

***NOMINATION FOR ASSISTANT EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARD
IN MEMORY OF BUFORD M. WATSON JR.***

LARRY D. RAINS, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
CASA GRANDE, ARIZONA

In early 2008, Larry Rains was promoted to Deputy City Manager of the City of Casa Grande, Arizona. Larry began working for the Casa Grande in 2002, as its Finance and Information Technology Director. He had previously worked as a finance director in three other Arizona cities, and is a former City Manager of Willcox, Arizona. Since he began working in Casa Grande, Larry has drastically improved the performance of the organization, especially in terms of financial management and information technology. His skills have helped diminish the impacts of the economic recession. He has an infectious leadership style that has promoted positive morale even amidst difficult times. The fact that Casa Grande has been able to excel in these challenging times is largely attributable to Larry's ability to effectively eliminate the peaks and valleys, and provide constant service levels to residents and business partners.

Larry has championed many projects since arriving in Casa Grande, but a few recent achievements could be highlighted as examples to Larry's dedication and management skills. The efforts Larry has put into the annual budget and the recently completed Casa Grande Performance Institute (CGPI) have been tremendous and noteworthy. The Casa Grande Performance Institute is a public/private partnership between the City of Casa Grande and the Francisco Grande Resort & Hotel, Located on 50 acres of land adjacent to Francisco Grande, the CGPI is a state-of-the-art, multi-discipline facility whose scope of operations and activities stretches 365 days a year. The CGPI currently includes six football and soccer fields,



and a 59,000 square foot training facility that houses an 11,200 square foot weight-training exercise area, eight semi-private therapy centers, and enough classrooms, locker rooms, meeting rooms, and laundry facilities for four teams. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of the CGPI is that it was constructed in only 119 days! This accelerated and demanding time schedule was necessary in order to complete the project in time for the beginning of the United Football League's (UFL) inaugural season, when two of the UFL teams used the facility as their training and practice home. Additional UFL teams are scheduled to train at the facility in August and September 2010. Four Major League Soccer (MLS) teams have also trained at the CGPI, with more teams expected in the near future.

Larry played a key role in the success of the CGPI, stepping in to guide the design, development, and implementation of the project. Because of the importance of the project and



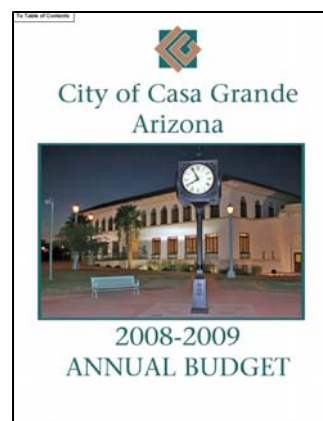
the compressed construction schedule, it was necessary for the involvement of an executive level decision-maker. Larry was asked to step into this position, and as such, spent many late nights and weekends at the CGPI, overseeing construction details that would normally be reserved for a

project foreman or on-site developer. He adapted to pressing situations, and made quick decisions when such were necessary. Without Larry's direct involvement and supervision, the CGPI could have faced delays which would have had catastrophic effects on the city's relationship with the UFL, thereby threatening the success of the project.

Larry has significantly influenced the development and implementation of the City of Casa Grande's annual budget. In the first four years as Finance Director in Casa Grande, Larry oversaw an increase in reserves of 700%, from \$2 million to \$14 million. He has since worked

alongside City Manager Jim Thompson to advocate for conservative fiscal measures, which have resulted in the more than doubling of the reserve balance in the last four years. Now, with \$30 million in reserves, the city has been able to resiliently face the recession head on. Larry's budget approach has also led to multiple bond rating upgrades, from an A- to the current AA- level. These upgrades reflect the trust the financial sector has in the state of Casa Grande's finances and financial policies, and have resulted in lower interest rates that have saved millions of dollars on bonds and capital improvement projects.

Larry has been instrumental in the development of Casa Grande's award-winning annual budget book. The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States (GFOA) has consistently presented a Distinguished Budget Presentation Award to the city for its annual budget. In order to receive this award, a governmental unit must publish a budget document that meets



program criteria as a policy document, as an operations guide, as a financial plan, and as a communications device. Under Larry's supervision, the budget book has grown to become a comprehensive document that provides a vast amount of information on all city operations.

Perhaps One of Larry's biggest impacts on the organization has been through his leadership of the Informational Technology division. When Larry started as Finance and IT Director, the IT division was crammed into a small space at City Hall, barely large enough to hold a few computers and staff. As the city doubled in population in only a few years (from 20,000 to 40,000 full-time residents), IT was faced with an increased demand for services. Larry oversaw the creation of a GIS division, which could produce maps and databases that have greatly increased the efficiency of city services. He helped hire a full-time webmaster, to provide

citizens with timely information and better access to city services. Larry guided the installation and implementation of financial tracking software and addressing databases, which have led the way for other service improvements such as online bill payment. Larry also oversaw the construction of an addition to City Hall, which now houses the IT division, its many servers, computers, and technicians. Casa Grande is now recognized as a regional leader in Information Technology, so much so that a neighboring city has contracted with Casa Grande to use its IT services. Larry's has had a tremendous impact on the IT division, which has dramatically increased service levels for the residents of Casa Grande.

Larry's leadership style is one-of-a-kind. His "managing while mentoring" attitude is invaluable for up-and-coming professionals who seek input and clarity in the management profession. He enjoys bouncing ideas off of these young professionals, and truly values their opinions and perspective. Despite their lack of direct involvement, Larry often includes these next-generation managers in difficult decisions in order to provide exposure to situations that they might not obtain elsewhere. Larry also provides opportunities to put these managers in charge of citywide projects which help them learn, stretch, and gain new knowledge. Larry is always willing to discuss issues with staff, and is open and candid about situations the organization is facing, without breaching confidences which need to be kept. Larry truly has an open door policy, and encourages all staff to talk to him about any concerns or problems they may perceive. These leadership traits promote trust between Larry and his colleagues, lead to consensus among team members, and produce a very positive working environment.

Larry respects his co-workers and strives to provide them with the tools they need to succeed. He is a strong supporter of professional development and strongly encourages city staff to be engaged in any and all activities that further their knowledge and advance them along their

respective career paths. He goes out of his way to create a working environment of professional development and growth.

Larry's approach to leadership has led him to become a role model to many who have interacted with him. His overarching kindness and humility are hallmarks of his management style. Due to Larry's strong financial background, Casa Grande's bond rating has improved, thereby saving millions of dollars. Larry's hard work and dedication as project manager for the Casa Grande Performance Institute have produced a major economic development and physical education tool for the community. The City of Casa Grande is lucky to have such an exemplary leader within its organization.



The Casa Grande Performance Institute