizens of Loudoun County's African-American community. Fascinated by his discovery, Jim started researching the property and the history of the people who were buried there.

The graves, clustered in two burial areas approximately 150 feet apart, are one of the few remaining vestiges of the Lower Sycolin African-American community that sprang up in this area in the latter half of the 19th century. What took place on this land less than a decade after the Civil War is quite remarkable.

### Who were they?

In 1871, on land that was once part of a large farm called Egypt, located roughly three miles from the center of Leesburg, several parcels of land were purchased by African-Americans who moved to Loudoun County from Kentucky.

In the years that followed, a small community formed that included homes, farms, cottage industry, and a church. The two men who purchased the land the town now owns were also trustees for the church, originally Union Church, but more recently known as First Baptist Church of Sycolin, located just to the south of the property containing the graves.

It is believed that, as leaders of the church, they allowed members of the congregation to be buried in the same general area where an earlier family cemetery was located on their private land. The Lower Sycolin community dissolved in the first

**On a fateful day nearly nine years ago, Jim came across something that had fallen off the community's radar for decades – the final resting place for over 55 citizens of Loudoun County's African-American community.**



**Red flags and posts mark grave shafts at the Sycolin cemetery. It is one of the few remaining vestiges of an African-American community founded here around 1871.**



**Fred Snowden (left) and Mayor Dave Butler (right) survey the town's newly created aerial maps with the GPS locations of the burial areas.**

half of the 20th century as the former inhabitants moved away or died. Today, only the church remains.

In 1989 and 1990, the town of Leesburg purchased approximately eight acres of land that was once part of this community to serve as additional space for the Leesburg Executive Airport's runway protection zone. Long before the town's purchase of the property, the land had been cleared of the homes and most traces of the community once located here vanished. After decades of inactivity, the former farm land had regrown into a wooded lot.

Based on U.S. Geological Survey maps and his-



**Historian Wynn Saffer (left) has researched cemeteries throughout Loudoun County and studied the genealogy of several people who are buried at this site. Doug Gibson (center) is a GIS mapping technician with Loudoun County. Matthew Turner (right) is vice president of GeoModel. He used a ground penetrating radar unit to help determine which depressions were actual graves.**

torical accounts, the town was reasonably certain that there were graves on the land, however there was no official action taken to identify the exact locations. The land remained untouched by the town for nearly 25 years.



**Pastor Michelle Thomas of the Loudoun Freedom Center and Delegate Randy Minchew at a community clean-up day at the Sycolin burial site.**

Fast forward to 2015 and the work of the Loudoun Freedom Center. This group, under the leadership of Pastor Michelle Thomas, has made it their mission to identify and preserve African-American gravesites throughout Loudoun County.

One of their most high profile projects has been the preservation of the Belmont Plantation Slave Cemetery near the intersection of Route 7 and Belmont Ridge Road to the east of Leesburg. It was here that the slaves of Belmont Plantation, the home of Ludwell Lee, were buried.

With significant construction related to a new interchange in

the works, the non-descript cemetery in a wooded area was at risk of being damaged or destroyed.

Using the resources of the Town's Thomas Balch Library for History and Genealogy, along with the historical records of the Loudoun County Court House, Pastor Thomas researched the site and gathered enough documentation to lead the charge to have this space protected from further development.

When Pastor Thomas and members of the Loudoun Freedom Center approached members of the Leesburg town council and town manager about opportunities to provide similar preservation of the burial area located on the Sycolin site, town leadership stepped into action.

A staff group composed of the town's preservation planner, history and genealogy experts from the Thomas Balch Library, and leadership from the department of public works and town

manager's office came together to develop a plan for documenting and stabilizing the site. The town was also fortunate to have the support of key Loudoun County staff who had experience with the Belmont burial site project.

Town and County geographic information systems (GIS) staff, along with historic preservation planners from both jurisdictions visited the Sycolin site on several occasions to gather GPS coordinate data for each burial shaft depression along with other significant features such as the rustic fieldstone head and foot markers that can be found at some of the graves.

