



Charleston County News Release

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See photo: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/projectimpact.htm>

Charleston County Wins National Sustainable Communities Award

Charleston County is one of 10 honored by the National Association of Counties

Charleston County Government was recently presented one of only 10 prestigious Sustainable Communities Awards by the National Association of Counties (NACo) for 2006-2007.

The awards, presented every two years by NACo's Center for Sustainable Communities, recognize the most effective and innovative county-led partnerships with private sector, faith-based or community groups in developing economically prosperous, environmentally safe and socially equitable communities.

Carl Simmons, Charleston County's Building Services Director, received the County's award at a reception in Washington, D.C.

"The award is a testament to Charleston County's success, innovation and collaboration in creating communities that embody economic vitality, environmental stewardship and social equity," stated Abigail Friedman, NACo's Community Services Program Director, in a letter to Simmons notifying him of the County's award. Winners were selected by a panel of independent judges.

The NACo Web site (www.naco.org) describes why Charleston County received the award:

"In putting together a comprehensive partnership for disaster mitigation education, Charleston County, S.C. engaged over 170 stakeholders from the private sector, foundation, and educational communities. As a result, they have implemented a replicable program that fosters awareness about the importance of disaster mitigation and the steps that individuals can take to improve their safety as well as that of their families and community.

All 28 local governments in Charleston County have signed on to and are implementing the disaster mitigation strategy, and Charleston (County's) approach has been used by FEMA as a training model for communities across the United States. Charleston (County) has become a known leader on disaster preparedness as evidenced by the actions of the City of New Orleans, which sought out Charleston (County) in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina."

The award was given specifically for the County's Project Impact program. Project Impact has a mission of making the community more disaster resistant. Public education about hurricanes, earthquakes, and other hazardous events, and steps to reduce losses associated with these events is one of the tools Project Impact uses to reduce disaster-related losses.

"We focus a great deal of effort on developing creative ways to educate our young people about hazardous events, because once young people become interested in preparing for these events, they frequently get their parents to take steps to protect their family and property," said Joni Rennhack, Charleston County Project Impact Coordinator.

Charleston County's Project Impact helps the community in the following ways:

- **Community awareness:** Implementation of a comprehensive, community-based educational efforts, such as displays at exhibitions to educate the public on ways to protect their families and property from hazard-related damage. Project Impact activities have reached over 260,000 people directly per year, with an additional 1.8 million across the region being educated through media coverage.
- **Projects:** Anti-terrorism task force; build-a-dune project to enhance beaches; building code educational workshops to teach people preventative steps to keeping their homes safe during a disaster; mobile demonstration models for hazard resistant construction techniques; and retrofitting critical facilities for enhanced wind resistance, storm surge signage, etc.
- **Schools/education:** Awards the best projects on a hazard-related theme at the Lowcountry Science Fair; provides speakers for school assemblies or classroom discussions on weather and hazardous event topics; sponsors a mini-grant program where teachers may apply for funding to develop art or music projects on a hazard-related theme; provides hazardous event literature to schools; participates in events, such as National Chemistry Week, to reach school children and adults.
- **Partner programs:** There are a total of 172 Project Impact partners, which include local businesses, non-profit organizations, schools, community groups, and many others. For example, through its partnership with the American Red Cross, Project Impact provides trailers that hold supplies for quickly setting up emergency shelters. Charleston County provides staff and administrative support for Project Impact through its Building Services Department.

Information on NACo and the Center for Sustainable Communities:

- The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,066 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.
- NACo's Center for Sustainable Communities primary mission is to provide a forum for county leaders to work with other governments, the private sector, and communities to develop policies and programs that will lead to economic enhancement, environmental stewardship and social well-being — the three pillars of sustainable communities.
- The other 2006-2007 Sustainable Communities Award winners are:
 - Boulder County, Colo. - Boulder County Super IGA
 - Franklin, Granville, Vance, and Warren Counties, N.C. - Kerr-Tar Regional Economic Development Corporation
 - Gwinnett County, Ga.,- The Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center
 - Harford, Cecil, and Baltimore Counties, Md. - Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor: An Unprecedented Partnership
 - Lake County, Ill., - Rt. 173/I-94 Intergovernmental Agreement
 - Louisville-Jefferson County, Ky. - The Partnership for a Green City
 - Morrow County, Ohio - Wheels to Work
 - Prince George's County, Md. - Low Impact Development/Green Highway Programs
 - Woodbury County, Iowa - Comprehensive Local Foods System Project

To schedule a speaking engagement or to learn more about Charleston County Project Impact programs, contact Joni Rennhack, Project Impact Coordinator, at (843) 202-6940 or jrennhack@charlestoncounty.org. For other news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government, visit www.charlestoncounty.org.