



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

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: Firefighters' Challenge - Hooksett Eight Grade

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Town of Hooksett, NH

Jurisdiction population(s): 13,554

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: Carol M. Granfield

Title: Town Administrator Jurisdiction: Hooksett, NH

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Carol M. Granfield

Title: Town Administrator

Jurisdiction: Town of Hooksett

Street address: 35 Main Street

City: Hooksett

State/Province: NH

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Hooksett Eighth Grade Firefighters Challenge

The Firefighters Challenge is a community partnership between the Town of Hooksett with its Fire Department and Firefighters' Association; the Hooksett School System with the Cawley Middle School Eighth Grade consisting of 160 students and the students' parents.

Why the Program was Developed - The Challenge was developed in the mid-nineties as an opportunity for Hooksett Firefighters to interact with the Town's eighth grade students at a fun-filled day style event while reinforcing the importance of fire safety, physical fitness and teamwork. The Firefighters' Association put together a plan for a fire service-based field day style event with the goal of reinforcing fire safety messages previously taught to students in the lower grades as well as stressing the importance for physical fitness and brought the plan to the Administration of the Hooksett Fire Rescue Department for support. The initial Challenge was based on a scaled-down version of the physical agility test used to determine if a firefighter candidate had the physical ability to perform the job of a firefighter. The Department leaders recognized the potential value of the plan and agreed to help the Association. The first year was a success and the Challenge has become an annual event, with 2011 marking the 18th year of the Challenge. The goals of the program include, (1) The opportunity to promote fire safety and reinforce fire prevention and safety concepts taught by the Hooksett Fire Rescue Department in the lower grades; (2) The opportunity to reinforce the lessons that students learn in school about physical fitness and wellness; (3) The opportunity to promote teamwork, leadership and positive attitudes; and, (4) The opportunity to provide students with a look at a firefighter's job and a glimpse at what is required to become a firefighter.

The Planning Process and Implementation of the Program - Planning for the Challenge begins at the beginning of the school year. The Hooksett Association meets with the School staff and the Fire-Rescue Administration to choose a date for the Challenge. Once a date has been

2 | Hooksett Eight Grade Firefighters Challenge

determined, the School staff is provided with informational packets that are distributed to the eighth grade homeroom teachers and then to the students. Each eighth grade homeroom is responsible for planning for their involvement in the Challenge.

The planning process for each eighth grade homeroom includes, (1) Creating a fire safety-themed song; (2) Creating a fire safety-themed team cheer; (3) Decorating their homeroom class door in a fire safety theme as well as creating a fire safety-themed mascot. Additionally, banners and signs are created to be displayed outside on the day of the Challenge; (4) Choosing a boy and girl runner for the Challenge; and, (5) Choosing a boy and girl alternate runner for the Challenge.

Throughout the planning process, the activities of the eighth grade classes are coordinated by the Physical Education teacher, who is also the liaison between the school and the Association. Each class is assisted by their homeroom teacher. Additionally, the Association works with school staff to send an informational letter to the parents of each eighth grade student as well as a more detailed explanation to the parents of each runner and alternate runner. Permission forms are distributed and collected prior to the date of the event. The only cost associated with this program is nominal for awards, tee shirts for runners and sweatshirts for the winners.

On the morning of the Challenge, members of the Association gather to review the details of the day. Equipment and vehicles are brought to the School and members begin the task of setting up the course for the Challenge on the school's soccer field. At the same time, additional members check in with school staff and meet with students to provide an opportunity to answer any last minute questions. While the final set up of the course is taking place, runners and alternate runners are gathered in the school cafeteria for a final explanation of the day's schedule and baseline medical information is gathered. The students are told that firefighters must

3 | Hooksett Eight Grade Firefighters Challenge

routinely undergo medical evaluations to make certain that they are healthy and fit for duty and that throughout emergency operations, firefighters are also monitored to make certain that they remain safe and healthy. Baseline vital signs including pulse and blood pressure are taken and recorded.

