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## **Sarasota County wins two top state communications awards for ‘virtual’ Town Hall meeting**

A Sarasota County “virtual” Town Hall meeting called “Money Matters” has been awarded the 2009 Crystal Award and the Judges Award by the Florida Government Communicators Association (FGCA). The Town Hall meeting is part of the county’s Community Connections campaign.

The Crystal Award recognizes the best county community relations program. The Judges Award recognizes a county’s ability to provide outstanding communications programs for minimal cost. The two awards were presented at the 2009 FGCA Annual Conference on Dec. 4 in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

In the two-hour, live “Money Matters” program, citizens in a studio audience or watching a webcast were able to ask, e-mail or call in questions about the county budget, finances, programs and services. The Town Hall was carried on Comcast 19, Verizon 32 and the county’s website, [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net). County officials participating included Jon Thaxton, Sarasota County Commission Chair, Jim Ley, county administrator, and Steve Botelho, county budget director.

The “Money Matters” Town Hall program is available online at [www.scgov.net/CommunityConnections](http://www.scgov.net/CommunityConnections).

“The Community Connections campaign increases community involvement in county government and encourages communications between the taxpayers of Sarasota County and their government,” said Crystal Pruitt, communications manager.

The combination of television, webcasting, e-mail, blogging and phone calls reached virtually every demographic in Sarasota County. Since the “Money Matters” program, Sarasota County has broadcast and webcast other virtual Town Hall meetings, including a forum of health and medical professionals talking about the threat from H1N1 (Swine) Flu.

For more information on the Community Connections campaign, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit [www.scgov.net/CommunityConnectons](http://www.scgov.net/CommunityConnectons).

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