



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 06/14/2014

RUTHERFORD COUNTY EMS, 911 AND TRANSIT RECEIVE NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



On June 12, 2014, Rutherford County was notified that they had received three different national achievement awards. Rutherford County had submitted applications on March 31, 2014 for all three projects awarded. The NACo Achievement Awards recognize innovative programs that modernizes county government and increase services to county residents.

From the announcement: “The National Association of Counties (NACo) is pleased to grant Rutherford County three 2014 Achievement Awards for its programs titled “Stuff the Ambulance” in the category of Children and Youth, “911 Public Awareness Campaign” in the category of Emergency Management and Response, and “Food Pantry Shuttle Service” in the category of Transportation. Congratulations to everyone involved, who were able to help develop this innovative program! Your hard work will yield positive results for Rutherford County. “

The first project awarded was the EMS for the “Stuff the Ambulance” toy drive. It was an idea that was



Paramedics: Caleb Alberts, Kaleb Johnson, Kayla Wynn, Kristen Oliver, Crystal Suttle, Terry Baynard at the Forest City Christmas Parade.

started in October 2013 by a paramedic employee who wanted to give back to the community. Approximately one hundred county employees got involved through promotion, Christmas parades, donations, staffing collection sites and distributing toys to children. EMS partnered with the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Cooperative Extension county office, Wal-Mart, the United Way and the Hickory Nut Gorge Rescue Squad. DSS suggested distributing toys to the foster children they work with on a daily basis. The Cooperative Extension office also had needs from citizens in their support group "Grandparents Raising Grandkids". In just eight short weeks, 2,200 toys were delivered to over 400 foster children and grandchildren being raised

by their grandparents. County employees established a program that could be easily replicated on an annual basis. Teamwork was built between county departments which would normally have not interacted with each other.

"I think that as EMS providers, we often see people only at the worst times of their lives. With this project, it has been a wonderful way for us to change that and bring happiness to the children of our county. By being recognized nationally for this achievement, I hope it will allow other EMS systems to implement their own "Stuff the Ambulance" to help their community." stated paramedic, Roc-Antony Smith, NREMT-P who was the originator of this project.

The second project awarded was the 911 Cell Phone Public Awareness Campaign. The campaign began in February 2014 with the purpose to inform citizens that it is imperative to always verify their county and location when calling 911 on their cell phone. Cell phone calls are often directed to another county's 911 Center, based on where the cell tower is located. 911 dispatchers will identify their county when answering a call, but in an emergency the caller may not hear them identify the county. The campaign also stresses that if a citizen is connected to a bordering county's 911 Center, they will be immediately routed to Rutherford County 911 to complete the call. Since starting the campaign in February and March 2014, several counties in North Carolina and South Carolina have picked up the campaign and are using it in their communities as well.

Tammy Aldridge, Director of 911 Communications Center was thrilled with the response from the campaign. *"We are always looking for innovative ways to speed up the dispatching process. Over half our calls are now coming from cell phones and knowing a caller's location is the most valuable piece of information we can receive. We have already provided this public awareness literature to other counties so they can implement the program as well."*



The third and final project that was awarded was for Transit's Grocery Shuttle Service. The driving purpose behind this project was to help people connect to food resources when transportation is a barrier. Rutherford County Transit went outside the scope of traditional public transportation services, by listening to their passengers, and creating a service that meets their passengers' basic needs outside of mere transportation.



Shuttle service is provided every Thursday to the Storehouse Pantry to Rutherford County citizens for free and is funded through the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Rural Operating Assistance Program and the Transit department within Rutherford County's local government. Currently, Transit provides service to approximately eighty families per month to the local food pantry.

Kerry Giles, Transportation Services Director stated *"Rutherford County is extremely blessed to have employees who are constantly observing the needs of our citizens and looking for ways to provide solutions. All three of these projects have strengthened the services we provide every day to our residents. I could not ask for a better team to work with."*

Started in 1970, the annual NACo Achievement Award Program is a non-competitive awards program that recognizes innovative county government programs. Each application is judged on its own merits and not against other applications received.

