

## *MACo President's Healthy Counties Best Practices Award*

### *2014 Nominations*

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#### *Commission on Excellence - Anne Arundel County*

**Description:** The Commission on Excellence was established to evaluate the efficiency with which each of Anne Arundel County's 19 departments operates and delivers services to the public. Over 45 county residents voluntarily served on the commission, which split into six committees that met from June to September 2013 to conduct an in-depth analysis of operations, policies, procedures and processes within the three to four departments the group was assigned and develop suggestions for improvement. Collectively, the commission delivered a report of nearly 200 recommendations for improvement that were focused on the central themes of technology, personnel and processes. The recommendations – which spanned expanding training partnerships with the community college to staffing administrative public safety positions with civilians rather than uniformed officers to updating customer service capabilities for county websites – were compiled into a final report. Many of these invaluable recommendations have already been implemented, and many more are in progress. In addition to the changes we have made throughout every department, the report has been used to inform our budget process and policy-making decisions. As the recommendations have been implemented, we have tracked their successes.

**Benefits to Health of the County:** As it was comprised of citizens who volunteered their time to serve the community, the Commission on Excellence posed no financial burden to the county. In fact, it presented an opportunity for cutting county expenses, as the commission's findings centered on saving taxpayer dollars through maximizing efficiency, consolidating efforts and capitalizing on existing partnerships.

Additionally, the commission contributed to the overall health of the county through the benefits its recommendations pose to our citizens. These recommendations include offering online permit application, tracking and approval in the Department of Inspections & Permits; implementing a fast-track process for smaller projects in the Department of Planning & Zoning; accepting credit card payments at park gates through the Department of Recreation & Parks; and many more.

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#### *Cage Farm Wetland Creation Project - Calvert County*

**Description:** Calvert County is surrounded by the Chesapeake Bay and Patuxent River. As a steward of the environment to help maintain the health of the Chesapeake Bay, Calvert County believes that creation of wetlands is one of the best management practices (BMPs) to reduce sediment run-off and nutrients from entering this precious resource. The wetland mitigation program for the Calvert County Department of Public Works develops wetland creation sites for use as future mitigation of unavoidable wetland disturbances associated with public infrastructure projects within the County. These sites, once approved and permitted by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), Army Corps of Engineers, and other reviewing agencies, provide a valuable asset for addressing

environmental impacts for future capital projects. The Cage Farm Wetland Creation Project represents Calvert County's latest addition for the provision of environmental credits for wetland mitigation. It was created through the joint efforts of in-house County agencies, State and Federal agencies and was an innovative use of County staff. The County agencies worked with the MDE and the Army Corps of Engineers diligently, including their legal staff, and developed a new template to meet the new mitigation regulation requirements, including the financial mechanism to maintain and upkeep the created wetlands in perpetuity. This process alone took almost two years to complete. It took nearly five years from concept to shovels in the ground for receipt of approvals, and only three months to construct.

**Benefits to Health of County:** We feel it was worth the effort, because this wetland mitigation bank in place, consisting of ten acres, will continue to meet the needs of the Calvert County Capital Improvements project for years to come and help the environment at the same time. The County has the best of both worlds, as the creation of these wetlands banks not only addresses the needs of Calvert County citizens, but also maintains the environmental balance. We also understand and are proud that it was the first project approved by all regulatory agencies under new regulations.

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***Peer Recovery Advocate Program - Cecil County (WINNER)***

**Description:** The Cecil County Peer Recovery Advocate Program provides early intervention to people with substance abuse problems by creating a relationship between a Peer Recovery Advocate and identified at-risk patients in our local hospital. The Peer Recover Advocate meets with the patient to discuss addiction and the resources available to help them in recovery. These one-on-one relationships have provided much needed support and encouragement to a person with the addiction from a “peer” – someone who has been through exactly what they have and has been successful in recovery. The Peer Recovery Advocates provide guidance on what programs exist, where to seek treatment, and a “warm hand-off” where they actually accompany the patient from the hospital to the Health Department to enroll in treatment. Much of the success of this program is due to dedicated advocates and the excellent collaboration with and commitment from Union Hospital in Elkton.

**Benefits to Health of County:** In 2011, Cecil County had the highest drug overdose death rate per capita in the entire State of Maryland. Since then, our community has rallied together to find solutions to this complex and multi-faceted crisis, and our Health Department has been a champion for searching for evidence-based programs that would likely have success in our community as well. This Peer Recovery Advocate program is just one example of how they are addressing our County’s substance abuse issues.

