

# Department of Public Relations and Media Services

## History

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Public Relation & Media Services began operations as the Research and Public Information Office on March 16, 1959, charged with the responsibility of public enlightenment of the county's governmental functions. This was accomplished through annual reports, factual reports to citizens, and the Manager's Monthly Report to the Board of Supervisors and interested civic leaders.

Fast forward to 2011: today, Public Relations & Media Services has a staff of 19 and is a three-tiered, comprehensive communications department including public relations and information; television services; and audio-visual tech service. Agency functions include media relations, public awareness campaigns, HCTV-Channel 17 operations, crisis communications, publications, web design and maintenance, photography and other products and services offered by the department. The department directs the county's communications program and increases awareness and understanding of government activities and policies to corporate and private residents, civic organizations, the media, county officials, employees, and other jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth and the nation.

Henrico County Television (HCTV Channel 17) is on the air around the clock broadcasting original programs, news and information about county events. In addition, Public Relations & Media Services assists internal departments with video production and audio-visual presentation services.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Chronological historic highlights of PR&amp;MS</b>
1960	E. G. Shaw, Jr. served as the first officer (director) until 1962. The <i>Guide to Henrico</i> was first published.
1962	Official department function was to "disseminate accurate, timely and complete information on Henrico County." James E. Davis, Jr. was named the Research and Public Information Officer. John S. Lynch briefly served as officer before Davis.
1963	<i>Directory of Organizations</i> was first published.
1965	Marshall E. Murdaugh was named officer and served until 1969.
1966	The inter-office Telephone Directory was first published to "bridge the communications gap; to provide useful and up to date information to those county residents as well as students, businessmen and government officials from many cities and counties across the nation."
1967	Began producing tax and utility bill leaflets as an information tool to residents.
1969	Mass mailed 63,000 precinct maps to registered voters. James D. Clark, Jr. named officer.
1970	Assisted with the Keep Henrico Beautiful campaign.

- 1972 The office consists of two employees. Received national publicity for the campaign to educate county voters on the use of automatic voting machines.
- 1973 The telephone directory wins a NACIO award. Assisted with a successful \$29 million bond referendum campaign.
- 1975 Assisted media with coverage on the dedication ceremonies of the new courthouse, two fire stations and groundbreaking for the new administration building. Office function to provide useful and timely information to county citizens, students, businessmen and government officials from many counties and cities in Virginia and the nation.
- 1976 Garnered media coverage of the \$41.8 bond referendum, which ultimately passed. Worked with the media regarding Henrico's receiving the gift of Meadow Farm.
- 1977 The department's longest serving employee, Joyce Keenan, began her career as an administrative secretary (in 2011, she is still employed with the department as the Business Supervisor). Office gathered 700 newspaper clips, stored on microfilm.
- 1978 The bi-monthly Supervisors Agend-O-Gram was first published for employees covering each board meeting. Began producing a four-page employee newsletter, *The County Chronicle*, and distributed more than 5,700 copies. Began clipping news stories about neighboring communities and storing on microfilm. Distributed 4,000 copies of the annual report.
- 1980 In March, began county's first TV station — cable channel 26 — with text-only character generated capability. Broadcast 24 hours a day, seven days a week to 25,000 households.
- 1981 Pamela W. Meeks replaces Jim Clark as public information officer.
- 1982 Coral Gills joined the office as the Assistant Officer (the third position added to the staff). It is still the smallest department in the county, but now is called the Public Information Office. Channel 26 reaches 30,600 households.
- 1983 Channel 26 reaches 35,000. Office now assists with legislative support.
- 1986 Coral C. Gills named Director.
- 1988 Hired first public affairs officer to serve as liaison to state and federal government.
- 1989 Played a key role in passing a \$25 million bond referendum. Channel 26 broadcast to 53,668 households.
- 1990 Channel 26 reaches 59,000 households.
- 1991 TV station moved to from channel 26 to channel 37 and broadcast to 59,415 homes
- 1992 Begin producing the Legislative Program and Legislative Summary. Channel 37 broadcast to 64,700 households.
- 1993 Tamra McKinney (future director) joins the staff of the Public Information Office.
- 1996 Co-sponsored "Powhatan Village" at the State Fair and played key role in publicizing the White Oak Semiconductor project.
- 1997 PIO entered the electronic age by establishing a presence on the World Wide Web where people can access news releases, request materials and