The county GIS technicians provided this data to the town's mapping staff to develop visuals that depicted the exact location of the graves on aerial photography from 2015. The burial areas were also overlaid on historical aerial images from 1957 and 1937 to show how the land has changed over the years.

The maps and other historical research will be archived at the town's library for future reference.

The town's public works staff cleared fallen trees that had over taken much

of the cemetery. Crews were able to create a walking trail that provides easy access to both burial areas from Sycolin Road. In honor of April being "Keep Leesburg Beautiful Month," the town hosted a cleanup day at the site where town staff and elected local and state officials joined with members of the Loudoun Freedom Center to collect litter at the site. The town was able to unveil the brand new GPS maps at this event.

"I'm delighted that the Loudoun Freedom Center approached the town about this project," said Leesburg Mayor Dave Butler. "It's always important to preserve our cultural heritage so that we can remember and learn from it. This is an important piece of Leesburg's history."

What may be most telling from this project is that, in a span of less than 60 years since the last burial at this site, these graves were nearly forgotten by the community. It shows how fast Mother Nature can reclaim the land and how fast our history can be lost to our collective memories. Now through the use of new technology, proper documentation and community partners, this piece of Loudoun's history has a much better chance of being protected and preserved for future generations. 

**The land had been cleared of the homes and most traces of the community vanished. After decades of inactivity, it had regrown into a wooded lot. It remained untouched for nearly 25 years.**

**About the author**

*Keith Markel is deputy town manager of Leesburg.*



# For the Record

## Five things you didn't know the Library of Virginia does for local governments

By Jan Hathcock

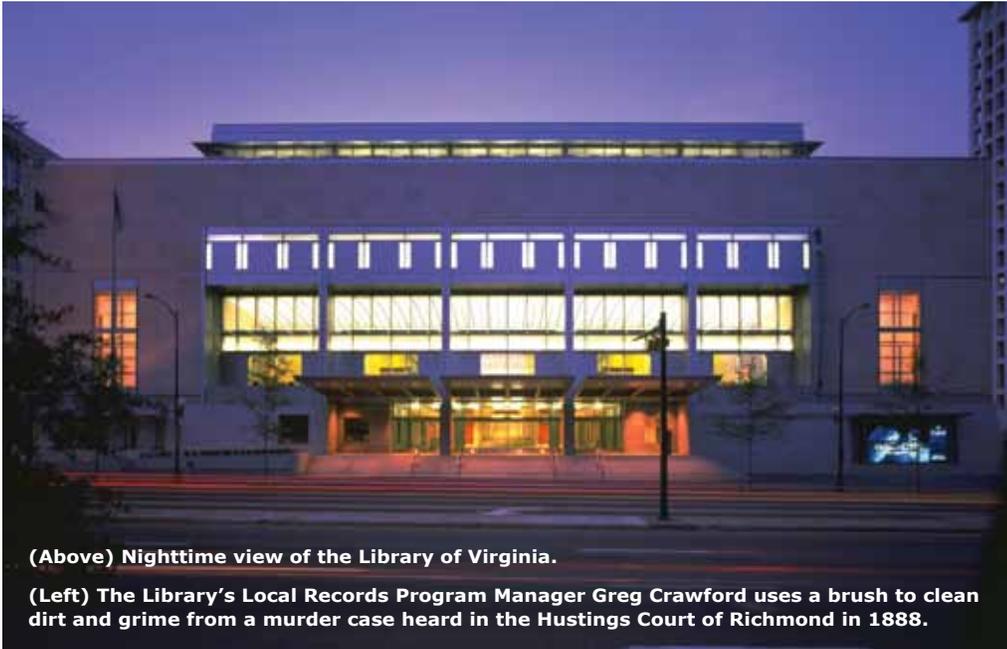
**I**T'S NO SECRET that Virginians boast of our history and the giants who shaped our democracy. The Library of Virginia holds the manuscripts and records of those founders as well as those for ordinary citizens. While known primarily as the research and reference library at the seat of government, the Library's reach and impact extends to all corners of the Commonwealth and well beyond.

