

APPLICATION FOR 2003-2004 RALPH W. KETNER EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY AWARDS

County: Davidson Employee: Joe Silver/ Catherine Lambeth Email: jsilver@co.davidson.nc.us;
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County Department: Davidson County Tax Department; Davidson County Department of Social Services Employee Title: Joe Silver: Tax Administrator
Catherine Lambeth: Director, Davidson County Department of Social Services

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Lexington, North Carolina 27293

Is this project being submitted on behalf of two or more employees? N Yes
o

If yes, please provide below a listing of all project employees. Employee & title as listed above should be for lead team member.

Fair Labors Standards Act Designation: In order for your project to be eligible, you MUST indicate one of the following. If you do not know, please contact your personnel director.

EXEMPT: NON-EXEMPT: BOTH (if applicable to team):

1. **Productivity Improvement** Property Tax Collection Collaboration
Title:
2. **Implementation Date (must be between January 1, 2003 and January 1, 2004):** December 2003
3. **Please describe the productivity improvement. (Please limit response to these 2 pages.)**

Develop and implement a cost effective and customer service oriented service so that citizens can pay their property taxes and have computer based information, in a satellite office location other than the County seat without increasing costs.

4. **Please describe why this project was initiated or what problem it addressed:**

For decades, Davidson County had a satellite tax office in the city of Thomasville. Because of budgetary constraints, the satellite office had to be eliminated. This saved approximately \$80,000 in costs per year, but placed a hardship on citizens who needed tax information or wished to pay their taxes in person, particularly senior citizens who had transportation problems. In an effort to address this concern, the Davidson County Tax Department contracted with an outside agency to receive tax payments; however this agency provided no other services such as property record care inquiries nor valuation reports.

Furthermore, tax payments could only be made if the taxpayer had his tax bill with him. The annual cost to have this tax payment receiving center

was about \$23-25,000. Since this outside contracted agency was collecting payments for numerous other businesses, there was difficulty with their balancing the tax payments on a daily basis. It became a weekly nightmare for the Tax Department staff to generate daily reports to locate the shortages and overages that occurred on a regular basis. It appeared that the only logical solution was to shut down the operation despite knowing that this would place a hardship on the senior citizens and other taxpayers in Davidson County's largest municipality.

4. Continued:

In seeking solutions to this dilemma, the Tax Administrator and Social Services Director began discussions since DSS already had a satellite office in Thomasville. As a result, an agreement was made whereby DSS staff would handle tax payments as well as provide other tax services such as property record inquiries and valuation reports. DSS would be compensated on the same basis as the former private agency. The Tax Department would not have to hire additional staff nor maintain the cost of an office in Thomasville.

5. Please quantify the improvement's results in terms of cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of services provided. (Please indicate what resources were used to achieve your results, and what was done with the time savings, if any accrued).

Once the Department of Social Services staff was trained by the Tax Department, Davidson County citizens then had a full service Tax Office in Thomasville. No additional computer data lines were needed and computers were provided from inventory in the Tax Office. Last year, the Tax Department paid the outside vendor over \$20,800 just to receive payments. Since DSS has assumed this responsibility, daily collections have increased in the first two months by 15% and the number of clients assisted in all aspects of taxation has increased by 31%. The Tax Department pays DSS the same amount as was paid to the private agency (\$1.10 per transaction and \$5.00 per trip to deposit funds) which resulted in no new county dollars being allocated to implement a more comprehensive service. All tax information is readily available to any taxpayer. There has not been a single problem with the daily balancing and deposits of funds received. The Tax Department is provided a daily printout of number of transactions and amounts collected whereas in the past the Tax Department had to generate their own reports.

6. Please provide any other descriptive information you would like to be considered by the review committee.

With the Davidson County DSS staff and the Tax Department staff working so well together, total tax information requests are handled expeditiously to our citizens in Thomasville and the northern section of Davidson County. This project could easily be replicated in other counties and is a demonstration of how county departments can benefit each other and our citizens when we work together to find solutions. The county and citizens also benefit because county dollars that were already allocated to the Tax Department were used to expand services. In turn these previously allocated dollars increase the revenue of Social Services to assist in meeting needs within the Department. By having the tax collection site operated at the Colonial Drive Center, customers now benefit from "one stop" service in that the Department of Social Services programs, Senior Service programs, Veterans Services and Job Link are all located at the same site thus providing a full range of services to customers as the need arises.

This project has been a "win-win" situation for Davidson County-- a higher level of services is being provided without increasing costs.

**County
Manager:**

Robert Hyatt

**Supervisor's
Name:**

Joe Silver/ Catherine Lambeth
