

2009 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 13, 2009

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Kansas City Area Mayors Climate Protection and Sustainability Conference

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Mission, Kansas

Jurisdiction population(s): 9,727

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2008, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: November Year: 2007

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Montréal, Québec, Canada, September 2009. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Mike Scanlon

Title: City Administrator Jurisdiction: City of Mission, KS

Name: Martin Rivarola

Title: Director of Community Development Jurisdiction: City of Mission, KS

Name: _____

Title: _____

Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Mike Scanlon

Title: City Administrator Jurisdiction: City of Mission, KS

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As local government employees we are charged with the responsibility to be good stewards of our communities' resources. Being a good community steward requires that we integrate sustainability into our organizations, and as City and County Managers we have gone so far as to create a Sustainability Pledge for our members. But how do you promote that idea locally? How do you inspire and integrate the idea of sustainability into the fabric of your community? These were some of the many questions we pondered during a local government retreat on sustainability in Grand Lake, Colorado in the early summer of 2007.

During the retreat, participants were asked to pledge/commit to specific action steps upon returning home. Among Mission's pledges was a commitment to work on increasing the awareness and importance of Climate Protection in our region. Saving the planet can be a vague concept. The workshop participants witnessed the destruction of the forests caused by the pine beetle, an insect once controlled by climate and temperature changes in the mountains. Not everyone has that first-hand exposure to the impacts of climate change. Our challenge was to help residents in the Kansas City metropolitan area "see" the devastation and be moved to action.

By the time we arrived back in Mission we had turned our pledge into a project. We hoped to move the discussions surrounding sustainability to the top of the region's agenda by hosting the largest single-day signing of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. The agreement, based on the Kyoto Protocol, promotes the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Today, 916 cities, representing over 82,000,000 people, have signed the Agreement.

We had a pledge, we had a project, now we needed people to help. First, we tapped employees in our organization that were interested in Climate Protection. A diverse group of volunteers stepped forward, including an Accounting Clerk, Neighborhood Service Director, Finance Director, City Planner, and City Clerk. In many cases, their work on this project fell outside their traditional roles and job responsibilities. Next, we needed a plan to make the signing ceremony a reality. What should the event entail? Given that our metropolitan community reaches across two states, the idea of involving both Kansas and Missouri seemed insurmountable for six to seven employees. We needed more help.

Our first offer of support came from the City Administrator's daughter who suggested that her University, Rockhurst, might provide an excellent venue for the signing ceremony. Rockhurst University, a small Jesuit University, had an active student organization called "Voices for Justice" which sought to support regional projects that focused on Social Equity and Justice. With the "Voices for Justice" group and Rockhurst University Administration offering their support, we had a place for the event and the people to support it. This allowed us to focus more intensely on the "purpose."

As we began asking mayors to participate in the signing event, we found ourselves facing a lot of doubt—and even disinterest—in area communities. Kansas City, Missouri had signed onto the agreement, but the surrounding 75 or so cities that make up the metropolitan area seemed less than interested. We heard it all: "Climate

change isn't real. Climate change doesn't really affect us. What does climate change have to do with anything?" It was discouraging at first, but we quickly realized we had a tremendous opportunity to educate local leaders as a part of the event.

Working with our Mayor and through our metropolitan planning organization, the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), we solicited and received the endorsement of the First-Tier suburbs in MARC which immediately brought 11 cities to the table. In addition, we received the endorsement and support of the MARC board, and as we worked with the Rockhurst students our once small signing became something altogether different. It became the Kansas City Area Mayors Sustainability and Climate Protection Conference, a half day event that would culminate with the signing of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

Our staff worked with the students to put together the educational program. We were able to convince some of the most recognized names in local, regional, and national climate protection into donating their time to participate in the event. The educational component was then advanced by two mayors in the Kansas City area who stepped up to help us. Mayor Laura McConwell, Mission, Kansas and Mayor Les Smith, Gladstone, Missouri made personal contact with every Mayor in the metropolitan area. Armed with information and enthusiasm, the personal visits by Mayors McConwell and Smith generated the interest we were looking for. By promoting the conference, they were able to encourage mayors who weren't ready to sign the agreement to participate and learn more about the issues.

Building on the excitement generated by Mayor McConwell and Mayor Smith, the students again stepped in, marketing the event to other students and local governments throughout the region. They used Rockhurst University's Communication Department to send out press releases and secured news coverage from all of the local television stations. The day of the event they even baked all of the cookies and brownies!

On November 7, 2007 Rockhurst University and Kansas City Area Mayors hosted the "Kansas City Area Mayors Climate Protection and Sustainability Conference." Over 250 people attended the half day conference. Following the two hour teach-in workshop and idea exchange on sustainability and climate protection, 18 mayors from the Kansas City region stood on the commons at Rockhurst University and made history with the single largest one day signing of the US Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Our one day conference occurred simultaneously with the 1st annual US Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Conference with Mayor McConwell of Mission in attendance.

Following the signing, we have seen a lot of movement in the metropolitan area regarding climate protection issues. A number of cities have joined ICLEI, some have undertaken GHG inventories, and many have formed citizen task forces on sustainability and climate protection. The Mid-America Regional Council created a leadership academy focused exclusively on sustainability issues, and local government managers from across the region are participating.

Our goal was to move the issues related to climate protection and sustainability higher on community agendas. We believe we have been successful. But, there is

more to do, and to borrow from poet Robert Frost, “we have miles to go before we can sleep” regarding climate change. In Mission, we have just started our journey.