



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities
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2011 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 11, 2011

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: Safe Community Task Force

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Dubuque, Iowa

Jurisdiction population(s): 57,637

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, 2010, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: October Year: 2009

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 2011. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Michael C. Van Milligen

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: Dubuque, Iowa

Name: Phyllis E. Russell

Title: ICMA Management Fellow Jurisdiction: Dubuque, Iowa

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Michael C. Van Milligen
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**Safe Community Task Force (SCTF)
City of Dubuque, Iowa**

The Problem

Homicides in Dubuque, Iowa are a rare occurrence, but two unrelated homicides took place within a week of each other in August of 2009. These incidents resulted in increased tensions in the community and increased fear and concern among residents. In response, the City Council held a community forum in September 2009 to facilitate a community dialogue on issues regarding public safety. Attended by over 130 residents, this event included participation from all sectors of the community including the Mayor and City Council, City staff, representatives from neighborhood associations, landlords, the business community, educational and religious institutions, non-profit organizations, youth representatives, and the public at-large. During this forum, participants were asked to identify the top assets they or their organization have to help keep the community safe and if there were any organizations or individuals not in attendance that should be invited to participate in this process. The discussion at the forum led to the creation of a volunteer Safe Community Task Force (SCTF).

Program Implementation

The City Council asked the SCTF to holistically gather facts on the scope of crime and safety issues in the community; identify efforts currently underway to improve and prevent future problems; review and analyze how other communities have addressed crime and safety issues; and, recommend goals and objectives for the leadership of Dubuque. The Mayor and City Council appointed 25 citizens to serve on the SCTF in addition to representatives from key City departments including the City Manager's Office, Human Rights, Police, and Housing, with additional City staff serving

as a resource. The task force began meeting monthly upon its inception in October 2009.

The SCTF set two goals on how it would accomplish the task it had been given from the City Council. First, recognize that all residents of Dubuque want to feel safe and identify ways to provide that feeling of safety. Second, as a group, identify and act upon things that most effectively reduce crime and the perception of crime. Discovering that the work of the Safe Community Task Force was comprehensive in nature, the task force established four key sub-committees and recruited 50 additional volunteer residents to serve on these sub-committees. The four sub-committees include Neighborhood Engagement/Social Capital, Enforcement, Management of Physical Environment, and Research and Facts. The role of the subcommittees is to help identify issues and develop opportunities or recommendations for the task force to consider as part of the task force overall implementation strategy in addressing crime in our community. Key to the success of these recommendations are the work of the sub-committees in helping to separate fact from fiction, discuss pros and cons of ideas, prioritize these ideas, and do a reality check on the resources needs to implement the idea. Over the course of 17 months, the Safe Community Task Force and sub-committees met 35 times, and produced 60 formal recommendations to City Council for their consideration. After much thought-provoking discussion and research during those meetings, task force members began to see that the solutions to many of the community's challenges had to be a holistic in their design and approach.

Costs and Outcomes

The SCTF produced their first set of recommendations to City Council in February 2010. That same month, Urban Strategies of St. Louis was hired (\$45,000) to facilitate the continued dialogue and deliberation for the second set of recommendations, which were presented to City Council in July 2010. In May 2010, Northern Illinois University was contracted to conduct a study on crime and poverty in the Dubuque (\$68,000). The study's results and the final set of recommendations were to presented to the City Council in January 2011.

The recommendations created by the SCTF have spawned several new initiatives, ordinances, and policies that have been adopted by City Council and implemented by City staff. Many of the recommendations focused on the management of rental properties in the city and have resulted in the City offering free background checks for rental applicants and support to landlords in evicting problem tenants for cause. A training program on code enforcement and property management is being offered quarterly and is required for acquiring a rental license. A data clearinghouse is being created that contains verifiable and factual information that both landlords and tenants can access when making rental/leasing decisions. A funding restriction has been adopted that will restrict owners whose buildings are not in compliance from receiving city monies until they have either brought their properties into compliance or are actively working towards compliance. The City Manager, Police chief, City Attorney and Housing Director meet monthly with the local landlord association to ensure they are aware of the changes that are taking place and that the dialogue continues around what is expected from both landlords and city leadership concerning the management of rental properties.

The task force also voiced a concern over increasing tolerance and mutual understanding among diverse segments of the population. Fostering community solidarity and global citizenship motivated the recommendation for the City to offer Intercultural Competency training periodically to businesses and the community at large. In response to the recommendation that human relations efforts be increased and remain a priority to leadership, the City's human rights department has been restructured to focus their time and resources on conflict engagement/resolution, community building, and intercultural competence.

In August 2010, the SCTF recommended that a juvenile curfew be instituted to confront the issues surrounded crimes committed by young people. However, after the NIU crime and poverty study shared its research findings, the task force amended its recommendation towards a more collaborative effort between the child, parent, and authorities. A parental responsibility ordinance was adopted and focuses on engaging parents and teens in efforts that will prevent future incidents.

To ensure that the recommendations would not fall by the way-side, two groups of volunteers were created. Task force members serve as a speakers bureau that continues to engage the community on crime and the perception of crime in the City through presentations to local groups and organizations. Following the conclusion of the task force's work, a new commission was developed by the City Council called the Safe Community Advisory Committee (SCAC) which will monitor the implementation and progress of the recommendations that were presented to Council. The SCAC will also continue community engagement to foster ownership of the solutions/actions that

need to be taken for the Dubuque residents to feel safe and enjoy an increased sense of community.

Lessons Learned and Analysis

Much was learned from the report on crime and poverty, which yielded a 782-page report that included: 1) a public opinion survey 2) an analysis of Dubuque's crime rates and trends over time compared to similarly sized communities in Iowa; 3) an analysis of Dubuque's crime incidents over time, and the extent to which Section 8 housing recipients are connected to crime; 4) a review of research studies related to poverty, Section 8 housing assistance, crime, fear of crime, and crime prevention; and 5) a set of recommendations based on the research and evidence.

However, perhaps the greatest lessons were learned from the process of openly discussing sensitive community issues related crime, poverty, race, class, and the myths surround each. The diverse makeup of the task force created an ideal environment for difficult conversations to be conducted in an open, civil, and safe forum in which all residents felt they were represented. Initially, the task force members viewed themselves as a conduit from the community to the City staff and elected officials. By the completion of the process, they considered themselves partners with City leaders and have taken it upon themselves to communicate to the community at large how the challenges are being address and residents' role in improving the community. Few communities are willing to go through such a transparent process to examine such sensitive issues. Dubuque has found the process to be extremely valuable and it has provided a path to increased citizen engagement and leadership development.