

COUNTY OF LOUISA
Troy J. Wade, Chairman
Board of Supervisors

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 8, 2016

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**LOUISA COUNTY RECEIVES HONORS IN VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF
COUNTIES 2016 ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS PROGRAM**

LOUISA, VIRGINIA – The County of Louisa is pleased to announce that it has earned a 2016 Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) Achievement Award for the School Garden and Classroom Breakfast Program. The effort is a collaboration between Louisa County Public Schools and the County Extension Office, and the program was also named a statewide finalist for the best model local government program for 2016. Focusing on childhood obesity and childhood hunger, the program implements creative solutions to these issues, enhancing the quality of instructional efforts for elementary children.

The School Garden supplies fresh produce to the school cafeteria and provides hands-on education in gardening. With guidance from the Extension Office and the Master Gardener's Club, the garden is a rousing success. Randy Herman, Nutrition Services Supervisor, and Moss-Nuckols Cafeteria Manager Cheryl Seay have been instrumental in the program. "Our school garden project brings the community together in a unique way," said Herman. "Through the collaboration of amazing community partners, children are receiving valuable science and nutrition lessons in an engaging hands-on setting."

Jenny Thompson, 4-H Extension Agent, has helped transform the program into a success by incorporating a "tasting party" that allows students to try the vegetables they grow. "With the 4-H emphasis on hands-on learning and STEM, this has been the perfect partnership," said Thompson. "The kids are excited to 'get dirty' and plant their garden, and the in-class lessons tie the garden to their SOLs. By finishing with the 'tasting party' and learning that 'their produce' is being served in the cafeteria, it brings the garden full circle, and they can see start to finish where their food comes from!"

The School Garden Program produces enough cafeteria salad vegetables for the majority of the year. Elementary school children receive valuable education on plant science and important life skills. In addition, children make a habit of eating healthy, fresh food in their school lunches.

"We are grateful to the community partners who have made this program so successful," said J. Douglas Straley II, Superintendent of Louisa County Public Schools. "The garden

creates valuable hands-on STEM learning opportunities while promoting whole-child wellness, and also providing operational efficiency. It has been a great benefit to our students and we are currently expanding the program to all of our elementary schools."

The Breakfast in the Classroom Program encourages eating a healthy, balanced breakfast, in the classroom rather than the cafeteria. This encourages all students to eat the first meal of the day that may not have otherwise done so. In addition, eating breakfast in the classroom allows more class time and is more efficient than the traditional cafeteria breakfast.

Since the program's inception, the First Lady of Virginia has visited to see the program and to commend staff on their hard work. In one year, participation in the program has risen from 28 percent to over 50 percent and class tardiness has declined.

VACo received 91 submissions for Achievement Awards this year, and this is the second consecutive year that Louisa has been selected for an Award. "The County is extremely pleased with the program, the guidance from the Board of Supervisors and the School Board, and the efforts of dedicated staff," said Christian Goodwin, Louisa County Administrator. Our employees work hard every day to do great things for our citizens, and it's an honor for their work to be recognized by the Virginia Association of Counties.

To read the full submission of Louisa County's winning achievement award submission, visit <http://www.vaco.org/VACoHonors/AchievementAwards/2016/16Winners.pdf>:

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