

**Assistant Excellence  
in Leadership Award  
in Memory of  
Buford M. Watson Jr.**



**FRANCES A. GONZALEZ**

*ICMA's Assistant Excellence in Leadership Award, which commemorates former ICMA President Buford M. Watson Jr., is presented to a local government management professional who has made significant contributions toward excellence in leadership while serving as an assistant (regardless of title) to a chief local government administrator or department head. Candidates must be members of ICMA, full-time assistants reporting to a chief local government administrator or department head who have been responsible for significant administrative duties for at least one year (not including internships in conjunction with an academic program), and endorsed by a CAO. This year's recipient of the Assistant Excellence in Leadership Award is Frances A. Gonzalez, assistant city manager of San Antonio, Texas.*

As assistant city manager in San Antonio, Texas, Frances Gonzalez is responsible for those city departments most directly involved with human development efforts—the Metropolitan Health District, the Department of Community Initiatives, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the library system. In this capacity, she has been a formidable leader for innovative change to benefit the community and a steadfast advocate for health and human services.

As an example of her solid record of achievement, in 2008 Ms. Gonzalez spearheaded one of the most significant city/county consolidation efforts in recent history, integrating city and county health services to establish a high-performing public health system. Under her leadership, health system roles and responsibilities were changed to enhance the quality of services, reduce duplication, use resources more efficiently, and provide a seamless system of care for patients. This restructuring of clinical, preventive health services will allow the city's health department to focus on its core competency: protecting the public through immunizations, environmental monitoring, communicable disease control, public health

emergency preparedness, health code enforcement, and food inspections.

In addition, Ms. Gonzalez led a team of city staff to plan and develop a state-of-the-art homeless campus known as Haven for Hope. Designed to be a transformation center, this \$80 million project, which involved both the private and public sectors, will include a comprehensive program of services for men, women, and families. Recognizing the significant role the campus will play in delivering services to this population, the city initiated the effort to garner financial support for the project while Ms. Gonzalez used the expertise of a multidisciplinary team to help negotiate the site development and lease agreement. Over time, the city will realize the benefits of providing services to this population through streamlined and seamless programs.

Her leadership qualities and advocacy efforts were also in evidence when Ms. Gonzalez helped to create a state-of-the-art clearinghouse for senior services and information. The result of a collaborative effort by three different departments, the Bob Ross Senior Multi-Service Health and Resource Center opened in April 2007 to provide health and wellness activities and services, education, social

and cultural activities, and volunteer opportunities for seniors 60 and older.

Committed to excellence and the long-term success of the city organization, Ms. Gonzalez was influential last year in the creation, development, and implementation of the city's Executive Leadership Program. Identifying executives from the city's leadership team who will work closely with executive coaches toward enhanced professional development outcomes, the program provides participants with strategies that are designed to enhance their leadership skills, communication techniques, and approaches to change management, all with a focus on continuous improvement.

Before becoming assistant city manager, Ms. Gonzalez served as assistant to the city manager, in which capacity she was responsible for staffing and coordinating the activities of the Housing and Neighborhood Action Team, which was developed to facilitate and expand existing housing policies and programs. She also managed the Organizational Review Office, which conducts comprehensive organizational studies and performance reviews of all city departments with the objectives of improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and finding new and better ways to deliver public services. And she coordinated the city's Better Jobs efforts, which link education, economic development, and workforce development programs and initiatives.

Ms. Gonzalez was also director of the city's Neighborhood Action Department, responsible for developing housing policy and implementing housing programs. During her tenure, the department created the nationally recognized *Neighborhood Sweep* program, which employs a

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George D. Di Ciero, from page 6  
committees, boards, and commissions. That hundreds of residents apply for positions on Broomfield's advisory boards, commissions, and committees each year is testament to Broomfield's open government.

A firm believer of transparency in government, Mr. Di Ciero has gained and kept the confidence of Broomfield's citizens, as evidenced repeatedly in their approval of such initiatives as a funding package to build a new interchange facilitating access to a new retail district; a financing package to build a new municipal complex; and a lodging tax to finance landscaping improvements and maintenance at key gateways to the city.

