



Russell County, Virginia

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Overview & Update

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Aerial View of Dante Mountain
Dante, Virginia

Overview

The Russell County Annual Report for 2024 is an overview of the initiatives, accomplishments, and milestones achieved throughout the year. This report serves as a reflection of our collective efforts, showcasing the impact of collaboration between local elected officials, government departments, community organizations, and residents.

Russell County remains committed to fostering a vibrant, thriving community by prioritizing projects that enhance infrastructure, support economic growth, preserve cultural heritage, and improve the quality of life for all who live and work here. This year, we focused on initiatives that align with our long-term vision for sustainable development, responsible fiscal management, and strategic investment in our future.

This report underscores our dedication to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. Together, we are building a stronger foundation for the success of future generations in Russell County.



Future Goals



Enhance Infrastructure



Community Engagement



Local Education



Sustainable Development



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Lonzo Lester

County Administrator

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From the Chair

"2024 was a year of opportunity; some won and some lost. We made great strides in economic development with Tate Industries and Simmons Equipment taking over existing vacant buildings and bringing jobs to Russell County. Environmental work is now under way that hopefully will allow Tate Industries to expand into the long-vacant Alcoa building. Work on the Pure Salmon facility is advancing with the construction of the main access road and the startup of construction of the building to follow. We have studied the possibility of an access road to Laurel Bed Lake from Russell County and will continue to pursue funding for that project.

We made great advances in our tourism efforts with projects in the Dante Community, including the Arty Lee Campground and trail system. Spearhead trails are being developed in the Honaker area, and we are looking at several county areas for potential campgrounds and trail systems. By working closely with the School Board and Superintendent, we were able to find the funding to allow substantial salary increases for our teachers and a 7% increase for all school and county employees. Construction of the New Courthouse and the renovation of the Old Courthouse was finished under budget.

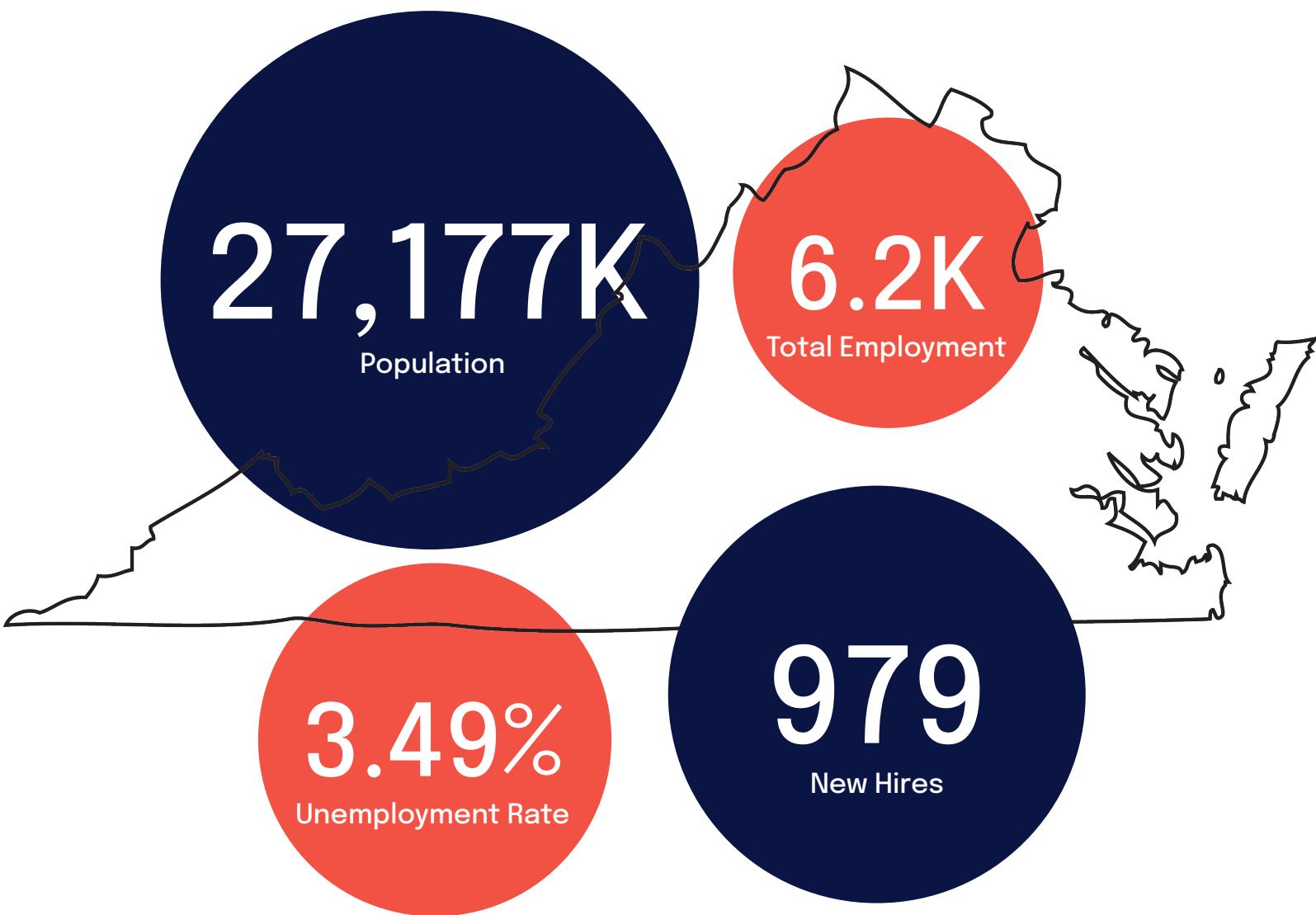
Using our Opioid Funds, we have continued support of our Recovery House, assisted in the reopening of Secor, and made a substantial contribution to the Isaiah 117 House. Although the evaluation of a modern landfill within the county met with much citizen objection, we did go through the process of evaluating this project just like any other economic development project. This project could have stabilized our currently volatile solid waste disposal costs for the next 40 years with payments to the County during that period projected at 205 million dollars and the addition of approximately 100 new jobs. However, it was the final decision of the board to close negotiations of a host agreement. We are now evaluating alternatives for solid waste disposal with the current cost of disposal approaching \$3 million dollars a year. New technologies are becoming available with major recycling opportunities and cost savings. I am hopeful that we can bring an alternative to the full board soon.

