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FOUR COUNTY PROGRAMS WIN NACo AWARDS

NEWTON, NC – Four Catawba County programs have been recognized with 2017 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Awards. The awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that enhance services for residents.

The Catawba County Library System won two Achievement Awards. The first was given for the Library's Homework Helpers program, which enriches learning opportunities for students and increases educational attainment in Catawba County by supporting student learning through tutoring and coaching. It also increases teen engagement and supports active learning, personal growth, and leadership for teen volunteers who work with elementary students. The Library acts as the facilitator and host by bringing high school student volunteers together with elementary age students who need practice reading and help with their homework.

The second Achievement Award was given for the Library's Born to Read initiative, a partnership with local hospitals and the Catawba County Partnership for Children to help improve kindergarten readiness and overall educational attainment in Catawba County. The Library presents early literacy training to expectant parents during prenatal classes. Before leaving the birthing center, parents of newborns receive a Born to Read Bag, complete with baby's first book and library card, along with plenty of information resources to give their baby a head start on early literacy with immediate access to thousands of online resources, including children's books, movies and music. The Library continues to support our youngest citizens through special collections, Baby Bounce and Ready to Learn story times, as well as outreach and education that positively reinforce early literacy development.

Catawba County Geospatial Information Services (GIS) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) won the third award for the creation of a map-based simulation tool to analyze EMS incident response scenarios and accurately predict necessary EMS resources to meet the County's under-eight-minute ambulance response benchmark. This collaborative tool has helped ensure efficient services to citizens without coverage gaps, minimal overhead cost for evaluating dispatch procedures, and better data analysis for prudent budget and resource allocation.

Catawba County Social Services won the fourth award for developing a drug testing purchase order portal to help streamline the drug testing process that is sometimes required for clients. One of the contributing factors to why children are sometimes removed from their parents involves illegal substance abuse. Parents are often required by the court to undergo random drug testing and demonstrate sobriety in order to regain custody of their children. The new software created by Social Services' IT staff provides a secure, paperless system that simplifies appointment scheduling, provides better tracking of appointments, and enables the testing clinic to organize client visits in a more efficient manner.

Nationally, NACo awards are given in 18 different categories that reflect the vast, comprehensive services counties provide. Catawba County has won 210 awards over the history of the NACo program and has been honored every year since the program's inception in 1970.

"My fellow commissioners and I are always impressed by the innovative and effective programs and solutions developed by County employees, and we're pleased to see that hard work recognized by NACo," said Randy Isenhower, Chair, Catawba County Board of Commissioners.

The categories include children and youth, criminal justice, county administration, information technology, health, civic engagement and many more. Learn more at www.naco.org.

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