



# 7TH ANNUAL REGION OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

MAY 9, 2012

## 2012 EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

### **Controlling the Cost of Government**

Town of Marshville

*Cost Savers  
Initiative*

### **Growing the Economy**

City of Belmont

*Small Business Support,  
Retention and  
Recruitment Program*

### **Growing the Economy**

City of Charlotte

*CharlotteBusiness  
Resources.com*

### **Improving Quality of Life**

Town of Troutman

*ESC Park Project*

### **Clean Cities**

Gaston County Schools

*Biodiesel Production  
and Use in Fleet  
School Buses*

## BACKGROUND

Centralina COG celebrates the work of member governments through the Excellence Awards. These awards honor the outstanding achievements that work collectively to achieve regional goals.

Elected officials, managers and other staff from our member governments were encouraged to nominate innovative projects implemented by their jurisdictions that contribute to significant and positive advancements in the community.

A panel of impartial judges reviewed each submittal and selected award winning projects based on the following award criteria:

- Innovation and creativity
- Commitment to goals
- Contributions to regionalism
- Program successes and sustainable benefits
- Engagement of community members
- Interaction with public/private partners

Our judges this year included: Norman Whitaker, Executive Director of the Central Midlands COG in Columbia, SC and Kirby Bowers, Executive Director of the Triangle J COG in Raleigh, NC. A separate committee reviewed and selected the winner of the Clean Cities Award. Please read page 4 of this brochure for more details on our judges.

## EXCELLENCE AWARD CATEGORIES

### **“Controlling the Cost of Government”**

The recipient of this award has been creative in implementing a new or innovative program or initiative that is effective and delivers the most value with public funds. Such program exemplifies efficiency through: utilizing economies of scale; partnering with other local governments to maximize the impact of public funds; and/or encouraging best practices to maintain or expand services.

### **“Growing the Economy”**

The recipient of this award has implemented innovative solutions to community development/investment challenges and engages in best practice strategies that: utilize public/private sector partnerships to maximize investment opportunities; prepares existing sites and infrastructure to meet the needs of target industries; and/or implements economic development including job creation/retention initiatives, etc.

### **“Improving Quality of Life”**

The recipient of this award best leverages resources to improve the quality of life for citizens. The award recipient has implemented innovative program offerings such as those that: enhance social equity; encourage community participation through public and private sector leadership; develop solutions that build on the community's strengths and improve upon its weaknesses; or use cooperative volunteerism to maintain or expand services.

### **“Clean Cities”**

The recipient of this award best recognizes the environmental and economic benefits of reducing consumption of fossil fuels. This recipient has lowered the use of traditional transportation fuels by: purchasing alternative fuel and/or fuel efficient vehicles, using alternative fuels in their fleet, implementing idle reduction policies and/or has partnered with fuel providers to expand alternative fuel availability.

## **“Controlling the Cost of Government”**

### **Town of Marshville Cost Savers Initiative**



Marshville Police Department has undertaken an initiative of partnering with the Wingate Police Department to jointly conduct Police training for both departments. This ultimately results in a savings to each town since the costs associated with an instructor, materials, and facilities are not duplicated but shared by the two towns.

North Carolina mandates that each sworn Law Enforcement Officer receive at least 20 hours per year of training approved by the NC Criminal Justice Education and Training Commission. By consolidating training efforts, the towns have significantly reduced their on-going annual training expenses. Additionally, the officers of the two agencies have developed closer professional ties to better serve the communities in the eastern region of Union County.

Since both agencies have entered into Mutual Aid Agreements and can call on each other in the event of a need for additional manpower, the combined training ensures that officers from both agencies develop a better working relationship and are better able to effectively deliver Law Enforcement services to the citizens of their communities.

## **“Growing the Economy”**

### **City of Belmont Small Business Support, Retention and Recruitment Program**



*Downtown Belmont*

The City of Belmont has entered into a unique partnership with the Montcross Chamber of Commerce to support, retain, and recruit small businesses in Belmont.