In closing, I want to thank the current board members for all their efforts on behalf of the County over the past year and say that I look forward to our continued work for the betterment of Russell County."

Steve Breeding

**Steve Breeding, District 5 Representative
2024 Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors**

2024 Data & Statistics



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Program, 1st Quarter (January - March) 2024, all ownerships.

Source: Virginia Works, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2nd Quarter (April - June) 2024.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

Russell County FY '24/'25 County-Wide Budget

Throughout the course of 2024 Russell County was able to make strides in producing strides to help in impove the quality of life and help in the retension of employees and working to be good stewarts of the county budget which included;

Russell County Employee Raises - 7%

2024 County-Wide Budget & County Tax Rates - No Increase

Russell County School Teacher Raises -7%

**County Courthouse Project Completed
\$300,000 under budget**

County Worker Program \$1.3M Savings



**Lebanon Middle School
Lebanon, Virginia**

Major Projects

County Renovations & New Courthouse Project

The Russell County Courthouse is a building full of history but was in need of renovation and expansion. This project was able to build an extension of the Russell County Courthouse, and renovate the historic existing courthouse. This project was able to be completed \$300,000 under original budget.

Pure Salmon Project Development

In 2024, Russell County advanced plans to support economic development through the establishment of Pure Salmon Virginia, LLC, on Route 19 near the Russell-Tazewell County line. This state-of-the-art facility will be a vertically integrated Atlantic salmon farm, featuring a hatchery, nursery, smolt, and post-smolt grow-out systems to produce market-sized fish. The project is expected to attract significant private capital investment in land, buildings, and manufacturing equipment while creating substantial employment opportunities for the region. To facilitate the project, the county is committed to constructing a new roadway to connect the property to Route 19, addressing its current lack of public road access. This initiative underscores Russell County's dedication to fostering economic growth and innovation in sustainable aquaculture.

Laurel Bed Lake Road Feasibility Study

Laurel Bed Lake, a 330-acre lake in Russell County within the Clinch Mountain Range, is a key recreational asset with significant potential for nearby communities. However, despite its proximity

to the Belfast community, the lake currently lacks direct public access from the north through Russell County. The only available route is over an hour-long drive that includes a one-lane gravel road. To address this, a feasibility study was conducted by Thompson & Litton in late 2023, involving site visits with county officials, property owners, and representatives from Appalachian Power. These visits assessed existing conditions, evaluated potential routes, and examined the existing service road on the lake side of the mountain, which would connect to the proposed roadway. This project aims to enhance accessibility, unlock the lake recreational potential, and benefit the region's economy and quality of life.