Although the original Peer Advocate Program was created with state revenue, the expansion of four new advocates for the program was funded this fiscal year by a Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) grant of \$105,000 with no burden to the taxpayers.

The value of a program like this in our community cannot be underestimated. Not only does it improve the quality of life for the individual in need, it positively impacts their families, their neighbors and their employers. As local government, we are constantly adjusting to the “new normal”, and substance abuse has become an issue for every county and every state as we search for

solutions. This program has successfully targeted a specific need to a very difficult issue in Cecil County, and therefore is very deserving of the MACo President's Health Counties Best Practices Award.

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### ***Frederick WORKS! One Job at a Time - Frederick County***

**Description:** In an effort to boost the local economy, Frederick County Workforce Services and the Frederick County Workforce Development Board developed and championed a business-driven hiring initiative in collaboration with Frederick County Chamber of Commerce, City of Frederick Economic Development, and Frederick County Division of Business Development and Retention. For the past two years, Frederick WORKS! *One Job at a Time* has encouraged Frederick County businesses to be part of the unemployment solution, by creating and/or filling new jobs. The initiative was launched in 2012 and reached its goal of 1,000 participating employers earlier this year, reflecting a total of 2,409 jobs.

Supported by the Board of County Commissioners, Mayor Randy McClement, and other local municipality leaders, Frederick WORKS! *One Job at a Time* was modeled after similar programs in other communities throughout the United States that have been successful in generating new job opportunities and getting the unemployed back to work.

**Benefits to Health of County:** The initiative was launched in 2012 and reached its goal of 1,000 participating employers earlier this year, reflecting a total of 2,409 jobs. According to economists, each new employee added to the workforce increases the United States GDP, on average, by \$100,000. Local leaders reasoned that even if only a small portion of Frederick County's businesses hired just one person this year, there would still be a significant and measurable impact on the local economy.

In addition, by publicly recognizing employers that have hired, Frederick WORKS! *One Job at a Time* partners have brought attention to the fact that Frederick County is a thriving labor market ripe with employment opportunities. "This initiative has strived to influence the local economy in yet another way, through a shift in perception – a positive momentum – that has helped to boost overall consumer and investor confidence," explains Laurie Holden, director of Frederick County Workforce Services.

This Board of County Commissioners is proud to have been a supporter of this initiative to create jobs, get unemployed citizens back to work, and boost our economy. As we expected they would, businesses in Frederick County thoroughly embraced this challenge.

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### ***Mobile Integrated Community Health Pilot Program - Queen Anne's County (WINNER)***

**Description:** In an effort to identify members of the community that are underserved and connect them with public health resources that are underutilized, a partnership was formed between Queen Anne's County Department of Health and the Queen Anne's County Department of Emergency Services. With this newfound partnership and through the use of multi-agency collaboration, the Mobile Integrated Community Health (MICH) Pilot Program was born.

The MICH Program operates by utilizing data obtained from 911 and emergency dispatch services along with observations and interactions experienced from EMS field providers (Paramedics and EMTs) to identify people who, due to barriers to care, are at a high risk for declining physical or mental health and may benefit from one or more of the resources offered by the Department of Health.

After a person is identified as high risk, a team consisting of a Nurse Practitioner from the Department of Health and a Paramedic from the Department of Emergency Services perform a home visit. Home visits are meant to assess the patient's current quality of life and focus on overall physical and mental health, substance abuse risk, home safety checks, fall risk assessments, nutrition, social support evaluation, medication review, and condition-specific education.

From this comprehensive assessment, barriers to medical and mental health-care will be identified and existing social, medical, mental health, transportation, and nutrition resources are considered for utilization. With the goal of improving the patient's quality of life, the MICH team works together to break down the identified barriers to care by linking the patient with the appropriate public health resources.

**Benefit to Health of the County:** So far, this program has helped to identify members of the community who lack access to primary care, struggle with the complexities of their chronic illness, suffer from geographic or social isolation, and experience a fragmented access to care for mental health or substance abuse. Since July, the MICH program has effectively identified people in need who otherwise would have continued to fall through the cracks of medical and mental health-care access. Through home visits and referred resources, the MICH program has been able to give patients an opportunity to overcome the barriers preventing them from living the life they want to live and gives them the chance to take back control of their physical and mental health, increasing their overall quality of life.

The MICH Pilot Program was made possible through grant funding from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as well as financial contribution from the University of Maryland Medical Systems-Shore Health (UMMS), a major stakeholder and collaborator for the program. With funding provided from these sources, this program is currently able to offer an extra avenue of outreach for those in need with little to no burden on the county budget.