

TCSA 2025 COUNTY SUCCESS STORIES



BLOUNT COUNTY – RUBBERIZED ASPHALT INNOVATION

Blount County’s Highway Department launched a pilot project using SmartMIX, a recycled tire material, to improve road longevity and sustainability. In partnership with Liberty Tire, the University of Tennessee’s College of Engineering and Harrison Construction, they repaved more than 16 miles of roads with rubberized asphalt, expected to last 5-8 years longer than traditional methods. UT students are analyzing how the mix resists cracking and aging. The approach not only enhances infrastructure but also diverts tires from landfills. A public workshop in the fall highlighted the project’s potential as a statewide model.



CAMPBELL COUNTY – VETERANS APPRECIATION BREAKFASTS

What began as a late-night conversation in early 2023 has grown into a heartfelt tradition: monthly and quarterly Veterans Appreciation Breakfasts serving more than 150 local veterans and their families in Campbell County. Held at local churches, the events feature flag presentations, community volunteers and updates on veterans’ benefits from mayor Jack Lynch and director Shane Prater. Scout troops help serve meals, and sponsorships from local businesses keep the program cost-free for taxpayers. The initiative honors Campbell County’s 2,600-plus veterans while also helping them draw down federal benefits that contribute \$180 million annually to the local economy. It’s now seen as a model of community-driven support and sustainable service delivery.



Campbell County officials and local veterans attend the Veterans Breakfast to learn, network and connect around their community.

COCKE COUNTY – HURRICANE HELENE RESPONSE

In September 2024, historic flooding from Hurricane Helene devastated Cocke County, submerging Newport and destroying vital infrastructure, homes and lives. Local agencies, churches, schools and volunteers mobilized within hours — rescuing more than 100 residents and setting up supply distribution points across the region. The county jail, roads and even a section of I-40 were wiped out, but response teams kept hospitals running and communities connected. Through the tireless work of emergency responders and volunteers, Cocke County demonstrated extraordinary resilience, unity and determination. The county’s ongoing recovery is a testament to the power of local collaboration in crisis.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY – DEPUTIES AS FIRST RESPONDERS

Cumberland County launched a groundbreaking Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) program that trains sheriff’s deputies to provide life-saving medical care before EMS arrives. Twelve deputies are now certified to handle emergencies like cardiac arrest and trauma, each equipped with AEDs (automated external defibrillators) and advanced kits. The program, only the second of its kind in Tennessee, was developed collaboratively by EMS, the sheriff’s office and the Cumberland County commission. It enhances response times in rural areas without raising taxes, while offering deputies modest compensation for added responsibilities. This innovative approach strengthens public safety and exemplifies effective, cross-agency teamwork.



Cumberland County mayor Allen Foster signs a resolution establishing the EMR Program, an innovative initiative between local emergency departments and first responders, that will have a positive impact on emergency response times and life-saving practices.



FENTRESS COUNTY – HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE READINESS DELIVERED LOCALLY

Fentress County celebrated a historic milestone with the groundbreaking of its first permanent higher education campus, a 49,000-square-foot facility that opened in June 2025. Partnering with Roane State and Tennessee College of Applied Technology, the campus brings degrees and certifications within reach for residents who previously had to

travel more than 45 minutes. Backed by a \$25 million state grant, the project strengthens local workforce pipelines and supports economic growth. Leadership from county and city governments, state agencies and education boards made the vision a reality. It's a transformative investment in opportunity for rural students and employers alike.



KNOX COUNTY – OPERATION HERO’S HILL

Knox County is tackling veteran homelessness with **Operation Hero’s Hill**, a pioneering initiative to build a 20-unit tiny home village with wraparound services. The homes are being constructed by students from six high school CTE (Career Technical Education) programs, workforce trainees at the START (Skilled Trades Academy Regional Training) Center and even justice-involved individuals — offering hands-on training and life-changing impact. Partnering with D.R. Horton, the VA (Veterans Affairs), KCDC (Knoxville’s Community Development Corporation) and AGC (Associated General Contractors), the project exemplifies collaboration, workforce development and social impact. Materials are donated, construction is underway and sustainability is built into every phase. Documented for replication, this project is designed to be a cost-effective, repeatable model for ending veteran homelessness.



Construction on the homes has begun, with all six schools and the START Center starting on their first tiny homes. Knox County anticipates opening the doors of the village in August 2026.



LEWIS COUNTY – CARDBOARD RECYCLING SUCCESS

Faced with rising waste disposal costs, Lewis County turned to cardboard — and turned a profit. Through grants, donations and partnerships with the American Jobs Center and local jail trustees, they launched a county-wide recycling initiative with more than 125 collection sites. In 2024 alone, the program diverted 375 tons of cardboard, earning more than \$43,000 and saving \$20,000 in landfill fees. With minimal operational costs, the program netted more than \$43,000 for the county’s solid waste budget. This creative, community-powered solution is a model of rural innovation and fiscal responsibility. **

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