### Records Management

The Library of Virginia's Records Management program assists local and state agencies in identifying, organizing, maintaining and assessing information and properly disposing of

unneded records. Proper records management results in cost savings and efficiency. The Library's Records Management program works daily with state and local records officers to improve government transparency and citizen access to government.

The Library offers free and open access to information documenting the work of our democracy and resources for connecting people with their government and essential government resources. It provides research and information services to state and local agencies, state and local employees, and the general public in addition to acting as back-up to the reference services provided by the public libraries.



(Above) Nighttime view of the Library of Virginia.

(Left) The Library's Local Records Program Manager Greg Crawford uses a brush to clean dirt and grime from a murder case heard in the Hustings Court of Richmond in 1888.

library directors, library boards of trustees, and local governments to ensure that Virginia maintains a strong and vibrant library system in all localities.

Through its Development and Networking Division, the Library offers programs to local libraries that help children enter school ready to learn. The Library of Virginia provides early literacy activity centers and iPads with early literacy apps to public libraries. The Library hosts an early literacy website, [www.DaybyDayVa.org](http://www.DaybyDayVa.org), which also provides age appropriate e-books. The website is available in both English and Spanish. To encourage parents to read to young children, the Library

## State Publications Depository

Looking for statistics for a report or presentation? The Library's State Publications Depository Program collects paper and electronic publications from every state agency, making it the single best place to search for Virginia government information. Whether the answer lies within 200-year-old printed documents or hundreds of digital records, staff experts will help you find it or find it for you.

The digital collection can be found on the Library of Virginia's Virginia Memory web site, [www.virginiamemory.com](http://www.virginiamemory.com). Use the Digital Collections drop-down menu "Collections A-Z" and select State Government Publications.

## Preserving local court records

The Library's Local Records program oversees the Virginia Circuit Court Records Program, funded with a \$1.50 fee placed on every deed recorded in the Commonwealth. Half of this funding remains in the Library, covering the costs of the local records staff who process, digitize, and index local records and produce the heavily used Chancery Records database on the Virginia Memory website. The other half of the funds are returned to the localities through grants that preserve historic local court records.

## Aid to local libraries and schools

As the state library agency for Virginia, the Library administers and distributes \$3.7 million in federal funding and \$15 million in state aid to local libraries. Among the projects the Library manages that are funded through these programs are statewide electronic information resources like Find It Virginia, available for free in every school and public library; early literacy and STEM training for public library staff; a statewide summer reading program for school-age children; technology training; and specialized training for public librarians in areas such as fostering 21st century work skills.

Library of Virginia staff also work directly with public li-

brary directors, library boards of trustees, and local governments to ensure that Virginia maintains a strong and vibrant library system in all localities.

For school age children, the Library of Virginia offers electronic reference materials, eBooks, and online homework help. In cooperation with the Science Museum of Virginia, the Library provides STEM resource hubs and training to support afterschool learning. These programs help to ensure that students receive the early training necessary for them to enter the workforce with skills that fit the needs of the 21st century.

To encourage reading over the summer, the Library sponsors an annual summer reading program. Last year, more than 170,000 children participated. The Library partners with Virginia Department of Agriculture to foster public library participation in the No Kid Hungry Summer Food Program. Throughout the summer, children are fed both mind and body by attending a summer reading program where a meal or snack is served.

## Loaning exhibits to local libraries

Most exhibitions that are offered in the Library's exhibition space travel across the state to local libraries, historical societies, and other venues with the space and capacity to make them available to the public. The traveling versions of the 2015 Strong Men & Women of Virginia and of the 2015 Virginia Women in History exhibitions, for example, were displayed at 13 local public libraries and historical societies and were viewed by a total of 310,000 people.

The Library of Virginia is proud to preserve and make available the documentary and printed heritage of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Explore what it has to offer to your locality at [www.lva.virginia.gov](http://www.lva.virginia.gov) and [www.virginiamemory.com](http://www.virginiamemory.com). 