- link to seven online versions of county publications; first PIO to electronically transmit information via modem to the Richmond Times-Dispatch; TV station bulletin board began using PowerPoint, added graphics and photos.
- 1998 Began producing pre-recorded video and audio PSAs, established a presence on the county's Intranet offering tips and helpful information.
- 1999 Tamra McKinney named department's first Assistant Director. Facilitated a citizen communication survey to determine how residents prefer to receive county information: television, newspaper and direct mail were the top three answers. Assisted with Y2K compliance and produced a readiness brochure. Provided media coaching to departments.
- 2000 Assisted with publicizing the November Bond Referendum.
- 2001 Publicity campaigns include: West Nile Virus prevention, Magisterial Redistricting (result of 2000 census) and Voter Education.
- 2002 Tamra McKinney named Director.
- 2003 Department's name changed to Public Relations & Media Services May 14, launched "HCTV-37" (Henrico County Television) with a more modern look; began broadcasting full-length original programs by late summer; began broadcast of Henrico Hot Talk on 990 AM with host Lou Dean; Sept. 17 Hurricane Isabel hit, staff worked around the clock disseminating information to the media and the public.
- 2004 Conducted second county-wide communications survey for feedback on services and how residents want to receive county news. Tropical Storm Gaston required around the clock staffing at the EOC to get out pertinent info to residents
- 2005 Conducted a massive \$350 million bond referendum campaign that passed; HCTV moved to Comcast channel 17 in July and expanded programming, offering four different shows each week. Programs became available on the PR&MS website via streaming.
- 2006 Assisted the Health Department recruit 900 volunteers for Operation HEALTH, a mass vaccination exercise.
- 2007 Assisted Emergency Management with publicizing the Emergency Notification System (ENS) that sends residents emergency bulletins via text and voice messages.
- 2008 HCTV wins first two Emmy Awards in June. PR&MS is heavily involved with the year-long address change campaign — "Henrico, VA" became a mailing address Oct. 1
- 2009 Began live webcasts of Board meetings and provided an online archive, allowing viewers to search individual agenda items from a particular meeting or watch an entire meeting. Began using Twitter (account name: HenricoNews) to broadcast information. Publicized the opening of the Employment Transition Center to assist recently laid-off or unemployed workers with job searches and employment tools.
- 2010 Heavily involved with implementing 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities. Worked around the clock providing the media and residents with information during the county's record snowfall events (four major storms in 6 weeks).

Produced 25 original television programs for HCTV. Won 24 state, national and international awards for departmental activities.

2011 Promoted the year-long 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration. Promoted the Henrico Advantage Card. Promoted and assisted with redistricting and voter precinct changes as a result of the 2010 Census. Produced 24 original television programs for HCTV. Won 50 state, national and international awards for departmental activities.

### **Additional historic highlights from more recent years:**

#### **1995-96**

The Public Information Office continued their mission to respond to the changing information needs of its internal and external communities and, through knowledge and education, increase awareness and understanding of Henrico County government activities and policies. This past fiscal year, Public Information coordinated the county's co-sponsorship of "Powhatan Village" at the State Fair of Virginia. The Native American village, an authentic reproduction as it would have been when the legendary princess Pocahontas lived, won the Director's Choice Award for the best exhibit at the 1995 State Fair. In addition, this office played a key role in the White Oak Semiconductor project, from assisting the local media with its coverage of the story, to disseminating the information as quickly as possible to the public. The legislative branch of the Public Information Office assisted with two of the "hottest" new pieces of legislation being passed in the 1996 session of the General Assembly: the Business, Professional and Occupational License (BPOL) tax and the transient occupancy tax.

#### **1996-97**

Aside from performing their regular duties of media and legislative relations, staff in the Public Information Office assisted or consulted with 30 county agencies, produced seven publications, won 15 national awards of excellence, and coordinated 14 major, special projects. Among these projects were organizing and publicizing the Henrico Regional Jail East dedication, and assisting a Hollywood film crew with shooting a cemetery scene at Henrico's Nuckols Road Landfill for the recently released movie The Jackal. Meanwhile, the office established a presence on the World Wide Web with its own home page. Visitors can access both current and archived news releases, request informational or newcomer packets, link to seven on-line versions of county publications, find general information about our legislators, and link to the metro area's only daily newspaper, the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Keeping with this technology wave, the office also became the first Public Information Office in Virginia to electronically transmit information via modem to the Richmond Times-Dispatch providing them with instant access to time-sensitive information.

#### **1997-98**

Acting as the county's in-house advertising and public relations agency, the Public Information Office (PIO) has its hands full with media relations, legislative affairs, promoting county business and special events, and coordinating community relations programs. During FY 98, the PIO consulted or assisted 30 different county agencies,

produced seven publications, won 15 national professional awards, and coordinated ten special events or projects. The PIO expanded its services this past year to include production of pre-recorded video and audio public service announcements, while continuing to perform other duties. The Office maintained its presence on the Internet, offering current and archived news releases, online versions of county publications, general information about our legislators, status of house bills in the General Assembly, as well as links to the Richmond Times-Dispatch and Gateway Virginia. The PIO also established a user friendly site on the county's Intranet, offering how-to tips on special event planning and promotion, dealing with the media, writing news releases and public service announcements, speakers' bureau information, and a brief outline of the services they offer.

