

History of Citizen Leadership Academy 1997- 2010

In 1997, Neighborhood College, a leadership development program was offered to County residents through the Office of Neighborhood Connections. The six week class provided neighborhood leaders an opportunity to gain skills & tools needed to manage and actively participate in their neighborhoods and to meet other leaders.

In 2001, Neighborhood Connections Neighborhood College combined efforts with the Community Services Leadership program to form the Citizen Leadership Academy. (CLA) CLA's goals were to develop and connect a pool of diverse leaders to work together toward a healthy community. Today, the goals are to promote a better understanding of how the county operates, how decisions are made and to encourage citizens to become actively engaged in our community.

Over the past 13 years, graduates have heard from community leaders about building relationships, communicating with county government, leadership development, flyer and newsletter design, fund development, meeting management, organizing neighborhood events, neighborhood assets, neighborhood matching grants, solving problems among neighbors, story circles, strategic neighborhood improvement plans, telling your story, youth/adult partnerships, web page design to learning about various County departments. The alumni have participated in group projects and made group presentations.

In 2007, a county component was added to educate citizens about various county departments, how they operate and how and why decisions are made. That year, the Board of Supervisors addressed issues facing their districts and goals they have for their districts.

Since 1997 this leadership development program has evolved to meet the changing needs of citizens. Citizens have participated in two-way constructive dialogue and developed ongoing positive relationships with the county administrator, department managers, county staff and the board of supervisors. Academy graduates become a resource from which the County draws boards and commission members and volunteers.

To date, a select group of 186 alumni have taken steps to become better informed about James City County and to learn how to become involved in their local government.