### About the author

*Jan Hathcock is the Public Information and Policy Coordinator for the Library of Virginia.*

# Remembering Vietnam 50 years later

## Vietnam combat art offered for local display in travelling exhibit

**I**N COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH anniversary of the Vietnam War, a special art exhibit – high-resolution images of 39 pieces of Vietnam combat art – is being offered for display in localities across Virginia.

The original works of art are the result of an Army Art Program, which was developed in 1965 as combat in Vietnam escalated. At that time, the Chief of Military History developed this new initiative to document Army activities. As in World War II, the program drew on the talents of both military and civilian professional artists.

During the Vietnam War, U.S. Army Special Services sponsored 10 teams of artists to serve four- to five-month tours. For 60 days, the artists traveled in Vietnam, experiencing the war with their contemporaries and documenting that experience



through photographs, field sketches, and meticulous notes. Then they spent the rest of their tour working in a studio to produce art based on their observations. Civilian artists also toured Vietnam in a similar fashion, and their art was donated to the Army.

In 2015, representatives from the cities of Roanoke and Salem, Roanoke County, the town of Vinton, and the Stonewall Jackson Chapter/ Association of the United States Army formed a committee to plan events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. An exhibit of combat art was one of the events identified, and the committee was the first to receive permission to reproduce several pieces of the combat art for display.

In March 2015, in partnership with Hollins University, the committee sponsored the first Vietnam Combat Art exhibition in the University's Ballator Gallery, at no cost to the public.

Going forward, the committee wants this opportunity to be available for all to experience. As a result, they are sharing this thought-provoking and moving exhibit with other localities and museums in Virginia. A set of guidelines for this traveling exhibit has been developed; among them is that the exhibit must be free and open to the public.

In addition to the Roanoke location, the exhibit has been shown by the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, Dinwiddie County, Bent Mountain Center, Salem Museum, Halifax County Museum, and Blacksburg Museum. Six additional sites have requested the exhibit in the coming months. 



**For 60 days, the artists traveled in Vietnam, experiencing the war with their contemporaries and documenting that experience through photographs and field sketches.**

### Want to show the exhibit in your town?

Anyone interested in having the exhibit shown at a facility in their area may contact Wendi Schultz at Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism, 540-777-6326,

or email [wschultz@roanokecountyva.gov](mailto:wschultz@roanokecountyva.gov) with questions or with the desired date you would like to host this exhibit. The art will be available through 2017.

*Submitted by the Roanoke Valley Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Committee*



# Supreme Court midterm report

## Decisions affecting local governments

**P**ERHAPS THE SUPREME Court's midterm has come and gone. The current term will end June 30. But the Court has issued decisions in only about half of the cases of the term so far. So now might be just the time to take stock of the Supreme Court's term as it relates to the states.

The Court has already decided two big cases and has four more left to go. Two of the six big cases (involving abortion and the Affordable Care Act birth control mandate) will have no direct impact on the local governments.

### Unions

In *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, the Court issued a 4-4 opinion which affirmed the lower court's decision to not overrule *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* (1977), holding that public sector "fair share" arrangements where non-union members must pay union dues are constitutional.

### One person, one vote

In *Evenwel v. Abbott*, the Court held 8-0 that, to meet the requirements of "one-person, one-vote," states and local governments may apportion state and local legislative districts using total population.

Justice Scalia's vote would have been decisive in *Friedrichs* and would have made no difference in *Evenwel*. Only time will tell how his absence will affect the rest of the cases to be decided this term.

### Deferred Action for Parents of Americans

In *United States v. Texas*, the Court will decide whether the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans program violates federal law or is unconstitutional.

### Race-conscious admission policies

For the second time, the Court has agreed to decide whether the University of Texas at Austin's race-conscious admissions policy is unconstitutional in *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*.

Beyond the "big" cases, the Court will only decide one case where a local government is a named party.

### Employment

In *Heffernan v. City of Paterson, New Jersey*, Officer Heffernan was assigned to a detail in the police chief's office. He was demoted after he was seen picking up a campaign sign for the current mayor's opponent. The sign wasn't for himself; it was for his bedridden mother. The First Amendment generally prohibits government employers from discharging or demoting employees because they support a particular political candidate. Officer Heffernan sued claiming he was demoted based on the police chief's mistaken view that he engaged in First Amendment protected speech. The Court agreed that Officer Heffernan has a First Amendment claim even though he engaged in no political activity protected by the First Amendment.

