



PARTNERHSIP BETWEEN GEORGETOWN COUNTY AND GEORGETOWN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIVES STATEWIDE RECOGNITION

Georgetown County has won the 2009 J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award, the top honor in the prestigious, statewide competition that the South Carolina Association of Counties has held each year since 1973. The coveted award is an effort to recognize outstanding achievements by County Governments in South Carolina.

The 2009 J Mitchell Graham Award was presented to Georgetown County at the 42nd Annual South Carolina Association of Counties Conference held July 30th – August 2nd in recognition of a unique, innovative partnership with the Georgetown County School District, and the Boy Scouts of America. In an effort to address consistent vacancies in fire fighting positions, Georgetown County devised a creative plan in conjunction with the Georgetown County School District, and the Boy Scouts of America to train local high school students to become firefighters. The entities joined forces to implement an accredited training program, utilizing a nationally recognized curriculum within the Georgetown County public school system on the elements of basic structural fire fighting. Upon approval by the South Carolina State Board of Education, the “pilot program” was introduced at Andrews High School in January 2009. The program, proposes to provide employment opportunities within Georgetown County for its graduates. Those who do not decide on fire fighting as a career choice obtain valuable and irreplaceable life skills.

Although there are currently no other similar programs in existence in South Carolina's public school system, the Georgetown County program has become a model and Georgetown County is currently fielding tremendous interest in similar partnerships from other jurisdictions. The County and the Georgetown County School District are also exploring avenues to expand similar offerings to other schools within the County. This training program was initiated as a novel way to serve a local need in addressing Georgetown County's vacancies and employee turnover within the County Emergency Services Department. The program has become about shaping careers of the future and providing tools to maximize success in life. Once fully developed, this program will not only meet the needs of Georgetown County, but will provide trained fire fighters for other municipalities and neighboring fire departments.

The J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award is a tribute to the influence and leadership of the late J. Mitchell Graham, a member of Charleston County Council for 18 years (10 years as chairman). Graham also served as President of the SC Association of Counties. County entries into the J. Mitchell Graham Award Competition are grouped into categories according to size/population, however, all counties compete equally for the distinctive award by making 10 minute presentations before a panel of judges during the competition. Counties also submit written entries that are reviewed by the panel of judges. Georgetown County's project was judged alongside a record number of entries submitted by counties statewide.

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