



MEDIA RELEASE

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CITY RECOGNIZED FOR INNOVATION, SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE

BURLINGTON, NC—

The City of Burlington has recently been recognized by various professional organizations for innovative programs and superior performance. While providing high quality municipal services is a tenet of the City of Burlington’s mission and is what employees strive to provide daily, it is impressive to realize where the City stacks up against other agencies across the state and nation.

“City employees are constantly striving for excellence,” says City Manager Hardin Watkins. “Our staff is always trying to come up with new and better ways to serve the community, enhance quality of life, and bring dollars into the local economy. I’m proud to see so many of these efforts acknowledged by external experts with prestigious awards.”

NCRPA Innovative Program Award: Hikes with Hounds

The Burlington Recreation & Parks Department (BRPD) was recently awarded the 2016 North Carolina Recreation & Parks Association (NCRPA) Innovative Program Award for their Hikes with Hounds program. The NCRPA Innovative Program Award recognizes a unique program that benefits “the individual, community, economy, and environment.” Hikes with Hounds recruits and trains volunteers to take shelter dogs on a monthly group hike along one of Burlington’s beautiful trails. This program is a partnership with Burlington Animal Services (BAS).

The BRPD recognized a need to help the community get active in the outdoors by using parks and trails and BAS recognized a need to raise awareness of adoptable pets and provide enrichment to shelter dogs. Together, the two City departments created a successful and innovative program. Dogs are carefully chosen to participate based on who has been at the shelter the longest, has extra energy to release, or may be feeling stressed. Since the program’s inception, three dogs have been adopted by volunteer hikers, one volunteer became a BAS foster, and dozens of dogs were adopted due to their social media exposure in Hikes with Hounds photos.

James Farrell ASA Award of Excellence

Last week during the 85th Annual Meeting of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA), the City of Burlington was given the James Farrell ASA National Award of Excellence in recognition of a 100% tournament rating as host City of the 2016 ASA Men's Senior National Tournament. To earn the James Farrell Award of Excellence, named in honor of former St. Louis ASA/USA commissioner and national office staff member James Farrell, cities must do an outstanding job of hosting ASA/USA National Championship Tournaments. The host city must receive an overall rating of 95 percent from the ASA/USA Representative, Umpire-In-Chief and National Office.

Award to Host 2018 ASA Nation Tournament

Due to the phenomenal performance of the City of Burlington and the Recreation & Parks Department, the City has been granted its bid to host the 2018 ASA Men's Senior National Tournament. This announcement was made at the 85th Annual Meeting of the Amateur Softball Association. In 2015, the Senior Softball Championship Series generated an estimated \$12 million across 17 markets. The City is also slated to host the 2017 ASA Men's Senior National Tournament.

NCAGIO Excellence in Communication Awards

www.BurlingtonNC.gov First Place Website

In December 2015, the City of Burlington launched a drastically redesigned website. The site's design is bright and modern, features resident-centric navigation, and is device responsive. The site's design and navigation were data-driven and informed by extensive research. The North Carolina Association of Government Information Officers (NCAGIO), made up of government communication professionals from state and local agencies in North Carolina, presented the City of Burlington with a First Place Excellence in Communication Award in the "Websites" category for the redesign of www.BurlingtonNC.gov.

This is the second state-wide accolade for First Place Website that the redesigned BurlingtonNC.gov has received. The website received a North Carolina City-County Communicators Excellence in Communication Award in April 2016. Based upon this recognition from two external evaluations, it is accurate to say that Burlington has the best municipal website in North Carolina.

"See Something, Say Something" First Place Communication Campaign

In response to an uptick in gun violence in the spring of 2016, the City's Public Information Office worked with the Burlington Police Department to encourage residents to use Crimestoppers to "see something, say something" and to assuage fear in the community. This effort included the production and release of three videos, and hosting multiple community input meetings in quick succession. This open and transparent community engagement effort was very successful in that Crimestoppers tips doubled, some of those tips leading to arrests. NCAGIO recognized the City with a First Place Excellence in Communication Award in the "Communication Campaign/Community Engagement" category for the effort.

NCAGIO judges commented: "This rapid response campaign, due to an increase in shootings within the City, was very effective. Videos on YouTube, four community conversation meetings attended by 250 and covered by the local media led to 100%

increase in Crimestoppers tips and many arrests. I was impressed at the quick reaction time, leverage of scarce resources and solid gains in public safety achieved. Great work!”

“Sending Out an SOS” Honorable Mention Biggest Impact with Small Budget

In late August 2016, Burlington Animal Services (BAS) experienced an unusually high number of stray and surrendered animals entering our shelter facility. On Tuesday, August 23rd, BAS was in a position of extreme overcrowding and had to act quickly to avoid euthanizing healthy, adoptable pets due to lack of space. A fee-waived adoption event was scheduled for August 24th- September 3rd. To promote this “Sending Out an SOS” adoption special, BAS created a flier, video, and newspaper ad. The Adoption Center opened on a Sunday to hold a final day of free adoptions. With only \$25 spent, BAS was able to reach tens of thousands of community members with its plea. Most importantly, 150 cats and 90 dogs were adopted and 36 families agreed to foster shelter pets.

The “Sending Out an SOS” adoption special communication efforts were recognized with an Honorable Mention by NCAGIO in the “Biggest Impact with Small Budget” category. Of the submission, NCAGIO judges stated that the communication was “a very simple idea that highlighted the people and the animals they care for, giving you the faces behind the facts and figures in an accessible, real way that no doubt contributed to their animal adoption success rate.”

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Our Mission:

“The City of Burlington is dedicated to providing high quality municipal services within our diverse community in a friendly, professional and efficient manner in order to promote the safety, health, and quality of life of residents and employees.”

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