### Law enforcement

The Court has only decided one qualified immunity case. *Mullenix v. Luna* involved a police officer shooting at a car during a high speed chase to disable it and accidentally shooting and killing the driver; the Court granted the officer qualified immunity.

### Fourth Amendment search

This term the Court will decide just two Fourth Amendment search cases. This issue in a trio of drunk driving cases is whether state implied consent statutes *criminalizing* a person's refusal to take a warrantless chemical blood alcohol test upon suspicion of drunk driving are constitutional.

The issue in *Utah v. Strieff* is whether evidence seized incident to a lawful arrest on an outstanding warrant should be suppressed because the warrant was discovered during an investigatory stop later found to be unlawful.

Read about all these cases and more in the State and Local Legal Center's Midterm for the Local Governments report at [www.statelocalc.org](http://www.statelocalc.org). 

### About the author

Lisa Soronen is Executive Director of the State & Local Legal Center.



# OfficeSpace

## Co-work spaces accelerate growth of local start-ups

**N**OT EVERYONE RELISHES the idea of working at home in their pajamas with the cats all day long. Nor does the home office offer much brand exposure for new businesses. That's part of why co-work spaces are catching on quickly in Virginia. Think of them as another pioneer of the sharing economy.

They offer entrepreneurs a community in which to grow their business faster. It's called accelerated serendipity and it simply means that big things happen when a lot of creative people share their workspace.

### Co-work spaces

Co-work spaces are a close cousin to the incubator. The key difference is that, in addition to operating space, business incubators provide long-term coaching and consulting services for the start-up companies. Co-work spaces do not provide business coaching typically, but they provide a professional work environment with all technology and amenities in one reasonable monthly fee.

Both models serve as a catalyst for economic development in small or large communities.

Like most co-work spaces, "gather" in Richmond offers their clients all of the amenities of a traditional office environment. Members can purchase a dedicated desk or private office starting at \$350/month or use the co-work area for just \$250/month.

All members have access to conference rooms where they can meet with clients in a professional environment. A large conference room includes state-of-the-art A/V equipment for presentations to large groups.

The opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs is the key benefit says Managing Partner James Crenshaw. Gather's



**CoLab's open work space is bright and spacious with all-inclusive amenities.**



**Gather, a co-work space in downtown Richmond, is opening a second location this month.**



**Launchpad is a business incubator located in a lively retail district in Williamsburg.**

clients include a wide variety of businesses that intersect, such as graphic designers and web developers or realtors and property managers. They get to know one another organically just by sharing the same building and soon, “They all send business to one another,” says Crenshaw.

Ariel Lev, director of CoLab in Roanoke agrees. “We build a community that would otherwise never exist.” Founded in 2014, CoLab now has more than 140 members. Like most co-work spaces, CoLab took an empty run-down space and revitalized it. In doing so, they eliminated an eyesore in an otherwise attractive neighborhood and replaced it with a lively space that also drives traffic.

“We intentionally create opportunities for networking,” says Crenshaw, noting that gather organizes weekly socials on-site, happy hours, a running club for members, a book club and other social opportunities.

Co-work spaces are not only for entrepreneurs. Nowadays, large corporations are buying co-work memberships in order to provide remote employees with a work space outside of their home. Conaway Haskins, Executive Director of the Virginia Community Economic Network says, “This is a way to retain talent in the community.” By having co-work spaces, a locality can make itself more attractive to large companies and corporations.

Though privately owned, gather and Co-Lab offer interesting models for publicly funded co-work spaces, which could play an integral role in a community’s economic development strategy.

## Municipally-sponsored incubators

Business incubators are also making their mark in small and mid-size communities in Virginia. The three localities of James City County, York County and the City of Williamsburg teamed up to open Launchpad about 6 years ago. The localities share the costs as well as any tax revenues.

