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Sarasota County receives nine NaCO Achievement Awards

Sarasota County government has been given nine awards from the National Association of Counties (NaCO) in recognition of innovation in policy and program delivery.

The Sarasota County Commission and county administration hosted a small reception Wednesday to formally recognize the recent receipt of the awards and to thank county employees and community partners for their participation. Among those congratulating the participants at the reception was Commissioner Shannon Staub, a longtime active member of NaCO who was recently named to two key leadership positions in the National Association of Counties. She chairs the Green Government Advisory Board and is vice chair of the Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee.

The nine awards were given to the following county programs and initiatives:

- **Collaboration in the Development, Operation and Utilization of IT:** Discusses the community benefits and taxpayer savings realized through the county government's collaboration with the Sarasota County School District for information technology (IT) services.
- **Fertilization Management: A Community-Driven Solution:** Tells the story of the community's commitment to the ideals of participative democracy and environmental stewardship as demonstrated by the citizen engagement process used for the development and adoption of the local fertilizer ordinance.
- **Volunteer Seagrass Program:** Details the evolution of the biannual seagrass survey conducted within the local bays from an effort reliant on county staff to one driven largely by community volunteers.
- **Professional Engineer Development Program:** Describes the program that was developed in-house and is designed to provide graduating engineers with broad experience, mentoring and coaching, a route to professional licensure and the potential for career growth, while ensuring that the county has access to bright, talented and dedicated engineering professionals to meet its workforce needs.

- **Projects in My Neighborhood:** Features the development of the publicly accessible and interactive Capital Improvement Program (CIP) map on the county's Web site. The map provides information on locations, budget and schedule status and key staff contacts of all major CIP projects.
- **Local Food System Development:** Summarizes efforts to reduce the county's ecological footprint by creating a locally based, self-reliant food system in which food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management function in harmony to provide community food needs. The program focuses on the adoption of policy language related to food systems planning through the Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan, and lays out the next steps to making this vision become a reality.
- **People with Special Needs (PSN) Evacuation Program:** Outlines the partnership between the county's Emergency Management and IT that culminated in the development of the WebPSN software application, a Web-based, secured database that enables emergency management agencies to track PSNs for hurricane evacuation and sheltering in the event of any disaster.
- **Changing Behaviors Through Education: Dentists and Painters:** Describes the county's efforts in two education-based hazardous waste outreach programs. The first program educates dentists regarding the potential risks associated with storing supplies used to perform amalgam restorations containing mercury, and provides information and incentives for safe disposal of mercury waste. The second program targets painters, helping them to improve their ability to estimate the amount of paint required to perform a job and educating them about proper disposal of leftover paint.
- **Green Business Partnership:** Highlights the collaborative effort of multiple county stakeholders to develop and implement the Green Business Partnership program to educate local business owners on the range of environmental stewardship measures they can take to elevate their overall environmental performance and reduce business expense.

For more information on the NaCO Achievement Awards, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000.

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