Commonwealth Energy Partners – Solar Project

CEP Solar is a Virginia-based company that partners with landowners, communities, and customers to develop solar and storage projects across Virginia, delivering long-term economic and environmental benefits to the Commonwealth. Solar farms generate affordable and emission-free electricity. At the end of the project's operational life, the solar panels are removed and the land will be available for its original use.

Tiller Trailer Park Water Extension

This project is meant to improve the living conditions of 43 households by providing access to safe, clean, potable water and providing greater accessibility by installing ramps for six households. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) disbursed to Russell County a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to produce this project in the form of construction ready water and sewer grants.

Dante Regional Sewer Line Extension Project

This project is possible through the collaboration with The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Through the use of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) through the contract to award an additional \$1,000,000 in funds from the 2023 CDBG One-Time Supplemental Infrastructure Funds Program. The total CDGB award for the project is now funded at \$3.5M .

The project will be servicing a total of 617 individuals and 240 total households. The purpose of the project is to help improve the quality of living conditions of residents living in Dante and Sun communities of Russell County through the provision of new and improved public sewer infrastructure.



**Drone Image of Clinch River
Town of St. Paul, Virginia**

Economic & Industry Development

Within the past year, Russell County has welcomed multiple new small startup businesses, as well as, two major employers including both **Simmons Equipment** and **Tate Access Board Incorporation**. Contributing to the creation of *over 200 jobs* and job growth in the county.

Simmons Equipment Expansion

Through a partnership between Russell County, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the Russell County Industrial Development Authority (IDA), and Simmons Equipment, Russell County secured a \$270,000 grant from the Commonwealth's Development Opportunity Fund (COF). This funding, provided by VEDP, will support Simmons Equipment in leasing two existing facilities from the IDA to expand, equip, improve, and operate heavy equipment manufacturing facilities within the county. The project represents a significant capital investment, creating at least 75 new jobs with an average annual wage of \$55,667—well above the county's prevailing wage of \$46,237.

As stipulated by the Commonwealth of Virginia, a minimum of 30% of the new positions must be filled by Virginia residents. This initiative

Location of Simmons Equipment
Lebanon, Virginia
Photo Credit: VCEDA



underscores the shared commitment of Russell County and the Commonwealth to fostering sustained economic growth, solidifying the county as a hub for industrial development and job creation,

Tate Access Floors Inc. Expansion Project

Through collaboration between Russell County, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the Russell County Industrial Development Authority (IDA), and Tate Access Floors, Inc., significant progress has been made toward the construction, expansion, equipping, improvement, and operation of Tate's facility. This project involves a capital investment of approximately \$14.85 million, with \$14.15 million allocated to machinery and tools and \$700,000 invested in furniture, fixtures, and business personal property. Additionally, the facility expansion will create and maintain 170 new jobs, offering an average annual salary of \$52,020 per full-time position. The resulting economic activity and increased tax revenue from this project demonstrate a strong public benefit, justifying the use of public funds. The Commonwealth's Development Opportunity Fund (COF) grant will be allocated with 10% directed toward Tate's capital investment target and 90% designated for achieving the company's job creation target. This initiative underscores Russell County's commitment to fostering economic growth and enhancing employment opportunities for its residents.

Economic Development & Community Projects

Spearhead Trail Development - Honaker & Dante

Dante Coal Heritage Trail and Dante Miner's Trail both experienced a successful first year. Additionally, the Town of Honaker and the Russell County Board of Supervisors have been collaborating with the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA) on developing a motorized trail in the Honaker area. While working with local property owners and town on easements to work on completion and development of trail in Russell County.



**Riverbend Campground & Cleveland Boat Launch
Cleveland, Virginia**
Photo Credit: The Nature Conservancy

Cleveland Boat Launch & Riverbend Campground Renovation

In coordination with Russell County's partners Town of Cleveland, Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission (CPPDC), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and others the county/town was able to add to additional boat launch to access the Clinch River in conjunction with The Clinch River State Park.