Broomfield has been recognized professionally by numerous local, regional, and national entities. The city's newest recreation center received *Recreation Management Magazine's* prestigious Great Expectations Award for innovative architecture. The wastewater treatment plant expansion received the American Public Works Association's environmental Project of the Year Award for medium-sized communities and was also honored by EPA as the best-operated plant for its size in North America. For eight consecutive years, Broomfield has received the Government Finance Officers' Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, and for 13 consecutive, its Excellence in Financial Reporting Award. Six times over the past ten years, *Site Selection Magazine* has named Broomfield among the top ten economic development programs in North America for netting the largest relative number of new jobs and capital investments for its size.

And over the years, Mr. Di Ciero himself has been widely recognized for his efforts, receiving the Boulder Valley School District Service Award, the Broomfield Chamber of Commerce Local Government Community Service Award, and the Distinguished Local Government Award from the Denver Federal Executive Board. In 2008, Mr. Di Ciero

celebrates 40 years of creating, planning, managing, and effectively building a masterpiece of a community whose residents call "Hometown USA!" ■

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Thomas O. Forslund, from page 7  
gift for explaining options and issues without ever telling the other manager what to do, she describes his advice as often coming in the form of a useful "decision-making framework." "After talking to him," she says, "you feel like you've worked out a way to move to the future."

As the second-largest city in the state, Casper's ranks of professional staff tend to be larger than those of other communities. Thus Mr. Forslund is generous not only with his time and advice but with his staff as well, lending them out to other towns in need of technical support. For example, Linda Witko, Casper's assistant city manager, spent several days in Douglas helping to revamp that city's planning and zoning operation.

A year after Mr. Forslund became city manager of Casper, he was elected to lead Wyoming's Great Open Spaces City Management Association, which at the time served all of Wyoming and much of Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and northern Colorado. Other managers still credit him with fostering the culture of mutual support that is now vibrant in Wyoming's management community.

Expanding the ranks of Wyoming city managers has been one of his personal missions. In 2002, when the Riverton city council was considering creating a city administrator position, Mr. Forslund made several trips to Riverton and met repeatedly with the mayor, several members of council, and Riverton's citizens to explain what an administrator would do and why it would be a good idea to have one. It was not the first time that he had supported the profession in Wyoming. He made a similar effort in Cody a few years earlier and in Sheridan in 2008. Cody and Riverton now have city administrators. In

Sheridan the referendum failed despite strong support from the city council, but if the issue comes up again, it is safe to assume that Tom will be back. ■

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Frances A. Gonzalez, from page 8  
variety of initiatives to mobilize city departments in a coordinated effort to clean up and improve selected neighborhoods. Under her leadership, Neighborhood Sweep received ICMA's 1999 Award for Program Excellence, Innovations in Local Government, and was a semi-finalist for the 1999 Innovations in American Government Award from the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government.

Among her other accomplishments, Ms. Gonzalez has served as special projects officer with the San Antonio Office of Dome Development and as planner in the Department of Economic and Employment Development. In addition, she is a member of numerous ICMA committees, including the current Strategic Planning Committee, helping to shape and provide input into the national discussions regarding the profession. She chaired the Host Committee for the 2006 ICMA Annual Conference, and has a strong commitment to the growth of the International Hispanic Network, for which she served as board president for three years. She has also been a longtime supporter and one-time president of the regional assistants' organization, the Urban Management Assistants of South Texas.

With a clear understanding of the importance of professional development and its relationship to the success of an organization, Ms. Gonzalez has been a role model and a mentor for numerous city employees. Modest and unassuming, she is probably unaware of the impact she has had on her fellow employees. However, her positive attitude, patience, compassion, and ability to empower others have set a positive example for others. These qualities not only make Ms. Gonzalez a trusted colleague, but also exemplify her true leadership style. ■