Both organizations recognized the need to provide technical support to the many small businesses in Belmont to help them avoid some of the common mistakes that many new small businesses make that can put them out of business. However, the City did not have the expertise to do this and the Chamber did not have the funding for a staff position.

In October 2011 both organizations signed a contract wherein the City of Belmont would provide \$20,000 toward a Chamber staff position that would provide small business support services. This funding could be renewed annually depending on

performance.

With many textile mills closed and larger employers locating in business parks elsewhere in Gaston County, Belmont has relied on cultivating small businesses in its downtown, East Belmont, and Wilkinson Boulevard areas. The Montcross Chamber found that 84% of its members are small businesses with 10 or fewer employees. Providing services to these members is good for the City and for the Chamber.

This partnership will allow the Chamber to reach entrepreneurs and start-up business owners and provide the needed advice and training. The Chamber will work with the Small Business Center at Gaston College, the Center for Entrepreneurship at Belmont Abbey College, the Small Business Administration and others to provide this training.

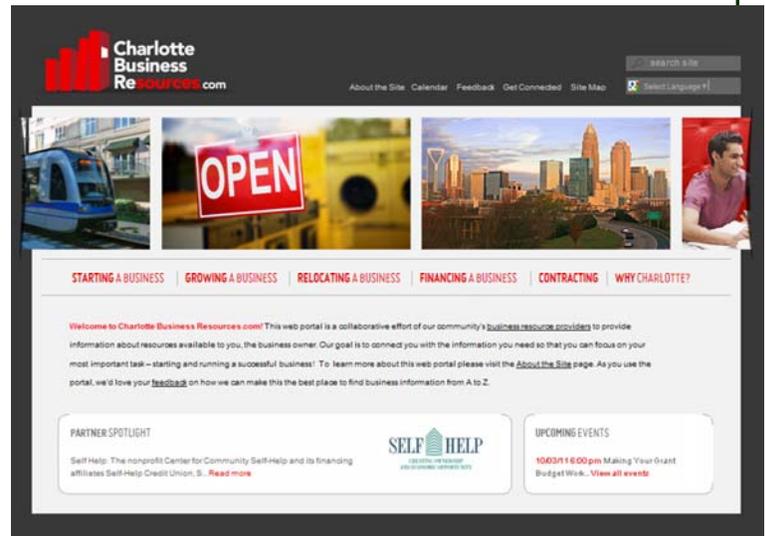
## “Growing the Economy” City of Charlotte *CharlotteBusinessResources.com Initiative*

*CharlotteBusinessResources.com* represents a unique collaboration of fourteen (14) community partners to make the Charlotte area the premier place for small business growth and investment.

The *CharlotteBusinessResources.com* brand represents: 1) the ongoing collaborative efforts of the Partners to implement the objectives of Charlotte’s Small Business Strategic Plan and 2) a website that serves as a single, comprehensive portal for businesses to connect to local, state and federal resources available to help businesses start, grow, overcome obstacles and succeed.

Prior to the development of the website, there was no single source for businesses to learn about the resources available to help. Since the site launched in May 2011 over 24,000 visits to the site have occurred and 1,000 individuals have subscribed to the newsletter. Reception by both the community at large and business resource organizations has been very positive.

*CharlotteBusinessResources.com* is one of the first of its kind in North Carolina and the commitment of the Partners has been recognized as innovative and worthy of replication around the state.



## “Improving Quality of Life” Town of Troutman *ESC Park Project*

Troutman’s ESC Park Project represents an innovative public engagement effort. By utilizing multiple community participation opportunities, the Town has been able to determine the preferences and recreational needs for citizens of all ages and abilities. The result has been a well thought out and community supported plan for Troutman’s first park.

The Town has kept the community informed of the project through the Troutman Planning Facebook page, website, and water bills. In addition to the PARTF grant funds that the Town has received, the Town has also been successful in garnering \$98,000 from Lowes Charitable and Educational Foundation. Further, citizens have raised over \$150,000 for development of the park.