Asty Lee Campground - Dante

Since April 2024 the campground has begun to host camper from across the US, the furthest traveling all the way from Wisconsin. The campground has been successful in hosting returning campers and new campers.

Dante Depot Revitalization

With use of VDOT Transportation Alternatives funding of \$286,000, Dante's historic railroad depot was transformed into a tourist and visitor center, ATV trail-head, and centerpiece for further revitalization

efforts in the former coal community. The depot will serve as an anchor point of contact between the community's residents and all visitors. With the growth of ATV trails and outdoor recreational tourism in Southwest Virginia, it is vital for the community to take advantage of such potential economic growth and ensure that Dante becomes a key destination for the trail networks. Dante's downtown area has already received preliminary--but not final-- approval as a Virginia historic district. By renovating the transportation depot donated by CSX to Russell County, Dante will see not only the rebirth of a historic transportation landmark, but subsequently their historic community as well.

Tri-County Transit Route Additions

Through coordination with Tri-County Transit, additional routes were established to provide residents using the service with access to more locations across the county.

Economic Development & Community Projects

Isaiah 117 House - Russell County

In 2024, the Isaiah 117 House made significant strides in Russell County to address the challenges posed by opioid use and its impact on the foster care system in Southwestern Virginia. Leveraging grant funds from the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority, the organization focuses on:

Community Engagement & Development: A dedicated group of volunteers raised awareness, secured property, and broke ground on the Isaiah 117 House project on December 5, 2024.

Based on current information there are 92 children in foster care in Russell County. The county has nine non-relative foster home and six relative foster homes available to provide care. These numbers are ever changing.



**Isaiah 117 House Ground Breaking
December 5th, 2024**
Source: Russell County Isaiah 117 House

These efforts underscore Isaiah 117 House's commitment to mitigating the effects of opioid use on the foster care system and enhancing the well-being of children and families in Russell County and the broader Southwestern Virginia region.

“The support from our community has allowed us to make tremendous progress in such a short time frame, which will ultimately allow us to open the Russell County home even sooner. We can't wait to see the home built, open, and serving our children!”

~Acacia Nunley
Russell County Isaiah 117 House



Grants & Funding Awarded

In 2024, Russell County was able to access and be awarded over **\$6.6M in grant and funding awards** to complete and begin working on a multitude of different projects, development, and community initiatives throughout the county and communities.

Community Development Block Grant - \$1,000,000

Laurel Bed Lake Feasibility Study Grant - \$25,000

Department of Criminal Justice Services – School Resource Officer Grants 25-290-C - \$244,728 & 25-515-A – \$163,152

IDA Commonwealth's Development Opportunity Grant - Tate Corporation - \$700,000

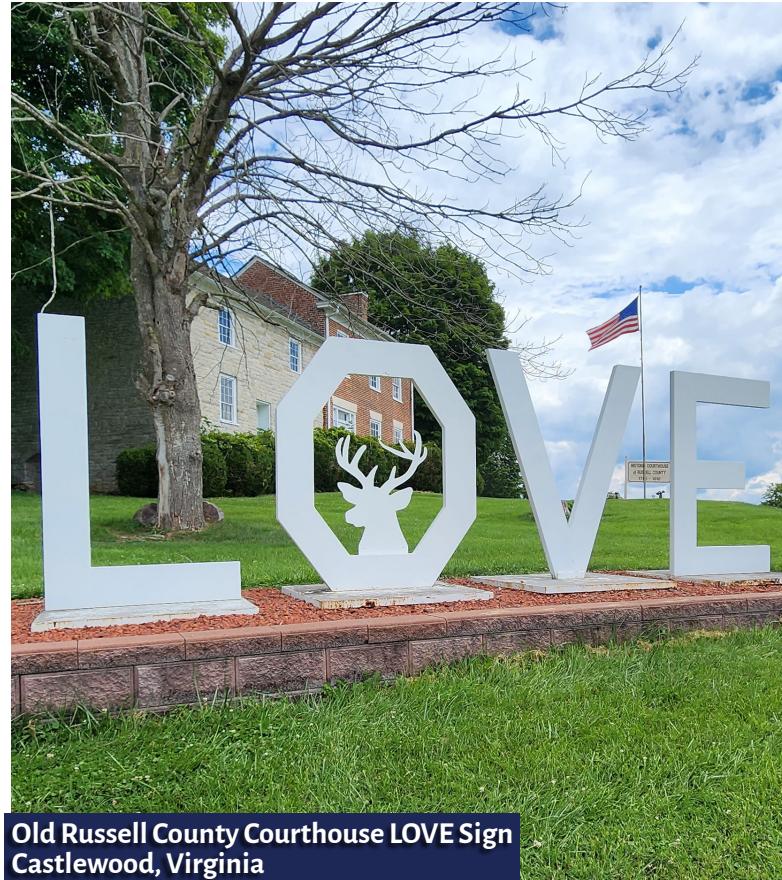
Russell & Dickenson County - Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority - \$250,000

