



**Haywood
Community
Connections
Recipient of
National
Association of County
Government 2008
Acts of Caring Award**

It is precisely because you have people believing in you and counting on you that not only allows but almost compels one to take your “game” to a higher level. We, as Haywood Community Connections staff members, have always carried a sense of importance for the work we do. We have always had determination to do good work. We now have the drive and ambition to take this project from good to **great!**

I’m a small town girl. I still feel a chill over my entire body when I reflect on the moment. There we were receiving national honor and recognition on Capital Hill. Congressmen from across the nation joined us for breakfast and applauded our efforts. Richly patterned carpet; marble hallways; huge, oversized, raised-paneled mahogany doors; luxuriously draped windows all served to set the scene. “Old Glory” stood proudly at the podium. I drank in the moment as I offered a small prayer of thanksgiving for the privilege. Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Ms. Janet Creighton, chatted with me as though she had all the time in the world to learn of what we do in Haywood County. My knees felt like jelly. I couldn’t catch my breath.

There is an old expression farmers understand; “The hay is in the barn.” It quite simply means that you’ve done the work, now enjoy the moment. I selfishly wished all those back in Haywood who had participated in the project could be in this room, in this moment. I knew this was only possible because together we had the courage to dream the dream, unite in partnership, believing and inspiring one another to continue. We **are** better together.

And so, we accepted with great pride and humility the 2008 NACO “Acts of Caring Award.” **We are grateful to County Commissioner “Skeeter” Curtis for nominating our project and County support that made our trip was possible.** We are grateful to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and their Community Partnerships for Older Adults program for believing in Haywood County and funding Haywood Community Connections. We are grateful to our partners for their untiring and dedicated works. We are grateful beyond words for the members of our community who have joined with us to turn hopes into realities.

Large-scale, lasting change requires patient work. While it can be difficult and occasionally stressful, there is no job I would rather have, nowhere I would rather be. The staff of Haywood Community Connections is rededicated to our mission of striving everyday to exceed all expectations. We thank Haywood County for the confidence placed in us and for the continued support from so many.

~Shirley Topper