### Project Timeline

**Jan 2010**—Town partners with Engineered Sintered Components (ESC) to develop the Town’s first park.

**March 2010**—Town holds a charrette with local students to help in the development of the site plan for the park.

**June 2010**—Town appoints a Parks and Recreation Committee to hold public meetings to identify recreational needs.

**Jan 2011**—Town Board adopts a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan.

**Jan 2011**—Town applies for PARTF grant.

**June 2011**—Town receives notification of \$500,000 PARTF grant award.

**August 2011**—Groundbreaking ceremony for the park. Town also holds a series of meetings to solicit more focused input on the Town park.

**Summer 2012**—Town anticipates having the playground within the park open.

**June 2014**—Town anticipates completion of Phase I of the park, which would include a walking trail, nature trail, multi-purpose field, picnic pavilion, etc.



*Students give their input on the town park.*



*Town citizens and other stakeholders help to decide on amenities for the new park.*



## “Clean Cities” Gaston County Schools Biodiesel Production and Use in Fleet School Buses



Over 200 Gaston County School Buses Run on Domestically-Made Biodiesel.



Used Vegetable Oil Delivered from Gaston County School Cafeterias

Gaston County Schools (GCS) is the first school district in North Carolina to produce its own biodiesel fuel for use in its bus fleet. School officials recycle used vegetable oil obtained from Gaston County school cafeterias, area recycling centers, and nearby Snyder's-Lance. These sources produce waste oil that serves as feedstock for the biodiesel produced at the GCS facility.

The school system expects to produce up to 100,000 gallons of fuel this coming year and save at least \$125,000 annually, following a nationwide trend of using alternative fuel to save money and cut down on toxic emissions. Currently, GCS produces biodiesel (B20; 20% biodiesel + 80% diesel) to fuel approximately 280 yellow school buses and white activity buses in their fleet.

They produce 500 gallons per day, approximately 4 days a week, totaling around 2,000 gallons of biodiesel produced per week during the school year.

In an effort to reduce diesel emissions from its school bus fleet, GCS began making biodiesel on-site in 2005. Using grease from the school cafeterias, the initial facility produced 75 gallon batches of biodiesel which was used to fuel the buses. Because of the support of the community and the commitment of the school district, GCS expanded its facility for making biodiesel. This new facility produces enough biodiesel to fuel the entire fleet with biodiesel and expects to produce 100,000 gallons per year.

## Thank you to all our Excellence Award judges!

### Kirby Bowers

Kirby Bowers is the Executive Director of the Triangle J Council of Governments in Raleigh. Mr. Bowers joined Triangle J in April 2009 after a distinguished local government career in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area that included Loudoun County Administrator and Deputy Administrator from 1989-2009. Mr. Bowers is responsible for guiding Loudoun County through a period of extensive population growth, attaining AAA credit status from all rating agencies while having one of the highest rates of population growth in the nation.

### Norman Whitaker

Norman Whitaker is the Executive Director of the Central Midlands Council of Governments in Columbia, SC. Prior to joining Central Midlands in 2003, Mr. Whitaker was Executive Director of the Knoxville, Knox County (TN) Metropolitan Planning Commission, Planning Director for Portsmouth, Virginia, and Planning and Economic Development Director for Beaumont, Texas. He has 33 years of professional experience involving land use planning, transportation, parks and open space, growth management, downtown revitalization, coastal zone management, historic preservation, economic development, and capital projects management.

### Clean Cities

A separate committee reviewed and selected the winner of the Clean Cities Award. This committee included: Erik Blowers, GBUSA, Inc. (last year's Clean Cities Award winner); Jim Burke, Gaston County Cooperative Extension; and Rich Deming, Calor Energy. The Centralina Clean Fuels Coalition appreciates the work of this committee and thanks them for their time and participation in the awards program.

### Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG)

CCOG is the state-designated lead regional organization for our nine county region and is one of 16 regional councils in the state. The organization represents 70 county and municipal governments and encompasses a population of close to 2 million people.

*Serving Anson, Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union Counties and the municipalities throughout the region.*