### **1998-99**

The Public Information Office (PIO) conducted a countywide communications survey in FY99 to learn, among other things, how our residents prefer to receive news and information from the county. The results confirmed that most residents think Henrico does a good job at disseminating information (some citing the survey itself as a good faith effort). The survey also yielded some surprising news: residents chose direct mail as their third preferred method of communication (after television and newspaper). The PIO will use the survey results to help tailor future communication plans. The office continued coaching Henrico staff from various internal agencies on standard media practices, expectations, deadlines, and formats. This knowledge enables them to more effectively use the media, and other non-paid advertising and publicity alternatives, to distribute information to our residents. The PIO also played a role in the county's Y2K compliance effort by working with the previously mentioned Technology Advisory Committee, and preparing for the Y2K Regional Readiness Forum. The office also produced a Y2K readiness brochure for the committee that will be widely distributed throughout the county later this year. In addition to these and other functions, the Public Information Office won nine state and national awards from four different professional public relations organizations for excellence in writing, communications programs, design, video production, and creative art direction.

### **1999-2000**

Hurricane Floyd, Blizzard 2000 and The Coming of Y2K: these three events collectively made FY00 the year of crisis communications for the Public Information Office. Staff worked around the clock, both in the Emergency Operations Center and the administrative office, to ensure that our residents had access to the very latest, breaking news in these emergency situations. From school and government office closings, to blocked roadways, to shelters that were opening in the area, the Public Information staff stayed in constant contact with the media, and continuously updated government access cable channel 37, to make sure Henrico residents had the same, up-to-the-minute information that we did. During the non-crisis periods, the office continued instructing various internal agencies on standard media practices, expectations, deadlines, and formats so they can more effectively use the media, and other non-paid advertising and publicity alternatives to distribute information to our residents. In addition to these and other functions, the Public Information Office won nine state and

national awards from four different professional public relations organizations for excellence in writing, communications programs, design, video production, and creative art direction.

### **2000-01**

During FY01, Public Information staff produced and implemented several full-scale public awareness campaigns, providing important information to our residents: last November's Bond Referendum, the West Nile Virus campaign throughout the spring and summer, Magisterial Redistricting as a result of Census 2000, and a Voter Education campaign for the county's Office of the General Registrar. While every public information campaign must be tailored to meet specific objectives, each shares a common goal: to distribute timely, accurate, reliable information to our residents through a variety of media outlets. By combining printed publications, direct mail, utility bill inserts, video, and print and broadcast media coverage, staff in the Public Information Office was able to provide our residents with the facts and knowledge they needed to make informed decisions. For the second time in five years, staff in the Public Information Office won the prestigious Gold Quill Award from the International Association of Business Communicators. Public Information staff competed with entries from 16 different countries around the world, and with high profile companies such as Hallmark, Fed-Ex, VISA International, Victoria's Secret, John Deere and Hewlett-Packard. The fact that Henrico County is placed in the same company as these successful, international businesses is testament to the quality and standards we strive to achieve. As well as the Gold Quill Award, the Public Information Office won seven more state and national awards from five different professional public relations organizations for excellence in writing, communications programs, design, video production, and creative art direction. In addition to these marked achievements, the Public Information Office provided public relations consultation, media relations services and communications support to the Board of Supervisors, the County Manager's Office and each of the 33 agencies within the general government administration.

### **2001-02**

This past year, County Manager Virgil R. Hazelett, P.E. named Tamra McKinney the new Director of Public Information. McKinney, who joined the Public Information Office (PIO) in 1993, is a graduate of Virginia Tech and has won more than 80 international, national, state and regional awards for excellence in communications practices. She succeeds former Director Coral Gills, who retired in February. FY02 was a popular year for public awareness campaigns. PIO staff worked tirelessly to get the word out about West Nile virus, final redistricting plans, Project Exile, drought conditions/watering restrictions, and the Keep Henrico Beautiful litter campaign—to name just a few. In addition, staff worked with outside consultants and other county agencies, as well as reviewed results from a citizen communications survey, to conceptualize and plan for expanded capabilities and modernization of government access cable channel 37. Although the project is still in the initial planning stages, PIO staff hopes to offer residents a wider variety of information through a more sophisticated, broadcast quality channel 37 in the near future. Also in FY02, the Public Information Office won 12 more state and national awards from six different professional public relations organizations

for exceptional writing, communication programs, design, video production, and creative art direction. In addition to these marked achievements, the PIO provided public relations consultation, media relations services and communications support to the Board of Supervisors, the County Manager's Office and each of the 33 agencies within the general government administration.