Wellspring Foundation - Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief Assistance - \$500,000

Virginia Tourism Corporation Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Marketing Grant: - \$9,690

CDBG Grant – Tiller Trailer Park Waterline Extension Project - \$514,500

RC IDA & Simmons Equipment Company – Tobacco Region Opportunity Fund Performance Agreement & Revenue Sharing Agreement & Loan Agreement - \$133,000



**Old Russell County Courthouse LOVE Sign
Castlewood, Virginia**

Virginia Opioid Authority Cooperative Partnership Grant – Smyth, Dickenson, & Russell County Project Pathfinder - \$10,000

Dante Depot Restoration Project – VDOT Reimbursement - \$276,854

DCJS VA Services, Training, Officers, Prosecution (VSTOP) Formula Grant Program for Continuation and New Applicants - \$133,333

RC School Energy Performance (VASaves Credit) - \$127,046

RC Little League Project Funding -

VDOT Economic Development Grant – Pure Salmon - \$850,000

Grants & Funding Awarded

National Opioid Settlements - \$106,582.42

Virginia Department of Fire Program Grants - \$108,167

Russell County Victim Witness Assistance Program Grant - \$70,000

**Dante Fire Department Facility – FY 2025
Congressionally Directed Spending Grant – \$423,000**

**Virginia Department of Emergency Management –
Emergency Shelter Upgrade Assistance Fund Grant - \$48,350**

**OAA FY25 Cooperative Partnership Agreement
Russell & Dickenson County - \$250,000**

RC OAA Direct Distribution Grant – Isaiah 117 House - \$200,000

**Russell County Fire Chief Association – SCBA
Equipment Request - \$351,089**

Coalfield Water Development Fund – Tiller Trailer Park Waterline - \$50,000

CDBG Grant – Tiller Trailer Park Waterline Extension Project - \$514,500

Supreme Court of VA – Community Work Program - \$68,570

Local Law Enforcement (LOLE) Grant Program – FY 23 - \$2,512

RC School Energy Performance Credit Payment - \$119,438.07

Wellspring Foundation – Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief Assistance Grant - \$500,000

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Litter Grant - \$22,430



Resolutions, Proclamations, & Agreements

Russell County Agriculture Week - July 7th - July 13th

This proclamation is made for the County of Russell in the Commonwealth of Virginia declaring the dates from July 7th through July 13th, 2024, shall be proclaimed and recognized as Russell County Agriculture Week, honoring and recognizing the success of the farmers and agriculture industry in Russell County

Russell County Pro-Life Proclamation - Month of June

The Russell County Board of Supervisors declared and recognized the month of June as the Pro-Life month. Russell County, to be a Pro-Life County and urging the citizens of the county to promote and defend the inalienable right to life and the inherent dignity of all human beings, from conception to death.

Kyle Fletcher Bridge Memorial - Town of St. Paul

Russell County Resolution of Support for the VDOT Smart Scale Rte. 19/80 Project

Resolution Terminating the Negotiation of a Proposed Host Agreement with The Nova Company of Virginia

- With respect to a proposed privately owned and operated landfill in Russell County.

Saint Paul Fire Department – EMS First Response Resolution

Russell County FEMA – Emergency, Public Assistance, and Individual Assistance Declaration

- In regards to the affects of Hurricane Helene on the citizens and communities in Russell County.

Wise-Russell Counties Regional Industrial Facilities Agreement – Economic Development

Russell & Dickenson County – Joint Resolution of Support for Recovery Residences

RC BOS Resolution Opposing AEP, Old Dominion, & Kentucky Utility Rate Increases

Russell County Sheriff Department Mutual Aid and Cooperation Agreement

- For law enforcement services with Washington County, Smyth County, Buchanan County, Tazewell County, Dickenson County, Scott County, and Wise County.