Because incubators also provide business coaching, entrepreneurs must apply to become a member of Launchpad. As with other incubators, members eventually graduate from the program and the space. Some of Launchpad’s graduates include Breathe Healthy, makers

of re-usable, germ-resistant masks, and MODU USA, a manufacturer of conveyor belt systems.

James City County Economic Development Director Russell Seymour says that incubators aren’t right for every locality, but Launchpad works well in their region because “we have a high number of start-ups and small businesses in an area with many new retirees.”

The Franklin Business Center is another example of a municipally-sponsored incubator. The City of Franklin and Southampton County are key partners in the business incubator, which is operated by Franklin Southampton Economic Development, Inc. Businesses must apply to become members. If approved, they get office space and all amenities starting at just \$82 per month.

**It’s called accelerated serendipity and it simply means that big things happen when a lot of creative people share their workspace.**

Clients also receive hands-on management assistance, access to equipment, and technical support services under one roof. Currently there are 24 businesses occupying the space. Fifteen businesses have graduated since the center began in 2005.

The co-work space creates connections organically and accelerates the development of new businesses. It also improves the quality of life for people who would otherwise work at home every day and it revitalizes neighborhoods. As Crenshaw says, “Put a diverse group of talent in one space and the possibilities are endless.” 

### About the author

*Nancy Chafin is editor of Virginia Town & City.*

## Top seven benefits of a local co-work space

1. Accelerated serendipity – when creative people meet, ideas flow, partnerships form and referrals soar.
2. A place for small businesses to meet with clients in a professional setting.
3. Fledgling businesses appreciate one set monthly fee for all utilities and amenities.
4. Large conference rooms with A/V and other technology that businesses need to host polished presentations.
5. Attract large companies/ retain local talent – Large companies rent space from co-work facilities to offer remote employees a work space outside the home.
6. Revitalize a district – most co-work spaces are launched in formerly vacant downtown spaces.
7. Members spend money in area restaurants, coffee shops and stores.

2016

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

INNOVATION  
AWARDS

Recognizing Excellence  
in Virginia Local Government

# CALL FOR ENTRIES

## 2016 VML Innovation Awards

(formerly the VML Achievement Awards)

THE 2016 VML INNOVATION AWARDS celebrate your hometown successes and all that you do to make your city, town or county a great place to live.

The Innovation Awards recognize outstanding achievements in local governments across Virginia. Formerly known as the VML Achievement Awards, the program is nearly 40 years old and is recognized as Virginia's highest honor in local government management.

Don't miss this opportunity to spotlight programs that have made a big difference to your residents – to celebrate innovative solutions that address emerging needs.

The awards are presented at a banquet at VML's Annual Conference in early October.

### Criteria

Projects and programs are judged on how well they demonstrate the following:

**Innovative problem solving**

**Improved quality of life**

**Excellence in management**

**Making the most of local resources**

**Increased citizen participation**

**Commitment to higher levels of service**

**Long-term value to the community**

**Adaptability to other communities**

Award-winning projects typically demonstrate innovative ways of delivering services, address a community need, or significantly improving an existing service.

### Categories

New this year, categories are based on the field of work as opposed to population. All populations compete within these categories. Our panel of judges have years of experience in municipalities of all sizes

and will judge the scope and impact of the project in relationship and proportion to the community's size, thereby putting localities of all sizes on a **level playing field**.

We recognize that many projects relate to more than one category. When deciding what category best fits your project, consider what the primary goal of the project is and what aspect of it demonstrates the greatest innovation.

Localities may submit in as many categories as they like. The categories are:

#### **Infrastructure**

includes public works, transportation, public utilities, stormwater, customer service enhancements, environmental preservation, sustainability, resiliency planning, structures and facilities, libraries and other projects.

#### **Economic Development**

includes business development, historic preservation, tourism, workforce development, housing, community events, strategic planning and visioning, public-private partnerships, consumer and financial literacy, public art, museums and other projects.

#### **Public Safety**

includes police, fire, rescue services, emergency planning and coordinated response, building code enforcement, jails, health and mental health related to public safety.

#### **Working with Youth**

includes civics education, pre-k-12 education, summer programs, parks and recreation, and literacy programs.