### **2002-03**

It was a year of change for Public Relations & Media Services (PR&MS), beginning with the department's name. Formerly the Public Information Office, PR&MS underwent an entire reorganization during the last fiscal year to encompass new responsibilities and expand the capabilities of Henrico's government access cable channel 37. On May 14, PR&MS launched the brand new HCTV- 37, Henrico County Television. The updated format offers Henrico cable subscribers a wider range of information with a more sophisticated, modern look. Currently, the station offers information about county meetings and events, as well as news from the Associated Press, local weather, date, time and photo-features of county attractions. In the near future, HCTV will begin airing full-length programs about county agencies and services. In addition to hitting the television airwaves, PR&MS began broadcasting Henrico Hot Talk on WLEE, AM-radio 990. The first Monday of each month, host Lou Dean invites guests from various county agencies to keep our residents in the know about Henrico County happenings. Never forgetting the print medium, PR&MS staff continued churning-out informative brochures and publications (including this annual report) to educate our residents and promote county services. In addition, staff completely revamped Henrico Today, a quarterly newspaper produced on behalf of the Board of Supervisors. PR&MS staff now creates the publication completely in-house, including all writing, design and photography. These accomplishments of FY03 did not go unnoticed: the PR&MS Department won 10 more state and national awards from six different professional public relations organizations for exceptional writing, communication programs, design, video production and creative art direction.

### **2003-04**

Public Relations & Media Services (PR&MS) spent the early part of FY04 on the continued expansion of HCTV-37, adding full-length, original programming to the television station's broadcast line-up. By late summer 2003, Henrico residents were watching award-winning documentaries and programs produced entirely in-house by PR&MS staff. Production was in full swing by late summer. Then came the storm . . .

At 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 17, PR&MS staff reported to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as part of the core team preparing for the impending hurricane. For 10 days, staff worked around the clock disseminating timely, accurate information to residents. HCTV-37 stayed on air with constant updates, and staff worked closely with the local media alerting them to road closings, downed trees, water and ice distribution sites and other emergency information required by our community. While some PR&MS staff handled media relations in the EOC, HCTV producers conducted on-site interviews and shot phenomenal footage that later documented the hurricane, residents' reactions and a real, behind-the-scenes look at Henrico County's emergency operations.

“Responding to Isabel” aired just one month after the storm devastated central Virginia. PR&MS staff plans to rerun the program late this summer during the anniversary week of Isabel. Despite the storm’s interruption, PR&MS staff met production deadlines for the fall issue of the quarterly newspaper, Henrico Today, as well as the many other print and on-line publications they write and produce in-house. These publications—along with the television programs, photography, design and public awareness campaigns conducted by the department—earned the staff an unprecedented 30 national, state and regional awards last fiscal year for excellence and professionalism in the communications field. By fiscal year’s end, the PR&MS staff was gearing up to conduct a countywide satisfaction and communications survey of residents. During September and October 2004, the Southeastern Institute of Research will conduct random telephone surveys of Henrico residents, seeking feedback on county services and how they prefer to receive information. Once the survey is complete, PR&MS staff will use the results and residents’ suggestions to tailor Henrico’s future communications plan.

### **2004-05**

HCTV staff shifted into high gear in FY 05, producing 30 original programs about topics ranging from the history of dairy farming in Henrico to the role played by the county’s Planning Department. The quality feature length programs began reaching a broader audience, as one show, “Attack Transport: Remembering the USS Henrico,” aired statewide on PBS affiliates on Veterans Day. HCTV’s award-winning shows will broadcast from a different channel in the next fiscal year, as steps were under way to move the station to channel 17. The move is part of a channel realignment by Comcast Cable. Public Relations personnel again buoyed the county’s emergency response efforts, staffing the Emergency Operations Center and disseminating timely, accurate information to residents during Gaston. Staff played an important role in March’s successful bond referendum, conducting a massive public information campaign that featured informational brochures, news releases and other printed materials; a speakers bureau and phone hotline for resident questions; and story coordination with area print and broadcast media. Henrico voters overwhelmingly approved nearly \$350 million in capital projects in the referendum. External groups recognized the quality of the department’s work in FY 05. PR&MS staff received an unprecedented 43 awards from local, national and international organizations for exceptional writing, video production, art design, information campaigns and other work.

