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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flagler County shines in 3 categories in NACo 2024 Achievement Awards: Civic Education & Public Information, Libraries, Parks & Recreation

June 10, 2024 – Flagler County is making its presence known nationwide for the high quality, comprehensive services it provides its residents, and was honored with National Association of Counties (NACo) 2024 Achievement Awards in three categories: Civic Education & Public Information, Libraries, and Parks & Recreation. The county was notified by email on Friday (June 7). The awards competition has 18 categories.

“Thank you for participating in the National Association of Counties (NACo) 2024 Achievement Awards and for joining us in celebrating 54 years of county innovation,” read the awards notification. “Thank you for your efforts to promote the betterment of county services and programs.”

All award winners can be found on the NACo website: <https://www.naco.org/news/announcing-2024-naco-achievement-award-winners#all>.

“This recognition is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and innovative spirit of Flagler County’s elected officials and staff,” said County Administrator Heidi Petito. “We are incredibly proud of this accomplishment and remain committed to continuing our efforts towards excellence and improvement, Putting Flagler F.I.R.S.T. ... making a difference!”

Flagler County was awarded for the following projects or initiatives: Transparency Dashboards in the category of Civic Education & Public Information; Food for Thought kiosks in the Libraries category; and, Flagler Greenways Pedestrian Bridge in the Parks & Recreation category.

It is the fifth award the county has received for the Flagler Greenways Pedestrian Bridge. Other honors include: “Project of the Year” in the Roads & Highways category by the American Public Works Association (APWA) Florida Chapter; “National Recognition Award” from American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) in the 2024 Engineering Excellence Awards (EEA) competition; American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Florida Engineering Excellence Awards top tier “Grand Award” – a statewide competition; and,

Andy Dance
District 1

Greg Hansen
District 2

David Sullivan
District 3

Leann Pennington
District 4

Donald O’Brien, Jr.
District 5

“Regional Awards for Excellence” in the category of Transportation presented by the Northeast Florida Regional Council.

“This is absolutely incredible,” said Engineering Department Project Manager Amy Stroger. “Every project is important, and excellence is always our (Flagler County Engineering Department’s) goal. We are humbled and honored by this recognition.”

The Flagler Greenways Pedestrian Bridge was designed shortly after the March 2018 collapse of the Florida International University pedestrian bridge in Miami, resulting in many rigorous reviews by Florida Department of Transportation Central Office Structures Design Group. Design focused on materials and detailing with minimal to no service life maintenance costs. The bridge and its associated shared use trails and sidewalks were completed in July 2023.

The Flagler County Public Library expanded just a little bit with the opening of two “Food for Thought” kiosks in February 2023 in which non-perishable canned goods can be exchanged for books, or vice-versa, at both the Haw Creek Community Center and the Hidden Trails Community Center. They were so well received that a third was added in May 2023 at the Espanola Community Center.

“Having a ‘Little Free Library-Pantry’ in each of these locations will help us get books out to the residents in western Flagler County,” said Chief of Special Projects and Library Director Holly Albanese. “Our programs are about encouraging people to read, and we recognize it’s not always convenient to make the trip from out west to come to the library. This program has the added benefit of helping us get food into the hands that need it.”

General Services staff built the three kiosks that are open 24-seven and restocked monthly. Books for all ages and genres are available.

The Transparency Dashboards (www.flaglercounty.gov/data) were unveiled in May 2023 as part of its pledge to provide accurate information in real time to the community. This innovative tool provides viewers with the opportunity to explore data sets of keen interest in a visual and easy-to-understand format.

Deputy County Administrator Jorge Salinas brainstormed the project, which has grown significantly from his initial idea, which was to create a tool merely to share with residents about the progress that Flagler County is making with its Strategic Plan. He worked with Audio Video Production Coordinator Carlos Hernandez to develop the dashboard main page and as they continued to develop more cards to the Transparency Dashboards, they added GIS Manager Taylor Phillips, GIS Developer Wayne Whitley, OMB Manager Brian Eichinger, General Services Assistant Director Michael Lagasse to the team, whose efforts were particularly useful in creating the “Where Do My Taxes Go” and “Feral Hogs” cards.

The newest cards are the Aircraft Noise Abatement Portal and the Aircraft Noise Abatement Dashboard to allow residents to report complaints and to view aircraft noise reports.

“Collaboration and teamwork get things done,” Petito said. “I’m proud of the work of all our staff.”

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