



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Vermillion County, Indiana earns NACo 2019 National Achievement Award for Commissioners' Mentoring Program

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The Vermillion County, Indiana **Commissioners' Mentoring Program** has been recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The award honors innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents.

**NACo recognized the Vermillion County, Indiana Commissioners' Mentoring Program in the category of Civic Education and Public Information.** The program was introduced three years ago with goals of helping to educate high school students about local government and the duties of elected officials, as well as to promote civic engagement throughout the student body. Each month a senior student is selected by local high school principals to participate in the program. Transportation to and from the County Courthouse is provided by the Vermillion County Sheriff. Students are brought from their high school to the courthouse where they are assigned honorary duties in a commissioners' meeting. They gavel the meeting to order, lead the Pledge of Allegiance, take roll call, and at the end of the meeting, they gavel the official adjournment. After the commissioner's meeting adjournment, the student is taken on a tour of the courthouse to visit with each elected office holder and to receive an explanation of the job and duties of each official. Students are encouraged to register to vote, which many of the students do while visiting the clerk's office. Students sit in on a court hearing and visit with the judge prior to being escorted by the sheriff back to school at the end of the visit.

**Tim Yocum, Vermillion County District 2 Commissioner** stated, "This is a major accomplishment for Vermillion County. **It is wonderful to be designated as #1 in the category of Civic Education and Public Information, not only in the state, but in the nation,** for initiating a program that helps our students understand more about their county government. As one of the Vermillion County Commissioners, I want to express appreciation for all of the individuals who have helped to make this program a success." It takes a coordinated effort from many people to make the program run smoothly: high school principals and counselors recommend students for invitation; Sheriff Mike Phelps arranges to be available or to have a

Deputy available to transport the student and offer positive and personalized attention to each individual; and all of the court house staff and other elected officials welcome the students to the center of our county government and share their knowledge. A link to the program information should soon be available on the county webpage.

NACo President Greg Cox said, “Counties implement innovative programs that enhance residents’ quality of life every day. This year’s Achievement Award-winning programs demonstrate how counties build healthy, safe and vibrant communities across America.”

Nationally, awards are given in 18 different categories that reflect the vast, comprehensive services counties provide. The categories include children and youth, criminal justice, county administration, information technology, health, civic engagement and many more. Out of 616 entries from counties and state associations in 32 states for awards in the 18 categories, Vermillion County’s program was chosen as the best innovation in the category of Civic Education and Public Information. The awards article can be viewed by following the link [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).

NACo will recognize award-winning counties at the Achievement Awards Luncheon on July 14<sup>th</sup> during the [2019 Annual Conference and Exposition](#) July 12-15 in Clark County, Nevada.

Started in 1970, NACo’s annual Achievement Awards program is designed to recognize county government innovations. Each nominee is judged on its own merits and not against other applications received.

*The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America’s 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public’s understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service. Learn more at [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)*