### **2005-06**

Public Relations staff conducted a number of countywide public information campaigns in fiscal year 2006. Working closely with the Voter Registration and Elections Office, staff developed a comprehensive campaign to let Henrico voters know about a key change at their polling sites — the implementation of touchscreen voting machines. The campaign featured news releases, public service announcements, informational brochures and other printed and graphic materials, as well as special instructional programming prepared for broadcast on HCTV. When the machines were unveiled for the 2005 gubernatorial election, Henrico voters were prepared – the touchscreen technology worked flawlessly countywide, and lines at polling sites moved quickly and efficiently. Other public campaigns featured information about the county’s relief efforts



for Hurricane Katrina victims; the relocation of the Henrico Federal Credit Union; and the rebranding of HCTV, which shifted from channel 37 to 17. The broadcast arm of the Public Relations & Media Services (PR&MS) operation, HCTV-17, stayed in high gear in FY 06, producing 30 original, full-length programs on a wide-ranging slate of topics. The shows — available to Comcast cable television subscribers in Henrico — covered an array of subjects dealing with county people, places, programs, services and history. Programs ranged from a new look at Henrico’s notorious unsolved crimes and histories of county bridges to gardening and exercise tips, disaster preparation and Richmond International Raceway. HCTV expanded its programming in FY 06, airing four different programs each week. And it enlisted the aid of the TV Guide Channel, which began running the station’s program schedules. Shows also went live on the World Wide Web, as PR&MS made streaming video of select programs available online at. The department’s work did not go unnoticed last year. PR&MS claimed 34 awards at state, national and international competitions. Serving as the county’s primary point of contact for external audiences, PR&MS responded to numerous requests for assistance from the media and general public. In FY 06, staff answered nearly 8,700 inquiries from the public and made almost 9,700 contacts with local media.

## **2006-07**

Henrico County unveiled a pair of significant emergency preparedness initiatives in FY 07 and Public Relations & Media Services (PR&MS) played an important role in each effort, conducting comprehensive public information campaigns and lending communications expertise to the planning process. In November, the county’s Public Health Department spearheaded Operation HEALTH, a special exercise designed to test Henrico’s plans to respond to a large-scale health emergency requiring the mass-dispensing of vaccine. To properly simulate the effects of a pandemic flu outbreak and the stress it could place on the local health care system, Health officials needed to enlist the help of people — lots of people. That’s where PR&MS got involved. Staff prepared public service announcements, news releases and bulletins for HCTV-17, explaining the purpose of Operation HEALTH, the need for community volunteers, ways they could register and the benefits — a free flu shot — of participating. The success of the public information campaign was easy to measure, as nearly 900 residents volunteered to participate, enabling Health officials to adequately test their plans for a mass-vaccination event. PR&MS assisted with another emergency preparedness effort in FY 07 — the Emergency Notification System (ENS). Designed to enhance the county’s ability to communicate with residents during extreme circumstances, such as severe weather, ENS sends emergency bulletins to residents by way of voice and text messages. PR&MS staff implemented a comprehensive campaign, producing a short feature for broadcast on HCTV-17, preparing a brochure and fact sheet for distribution to Public Utilities’ customers and other residents, and sending a public service announcement and news release to local media. The broadcast arm of PR&MS, HCTV-17, produced 27 original, full-length programs in FY 07. Topics ranged from Alzheimer’s disease and a history of early radio in central Virginia to a study of Henrico’s disappearing honeybees. Two programs — “Living with Autism” and “Culture and Pride: Native American History in Virginia” — were nominated for Emmy Awards, the first such recognition for an HCTV-17 program. The Emmy-nominated programs weren’t the only

department efforts to receive recognition last year. PR&MS staff claimed 23 awards at state, national and international competitions. Serving as the county's primary point of contact for external audiences, PR&MS responded to numerous requests for assistance from the media and general public. In FY 07, staff answered nearly 11,000 inquiries from the public; distributed more than 13,200 mailings and information packets and another 5,300 DVDs; and made more than 9,300 contacts with media.

## **2007-08**

In fiscal year 2008, the Public Relations & Media Services Department (PR&MS) played a leading role in an unprecedented effort — the successful initiative to establish “Henrico, VA” as a mailing address. Working closely with the County Manager’s Office and Department of Finance, staff implemented an extensive, months-long public information campaign that featured direct mailings and television and print ads developed in-house. Staff prepared news releases and bulletins for HCTV-17, promoted news coverage by local media and coordinated interviews with county officials. Staff also coordinated a speaker’s bureau for presentations to civic groups and community organizations. And, perhaps most significantly, PR&MS served as the principal point of contact for residents regarding the address change initiative. Public Relations staff fielded nearly 1,000 phone calls, answering questions and discussing the initiative with residents and business owners from across the county. The saturation effort mailed nearly 166,000 informational brochures to residents and aired 30 television ads over the area’s broadcast stations. The effort paid off dramatically. More than 60 percent of voters cast a “yes” vote to establish Henrico as a mailing address. In another project last year, PR&MS worked to make the meetings of Henrico’s Board of Supervisors more accessible to the public. Staff made complete audio recordings of the board’s regular meetings available online and provided CDs upon request to interested residents. Staff also began preparations to broadcast board meetings on HCTV-17 and stream them over the county Web site. HCTV-17 produced 26 original, full-length programs in FY 08. Topics ranged from local archaeology and bird watching to the Henrico Police forensics unit and Edgar Allan Poe. Two programs — “No Way Back: Coping with Alzheimer’s” and “Turning Point: Inside Henrico’s Drug Court” — won Emmy Awards from the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. The prestigious honors were the first Emmys for HCTV, which began airing original programming in 2003. The Emmy-winning programs weren’t the only department efforts to receive recognition last year. PR&MS staff claimed 23 awards at state, national and international competitions. Serving as the county’s primary point of contact for external audiences, PR&MS responded to numerous requests for assistance from the media and general public. In FY 08, staff answered more than 12,300 inquiries from the public; distributed nearly 20,000 mailings and information packets and another 2,800 DVDs; and made more than 8,800 contacts with media.

