

News Release

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Fredericksburg Wins Five Awards for Efforts During the Covid-19 Emergency

(Fredericksburg, VA) October 2, 2020 – The City of Fredericksburg has been awarded five Local Champion Awards by the Virginia Municipal League for its efforts to protect the health and safety of Fredericksburg during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Virginia Municipal League is a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan association of city, town and county governments. The membership includes 37 cities, 160 towns and eight counties. Their Local Champion Awards recognized local governments for their efforts to provide communication, community health, continuity of operations, economic and business stability, public safety, risk management and education and youth initiatives during the unprecedented Covid-19 public health crisis in 2020.

The City of Fredericksburg was recognized for outstanding efforts in five major areas. In Public Safety, the men and women of the Fredericksburg Fire Department quickly strategized how to deliver services safely for citizens and staff. Emergency measures such as shift changes, safety procedures and decontamination processes were implemented in March 2020. The reaction across the disciplines of the department's fire suppression, medical and emergency management were broad and required sacrifice but to-date have kept department's staff virus-free. Most importantly, the City maintained operations for our citizens unaffected by the pandemic.

Fredericksburg's Department of Economic Development and Tourism was recognized as a Local Champion for providing Economic and Business Stability. The EDT staff was highly responsive to the needs of the local business community amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Their efforts included running two separate small business grant programs that provided \$500,000 for Fredericksburg businesses. Additionally they launched new information campaigns, revamped online and in person resources, designed and launched a line of face coverings, reimagined events such as Fredericksburg Restaurant Week, and worked with businesses to expand sidewalk seating during Governor Northam's Phase 2.

In response to health restrictions on gatherings resulting from COVID-19, the City of Fredericksburg's Information Technology Department, City Attorney, and Clerk of Council developed and implemented several solutions to ensure the City Council and various boards could conduct meetings electronically beginning as early as March 20th. Their efforts have won them the Local Champion award for Continuity of Operations. Moving to online operations required the City's team to act quickly to ensure that the new online process comply with FOIA, the Records Retention Act, and provide public comment protocols, just to name a few. Additionally, technical requirements required upgrading the City's internet bandwidth and implementing a streaming solution for the online meeting platforms. The City's team acted swiftly to keep important business maintained during this time of emergency.

Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation & Events' Superintendent, Jenny Casarotti, was awarded Local Champion for her "Camp at Home" summer program. This important Education and Youth Initiative was a safe solution for engaging children creatively during a time when families were under a stay at home order. Mrs. Casarotti designed a new take home camp with boxes containing a week full of activities: art, nature, STEM, craft and physical activities, including all instructions, supplies, and a t-shirt. By being resourceful, using recyclables, inexpensive, and supplies on-hand, she was able to set the price at a very affordable \$15. The following week Casarotti live-streamed herself demonstrating the activities, 1 hour a day for 5 days. Children who tuned in could ask questions, and actively participate in the camp. Parents would say that she is a local champion with the Camp at Home initiative.

Finally, the City's Executive Leadership Team, Safety and Risk Management and Public Facilities staff were awarded Local Champions for their Risk Management efforts during the Covid-19 crisis. The safety of our City employees remains a top priority. The City tasked a team to identify and implement efforts to mitigate city employees' risks associated with the pandemic. CDC and Commonwealth of Virginia guidelines were shared and followed for all employees, which included risk assessments, implementing physical barriers and a new face covering policy. Staff were assigned to staggered shifts and were trained on best practices while at work.

"The focus and flexibility that our City employees provided during this time of crisis has been very significant and worthy of recognition," stated City Manager Tim Baroody. "I am grateful to our Fredericksburg team as they continue to demonstrate extraordinary commitment, living our core Values, during these unprecedented times," he concluded.

For more information on the City's efforts, please visit www.FredericksburgVa.gov or call 540-372-1010.

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