RC Six-Year General Reassessment Services Contract

Russell County “Hurricane Helene” Declaration of Emergency

Town of Honaker and RC Sheriff Law Enforcement Contract



Pinnacles Natural Area Preserve
Honaker, Virginia

Community Initiatives

Russell County Food Bank Donation Awarded

Each food bank in Russell County was awarded an award of \$25,000 from Russell County to provide goods to our community in need.

- Lebanon Food Pantry
- Elk Garden Food Bank
- Roger E. Jesse Community Food Bank
- Word of Victory Food Bank

Hurricane Helene Donation

\$100,000 of funds was donated to local families who were in need from the devastation of Hurricane Helene in Russell County.

County Community Awards Presented to:

Katie Patton: Russell County Attorney Service Award

Dan Bush: Firefighter Hero Award

- American Red Cross

Jess Powers: 2024 Patty Tauscher Service Award

- American Red Cross

Mel Leaman Free Clinic Partnership

When we are investing in our community, we are investing in our future.

Century Farm Dedications

Recognition of over 35 family farms within Russell County that have been in continuous operation for over 100 years within the same family.

RC DSS Elderly White Christmas Program

RC Sheriff Department – STARR Communication Pilot Program

Russell County Tourism Department Received - Best

Rack Card or Brochure Marketing Budget - \$50,000 or less at the SWVA Tourism Summit to produce and distribute the new Russell County Travel Guide.

Tourism Scholarship Award Recipient

Lrycen Hess - Honaker High School

R.A.C.E Students 2024

Registered/Enrolled 2024: **76 Students**

Total Amount Registered Since 2019: **416 Students**

Total Amount of Community Service Hours

Completed Since 2019: **17,905 hrs**

Russell County Annual Turkey Donation

County Donation to Local Events

SWCC Arts Festival | All Town 4th of July Celebrations

Clinch River Days | Redbud Festival

Big Rig Showdown | Russell County Kid's Fishing Day

Russell County Fair & Horse Show

Russell County Sheriff's Office Annual

"Shop with a Cop" Program

Russell County Emergency Management

Medication Exchange Program

Virginia Federation of Humane Societies Direct

Animal Award 2024 - \$10,000

VARR Certification of Accreditation of Men &

Women's Recovery Facilities

Looking Forward

"I am optimistic about the outlook for Russell County in 2025. We are actively working on initiatives to increase pay for our teachers and staff to ensure we remain competitive in attracting and retaining talent. Additionally, we are excited to launch the 'Heart of Russell County' program, which will focus on visiting and supporting our existing businesses. Thank you to the Board of Supervisors representatives for all of the hard work and dedication that comes with the commitment to our beloved county. Thank you to our community and residents of Russell County for your love for our community and work to ensure the future of Russell County. Philippians 4:13 "

David Eaton

**David Eaton, District 4 Representative
2025 Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors**



Advancing Tourism Efforts



Animal Shelter Construction



"Heartbeat" Campaign Supporting Industry Business



Continued Industry Development



Updated County Website



**Ellenbrook Mansion
Elk Garden, Virginia**



In Conclusion

As we reflect on 2024, it is evident that Russell County has made significant strides in advancing its economic development, infrastructure, and community support initiatives. Through collaborative efforts with regional partners, state agencies, and dedicated local leadership, we have accomplished milestones that lay a strong foundation for sustained growth and prosperity. Projects like the Pure Salmon Virginia, LLC facility and the Laurel Bed Lake Road Feasibility Study exemplify our commitment to fostering innovation, creating jobs, and improving access to the county's unparalleled natural and economic resources.

The county's focus on addressing critical challenges, such as the opioid epidemic through partnerships like Isaiah 117 House, further highlights our dedication to supporting the health and well-being of the residents. Additionally, strategic investments in infrastructure and recreational accessibility ensure that our communities remain vibrant and attractive for future generations.

Looking ahead, we are optimistic about the opportunities to build on this progress. Russell County remains steadfast in its mission to serve its residents, strengthen its communities, and cultivate a thriving environment for businesses and visitors alike. With the continued support of our local government, residents, and partners, the future of Russell County is brighter than ever. Through additional community initiatives such as an updated county website, business support campaign, and much more. Together, we will transform challenges into opportunities and continue to shape a prosperous future for all.