## **2008-09**

Building on the successful campaign in FY 08 to establish “Henrico, VA” as a mailing address, the Public Relations & Media Services Department (PR&MS) maintained efforts to educate residents and businesses about the change and worked to formally implement the new address in FY 09. Although residents and businesses voted to

create the new mailing address in a May 2008 referendum, their questions regarding the change continued for months afterward. PR&MS maintained its role as principal point of contact for the public, fielding hundreds of additional questions for the remainder of the year. The department led the effort to announce the official transition of county government mailing addresses to “Henrico, VA” on Oct. 1 with news releases, public service announcements and bulletins for HCTV-17. Staff also promoted news coverage by local media and coordinated interviews with county officials. By the end of FY 09, the new mailing address seemed to have taken root in the county’s consciousness. Calls from residents and businesses dwindled and the “Henrico, VA” address had ceased to be a source of controversy. Finance Department officials noted the change, too, as county coffers reflected a bounce in tax revenues stemming from the new address. The 2009 fiscal year marked a first for Henrico County — the live video streaming of Board of Supervisors meetings on the county Web site. PR&MS spearheaded the effort, overseeing installation of wall-mounted cameras, control room equipment and other upgrades in the board room. Department staff also produced live webcasts and maintained an online archive of meetings. PR&MS headed another technology-driven initiative in FY 09: the redesign of the Henrico County Web site. The months-long process included the conversion of more than 4,000 Web pages to the new design. The enhanced Web site features a news ticker feed that will reflect Henrico news during an emergency; a dynamic “Adopt A Pet” section; an interactive map with layers including county government buildings, parks, libraries, fire stations and schools; and an extensive photo gallery. The new site launched early in fiscal year 2010. In other department activities, HCTV-17 produced 29 original, full-length programs in FY 09, covering topics ranging from spinal cord injuries and teen drug abuse to landscape gardening and modern aviation in Virginia. A variety of communications experts recognized the quality of the department’s work last year — staff claimed some 51 awards at state, national and international competitions. Serving as the county’s primary point of contact for external audiences, PR&MS responded to numerous requests for assistance from the media and general public. In FY 09, staff answered 9,375 inquiries from the public; distributed more than 18,500 mailings and information packets including 1,887 DVDs; and made nearly 8,800 contacts with media.

## **2009-10**

Henrico will launch a yearlong party in 2011 — the 400th anniversary of the county’s founding — and preparations for the birthday bash were under way in FY 10, spearheaded by the 2011 Commemoration Commission. The Public Relations & Media Services Department (PR&MS) played an essential role in developing, implementing and marketing plans for the celebration. Staff designed the quadricentennial logo; created a historical map; researched, wrote and edited the event’s official brochure and laid the groundwork to produce original documentary programming. Staff also helped develop the commemoration’s website, [www.henrico400th.com](http://www.henrico400th.com), and helped plan and promote nearly two dozen special events scheduled to begin in fall 2010 and continue throughout 2011. One of the tools PR&MS is using to spread the word about 400th anniversary activities — as well as other county news — is Twitter.com, the social-networking site. The department added the popular microblogging service to its communication toolbox in fall 2009, offering a new means for area residents and media

to keep in touch with the programs, services and news bulletins offered by Henrico's general government. The HenricoNews account garnered more than 450 followers in its first nine months. Twitter was just one of the ways PR&MS kept residents informed of weather-related impacts on county services during the winter of 2009-10, which brought record snowfalls to Henrico and the region. Staff continuously updated the county website and HCTV with timely bulletins. Staff also maintained regular contact with local media to keep residents informed about the condition of roadways, the status of county landfills, libraries, recreation centers and other county facilities and programs. In other department activities, HCTV produced 25 original, full-length programs in FY 10, covering topics ranging from wildlife care at Recreation and Parks facilities and the operations of the county's E-911 Communications Center to biographies of renowned Virginians Douglas Southall Freeman and John Marshall. A variety of communications experts recognized the quality of the department's work last year. Staff claimed some 26 awards at state, national and international competitions, including the department's third Emmy Award from the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for the program "Battles with Parkinson's Disease." Serving as the county's primary point of contact for external audiences, PR&MS responded to numerous requests for assistance from the media and general public. In FY 10, staff answered 7,842 inquiries from the public; distributed 18,938 mailings and information packets including 3,238 DVDs; and made nearly 8,000 contacts with media.

