

August 2020

Civic Engagement: Innovative Approaches Becoming Part of Every Day
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Civic engagement can take on many forms and, undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has led localities down varying paths. Despite the hardship the pandemic has caused, it's opened new routes to develop innovative solutions as we strive to connect with residents and the workforce.

This is particularly true for Chesterfield County. When Chesterfield reduced in-person operations to a very limited model, an opportunity presented itself to reinvent programs and services, as well as communication efforts across the organization and, in some cases, throughout our region.

Chesterfield County Public Libraries (CCPL) set-out to continue serving residents by quickly adapting library check-out procedures, enabling residents to pick up materials curbside, without any person-to-person contact with staff. In turn, Chesterfield became a model for others throughout the nation. Additionally, CCPL turned to Facebook to provide livestreaming for weekly story times, arts and crafts instruction, and even an acoustic concert series. These recurring virtual events have been extremely successful and received great praise from the community.

As we evolved programs and services to meet public needs, we also recognized how important it is to keep employees engaged during a time like this. An example is the county administrator's weekly email message to employees since the onset of the pandemic. Dr. Joe Casey has worked diligently to remain connected and engaged with the county's workforce through his weekly messages that he shares with all employees. His messages include topics ranging from navigating this new environment we've been thrown in, to visits with his mother and other personal sentiments that have endeared him to many employees with which he previously had little contact. These weekly touchpoints have become a much-anticipated part of employees lives and provided an avenue to connect with the county administrator in a way we could not have imagined in a pre-pandemic world.

Chesterfield continues to seek alternative ways to deliver services and offer programs, while remaining mindful of the ever-evolving nature of this pandemic. Civic engagement has taken on new forms in Chesterfield, and many of these

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innovative approaches will likely become part of our every days. In a pre-pandemic world where government may take a long time to effect change, Chesterfield has shown how quickly we're able to pivot and keep moving ahead, offering citizens and employees the best place to live, work, and play – from the comfort of home.