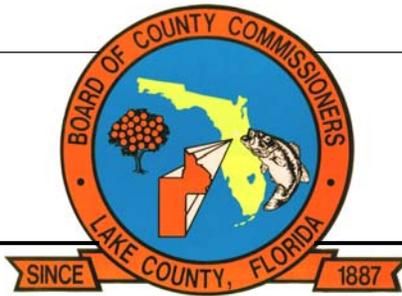


Debbie Stivender, Chairman  
Jennifer Hill, Vice Chairman  
Robert A. Pool, District 2  
Catherine C. Hanson, District 4  
Welton G. Cadwell, District 5



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## Two Lake County programs nab national honors

**TAVARES** – Unique approaches by Lake County at allocating resources for capital projects and providing residents gardening tips were recently rewarded at the annual convention of National Association of Counties (NACo) in Phoenix.

Since 1994, Lake County has been recognized 22 times for the distinguished achievement awards from NACo. The NACo Achievement Award Program seeks to recognize innovative county government programs. Counties in the State of Florida took home 76 awards at the 2004 convention, which was second only to counties in California.

“The Game of Lake: Prioritizing Competing Capital Requests for Limited Funds” earned best of category honors for fiscal management. Receiving the honors at the NACo convention were Lake County Commissioner Welton Cadwell and Public Works Department Director Jim Stivender Jr. It was the second time Lake County had been graced with a “best of category” award as the Public Works Department also earned the honor in 1999 for its emergency preparedness and disaster response plan.

“When you get a ‘best of category’ it’s pretty cool,” Stivender said. “There’s not a public works category so we’re proud of both awards.”

Introduced to the Lake County Board of County Commissioners during a financial retreat last year, the colorful, board game inspired “The Game of Lake” helped county leaders visualize long-range spending plans. All government entities struggle with how to select and prioritize building and other capital projects in a resource-constrained environment, Stivender said.

“The whole idea was to promote visualization,” he said. “Not to knock CPAs and engineers, but most people are not number crunchers, they’re more visual.”

The game featured 700 chips valued at \$100,000 each and the Board of County Commissioners was encouraged to decide how the pieces would fill the available funding spaces laid out on a large grid. With \$140 million in capital requests and only \$70 million of resources to allocate, county leaders eventually delayed several projects to accomplish a balanced plan.

The process was especially important for Lake County in 2003 as a renewed 15-year term of a voter-approved 1-cent sales tax for infrastructure improvements was beginning and fiscal planners sought a clear and concise way to accomplish effective long-range planning for this revenue. Stivender says capital requests often outweigh available resources; however, for Lake County last year, the process was important because of the penny sales tax budget.

Also receiving an achievement award at the NACo convention was an initiative by the Agricultural Education Service of the Lake County Community Services Department. Extension Agent Charles Fedunak said the “Mobile Plant Clinic” provides important educational materials to citizens about horticultural and other services provided by various Lake County departments. Originally started several years ago when a grant helped the department purchase the trailer, the activities of the mobile clinic has steadily increased.

“We take it to different places like home and garden shows, festivals and events, and we set it up so people can come to us and ask questions,” Fedunak said. “We have volunteers that man it – trained master gardeners – and what they do is provide information to citizens on what’s wrong with their plants.

“Basically it’s there to give them information,” he added. “We’re strictly education and we’re not selling a product. It is a non-bias resource where people can find out information.”

The  
Game  
of **LAKE** 2003  
Edition



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