#### **2010-11**

The Public Relations & Media Services Department (PR&MS) played a key role in the yearlong celebration of county history, culture and people associated with Henrico's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration. Staff previously had helped lay the groundwork for the quadricentennial, assisting with event planning; cultivating media; developing and coordinating advertising and marketing campaigns; and providing a range of creative services, such as design of the anniversary logo and production of original documentary programming. In FY 11 the department focused efforts on promoting the historical, cultural and recreational festivals, exhibits, tours, lectures and other activities tied to the anniversary. Staff produced news releases, public service announcements, a special issue of "Henrico Today," HCTV bulletins, Twitter postings and targeted email messages to spread the word about events as varied as harvest and kite festivals, African-American and Indian cultural programs, history hunts, historical bus tours and a Civil War symposium. Nearly 60,000 people had attended a 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary event through the end of fiscal 2011, with more events to come. Also last year, PR&MS worked with the Department of Finance to publicize the Henrico Advantage Card, a program that offered shoppers incentives to do business with county retailers. The promotional campaign — which sought to increase business participation in the program while also boosting public awareness — included news releases, "Henrico Today" articles, HCTV bulletins and programming, and made use of Twitter and the county website. Another key publicity effort in FY 11 supported the county's decennial magisterial redistricting effort, a federally mandated process. PR&MS staff worked with the Planning Department and the County Attorney's Office to develop legal advertisements, news releases and HCTV bulletins designed to apprise residents of

potential changes to their districts and voting precincts and seek their participation in public meetings and official public hearings. In other department activities, HCTV produced 24 original, full-length programs in FY 11. Topics ranged from Henrico's increasingly diverse population to a biography of polar explorer Richard E. Byrd to a history of the early days of television in central Virginia. A variety of communications experts recognized the quality of the department's work last year. PR&MS staff claimed 50 awards at state, national and international competitions in FY 11. Serving as the county's primary point of contact for external audiences, PR&MS responded to numerous requests for assistance from the media and general public. In FY 11, staff answered 6,884 inquiries from the public; distributed 2,392 photographs; distributed 55,843 mailings and information packets including 2,128 DVDs; and made more than 8,100 contacts with media.

## **2011-12**

Public Relations & Media Services (PR&MS) kept residents informed about road conditions and critical county services during several incidents of extreme weather.

The department staffed Henrico's Emergency Operations Center before and after Hurricane Irene hit central Virginia in August 2011, toppling trees and knocking out power.

Through media contacts, Twitter messages, Henrico County Television (HCTV) and the county's website, PR&MS gave news outlets and residents timely information on county services, including the opening of emergency shelters and water-filling stations and the cleanup of fallen trees and other debris.

The department served a similar role in late June, when violent storms snapped trees and caused widespread electrical outages.

Under more-pleasant circumstances, the department wrapped up a campaign to promote the commemoration of Henrico's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

PR&MS earned its fourth overall Emmy for programming produced for HCTV.

The 29-minute program "Airwaves of Yesteryear: Early Television in Central Virginia" received a 2011 Emmy from the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

Other accolades came from the National Association of County Information Officers. The department earned 16 awards and three Best in Class honors for various projects, including feature articles, scripts, graphics, designs, photographs and video programs.

Overall, the department's achievements for the year included 23 original programs produced for HCTV; 2,303 distributed photos; 36 publications, including brochures, signs, presentations, covers and posters; 20 awards; 7,509 contacts with news media; 5,768 responses to requests for assistance; 17,543 mailings; and 1,995 mailings of HCTV program DVDs.

## **2012-13**

Public Relations & Media Services (PR&MS) oversaw several projects that culminated with the installation of John A. Vithoukias as Henrico's eighth county manager.

PR&MS planned and coordinated Vithoukias' investiture Jan. 16 in the Board Room at the Henrico County Government Center. Henrico Circuit Judge L.A. Harris Jr.

presided over the ceremony, which was attended by members of the Board of Supervisors, judges and other officials and guests.

The department also responded to news media requests relating to the retirement of Virgil R. Hazelett, who had served as county manager since 1992.