#### **Communications**

includes promotional campaigns, branding campaigns, crisis plans, events, customer service programs; media can include online, video, print, social and other formats.

## President's Award for Innovation

One winning project from the category winners will be selected for the top prize – the President's Award – and will receive this top honor in addition to the award in their category. The President's Award can come from any of the categories.

### Deadline

**All entries must be received via e-mail by 5 p.m., Friday, July 29, 2016.**

### Rules for entering

New this year, all entries must be submitted electronically. Localities must download the entry form at [www.vml.org/education/innovation-awards](http://www.vml.org/education/innovation-awards) and fill in all of the requested information directly on the form. The completed form must then be e-mailed to [nchafin@vml.org](mailto:nchafin@vml.org).

The competition is open to all VML local government members.

Entries must cover new projects or programs completed between Jan. 1, 2015 and May 1, 2016, or – for existing projects – entries must cover major enhancements that occurred between Jan. 1, 2015 and May 1, 2016.

Each entry form must be fully completed and must be signed by the local government's chief administrative or elected official.

A local government can submit entries in all of the five categories. The President's Award is not a separate category.

A maximum of three supporting documents totaling no more than 10 pages, including photos, brochures, charts, or other information can be included in a separate document. This document must also be e-mailed. Videos can be uploaded to a file transfer site. Full instructions are provided at [www.vml.org/education/innovation-awards](http://www.vml.org/education/innovation-awards).

### Questions?

For more information about completing your entry or other details, contact VML's Nancy Chafin at 804-523-8527 or [nchafin@vml.org](mailto:nchafin@vml.org).

### The judging

Entries are screened by VML staff and judged by a panel of three judges chosen for their expertise in local and state government. They generally represent a variety of communities – from small towns to large cities and state agencies.

### The winners

Awards will be presented at the VML annual conference in Virginia Beach, October 9-11. All winning entries will also be featured in articles in the VML magazine *Virginia Town & City*.

Don't miss this premiere opportunity to spotlight innovative programs that make your town, city or county a great place for people to call home!





# INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL OFFICIALS

KEY TRAINING FOR NEW & VETERAN OFFICIALS ALIKE

**July 22-23, 2016**

**Hilton Richmond Downtown**

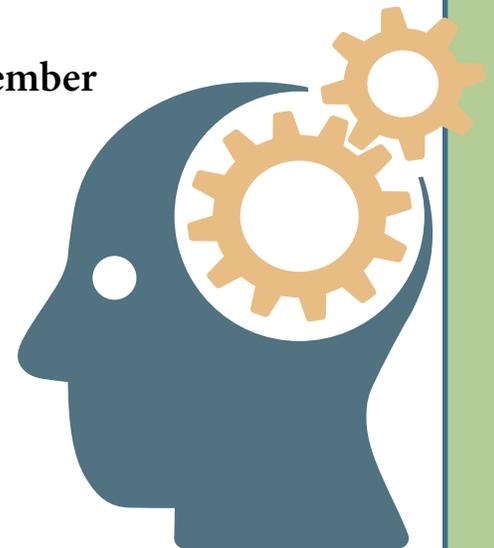
**501 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219**

This event replaces what was previously known as the Newly Elected Officials Conference and is open to newly elected officials and veterans alike.

**To view the preliminary agenda and to register, go to [www.vml.org](http://www.vml.org).**

## TOPICS

- **Fundamentals of serving as a council member**
- **Making the most of meetings**
- **Budgeting**
- **Freedom of Information Act**
- **Conflicts of Interest Act**
- **Interacting with constituents**
- **Basic Law Making / Dillon's Rule**
- **Public officials' liability**



Attendees will earn 10 of the 40 hours required to achieve Level One (Local Government Basics) certification in the Virginia Leadership Academy.

Cost: \$175 for Members and \$75 for Guests

Hotel accommodations are available at the group rate of \$121/night.

For questions or more information, please contact Anita Yearwood, CMP, CGMP at (804)523-8534 or [ayearwood@vml.org](mailto:ayearwood@vml.org).

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