The runners and alternates are then brought out to the field and each component of the course is explained. The course consists of the following nine (9) stations, (1) Ladder Lift; (2) Ladder Raise; (3) Simulated Ventilation Station; (4) Hose Dummy Drag; (5) Hose Hoist; (6) Ladder Carry; (7) Hose Drag; (8) Attic Crawl; and, (9) Hose Carry.

Each runner proceeds through the course while wearing a firefighter's coat, helmet, and work gloves. The alternate runner proceeds through the course alongside the runner to provide encouragement and advice. Each station is staffed by a member of the Association and each runner/alternate team is accompanied by a member of the Association.

After the course is explained and each station is demonstrated, the runners and alternate runners have an opportunity to practice each station. At the conclusion of the course orientation/practice, the students and Fire-Rescue Personnel return to the cafeteria to rejoin the entire eighth grade for lunch.

After lunch, the students return to their homerooms for final preparations. At the same time, parents and school staff assemble on the soccer field to observe the Challenge. The eighth grade classes proceed to designated assembly and observation locations on the field. An opening ceremony is held and the course component of the Challenge is started. Each homeroom counts down when it is time for their boy and girl runner to start the course and cheers on every runner. Runners are timed and their times are recorded by a school staff member or parent volunteer.

When a runner completes the course, he or she is brought to a rest area. The fire gear is removed; they are given water and a small snack, and an opportunity to rest. When Association

members and school staff are confident that the student has rested appropriately, he or she is allowed to rejoin their homeroom.

Throughout the day, each homeroom is judged on their overall team spirit as well as their decorations, cheer, song, and mascot. This information is tallied along with their boy and girl runner's times in order to determine an overall score. The Challenge is not just about the runners running the course and getting the best time. Significant emphasis is placed on the fact that to win the overall Challenge, a great deal of cooperation, teamwork and leadership is needed.

When all runners have completed the course each homeroom is given an opportunity to present their song and cheer. This gives Association members, school staff, and parent volunteers an opportunity to tally scores and determine the boy champion, girl champion, and homeroom champion.

At the conclusion of each homeroom's song and cheer, Certificates of Participation are given to each runner, alternate runner, and homeroom. Association members and school staff give a few brief remarks to the group and then the awards are presented. The awards are given to the boy champion and girl champion first, and the homeroom winner is then awarded to further reinforce the fact that the Challenge is a team-oriented event. A brief closing ceremony is held, photographs are taken, and then each homeroom returns to their classroom.

The boy and girl champions remain on the soccer field until all students have returned to their classrooms. The final event for both champions is a victory lap around the school grounds, usually in the Fire Department's ladder truck. The trucks lights, sirens, and air horns are used to announce to the school community that the champions are taking their well-deserved victory lap.

Benefits of the Program - The program benefits many individuals and is also a program that can be easily replicated and has been done now in several other New Hampshire communities. The Hooksett Fire-Rescue Department benefits as with limited financial and personnel resources, the

5 | Hooksett Eighth Grade Firefighters Challenge

Challenge provides a supplement to the Department's fire safety education programs and reinforces lessons that students have previously learned; it also provides an opportunity to interact with students, school staff, and parents in a non-emergency setting. Fire Department personnel have the opportunity to explain to students their chosen career path and what led them to become a firefighter.

The Challenge provides a non-traditional means to reinforce lessons learned in class in regard to not only physical fitness and wellness but also social skills such as teamwork and positive attitudes. School teachers also report that they use the Challenge as a means to teach eighth grade students that they are role models and must act as leaders for the younger students who will one day find themselves in the eighth grade and participating in the Challenge.

Parents see many of the benefits to include social skills, fitness and wellness. Numerous parents have commented that their younger children look up to their older children who have participated in the Challenge and has been a good role model opportunity. One parent cited that the Challenge reinforced lessons for her son that resulted in an improvement in school overall.

Students benefit from the Challenge as they participate as a team and realize the positive rewards associated with working together to achieve a common goal along with leadership. Students have the opportunity to learn about careers in the fire service and greatly benefit by improved physical fitness.

In conclusion, this is an outstanding program that involves many partners, generates several benefits, is very cost effective and provides students with many new skills, leadership abilities and promotes positive relationship. It also can easily be replicated.