On Oct. 28-29, PR&MS staffed the county's Emergency Operations Center during Hurricane Sandy. Through media contacts, Twitter messages, Henrico County Television (HCTV) and the county's website, PR&MS provided news outlets and residents with timely information on county services, including the opening of emergency shelters, road closures due to fallen trees and other hazards.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency later approved disaster aid for three cities and 26 counties in Virginia; Henrico avoided significant flooding and damage during the storm.

Also in fiscal 2012-13, PR&MS worked with the Division of Fire on media campaigns to promote a firefighter recruitment effort and the launch of a new emergency alert system, called the Community Emergency Notification System. The campaigns included brochures, fliers, banners, posters, news releases and articles and segments for the Henrico Today quarterly newsletter and the "Inside Henrico" video news magazine program.

In addition, PR&MS began work on an informational campaign for Henrico's meals tax referendum on Nov. 5.

Staff helped develop a website and produced a brochure to be sent to 150,000 addresses and a utility bill insert to be sent to 95,000 customers. The efforts also generated posters, news articles and segments for Henrico Today and "Inside Henrico." Staff also coordinated a speakers bureau and organized community meetings to inform residents about the referendum.

PR&MS received 20 awards from the National Association of County Information Officers. The department earned the awards, which included four Best in Class honors, for articles, scripts, graphics, designs, photographs and video programs. The department also received four awards from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors for television programs produced for HCTV.

In addition, two television programs — "You are not Alone: Breaking the Stigma of Mental Illness" and "Mother Maybelle and The Carter Sisters: The Henrico Years" — received regional Emmy award nominations from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

Overall, the department's work for the year included 27 original programs for HCTV; 1,636 distributed photos; 40 publications, including brochures, signs, presentations, covers and posters; 24 awards; 7,041 contacts with news media; 6,014 responses to requests for assistance; 10,865 mailings; and 1,916 mailings of HCTV program DVDs.

## **2013-14**

*Director: Tamra R. McKinney, 501-4976*

The Department of Public Relations & Media Services (PR&MS) coordinated a campaign to inform residents and others in the community about a meals tax referendum in Henrico.

Voters approved the Nov. 5 referendum 52,628 to 49,646, which authorized the Board of Supervisors to adopt a 4 percent tax on prepared meals in the county. The tax took effect June 1.

PR&MS managed the effort, called “It’s Your Decision,” by working with the County Manager’s Office, the Department of Finance and Henrico County Public Schools. The department prepared information for a website, titled Henrico Meals Tax Facts, and produced a brochure sent to 150,000 addresses and a utility bill insert sent to 95,000 customers.

PR&MS also designed posters and display advertisements for public meetings held to explain the referendum and answer questions from the public. The department produced videos about the referendum and provided updates in news articles written for the Henrico Today quarterly publication and in segments featured on the Inside Henrico program for Henrico County Television (HCTV).

In addition, PR&MS coordinated a speakers bureau that met with neighborhood and community groups, and it staffed nine public meetings at county high schools.

Also in fiscal 2014, PR&MS expanded public access to the meetings of the Board of Supervisors. The county has offered since 2009 a live video stream of board meetings as well as recordings of past meetings at [henrico.us/supervisors/video-of-meetings](http://henrico.us/supervisors/video-of-meetings). In June, access was extended to smartphones and other mobile devices. PR&MS also made HCTV programs available on mobile devices.

HCTV programs also are available on Comcast Channel 17 and Verizon Channel 39 and through Comcast’s on-demand service.

PR&MS received 11 awards from the National Association of County Information Officers. The department earned the awards for news articles, news releases, scripts, print and video graphics, video programming and photography.

HCTV was named the third best overall government television station in the country by the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, trailing only San Diego and Seattle — stations serving major metropolitan areas. HCTV also won five awards for individual programs in the categories of public safety, arts and entertainment, social issues documentary, public education and profile documentary.

The department’s year-end accomplishments included 26 original programs for HCTV; 1,354 distributed photos; 40 publications, including brochures, signs and posters prepared for other departments; 19 awards; 6,551 contacts with news media; 5,637 responses to requests for assistance; 6,979 mailings; and 1,617 mailings of HCTV program DVDs.

**Departmental Staff Complement (as of September 2014):**

Director of Public Relations & Media Services (1)  
Assistant Director of Public Relations & Media Services (1)  
Television and Media Services Manager (1)  
Business Supervisor (1)  
Senior Public Relations Specialist (1)  
Public Relations Specialist (2)  
Media Specialist (1)  
Senior Television Producer/Director (1)

Television Producer/Director (5)  
Broadcast Engineer (1)  
Technology Support Specialist (1)  
Secretary (1)  
Office Assistant (2)

*Total Complement: 19*