



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: Casa Grande Performance Institute

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Casa Grande, Arizona

Jurisdiction population(s): 48,571

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: September 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: Jim Thompson

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Casa Grande, Arizona

Name: Larry Rains

Title: Deputy City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Casa Grande, Arizona

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Benjamin Bitter

Title: Management Analyst Jurisdiction: City of Casa Grande, Arizona

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**Submitted March 11, 2011 to the
International City/County Management Association
in consideration for:
The Program Excellence Award for Community Sustainability
(Population 10,000 to 49,999)**



Casa Grande Performance Institute

City of Casa Grande, Arizona

Nominated by:
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Located on 50 acres of land adjacent to the Francisco Grande Hotel & Resort (“the Resort”), the Casa Grande Performance Institute (“CGPI”) is a first-of-its-kind facility that breaks the mold of traditional city parks. CGPI boasts eight football/soccer fields, along with a 59,000 ft² training facility that houses a weight training area, therapy centers, classrooms, locker rooms, meeting rooms, and laundry facilities that can accommodate up to four professional teams. CGPI was created as a public-private partnership in order to satisfy the demands of local residents for enhanced sporting facilities. Now in its second full year of operation, CGPI is proving to be a model of success for innovative and sustainable park development.

Problem Assessment

Casa Grande, Arizona was founded in 1879, with a population of eight people. By 2000, nearly 25,000 people resided there. Although it took 120 years to reach 25,000 residents, it took only ten more for the city to blossom to 48,500 residents. With the housing boom of the early 2000s came an increased demand for city services. The city put forth its best efforts to prepare for future needs, and conducted multiple citizen surveys, studies and master plans throughout its period of rapid growth. As a result of a 2007 citizen survey, the city learned that one of the citizens’ greatest desires was to have an enhanced sports complex for use by local sports leagues.

Program Implementation and Costs

In the year following the survey, Casa Grande City Manager Jim Thompson entered into discussions with the Resort to help address the lack of adequate sports fields. These discussions led to the formation of a public-private partnership between the city and the Resort, and yielded the creation of the Casa Grande Performance Institute. The idea of CGPI was to help solve the recreational needs of the community, while also earning the city international notoriety as a

premier sports destination, thereby enhancing its potential for economic development. Because of the public-private partnership it was easier to secure the land and funding than would have traditionally been available to the city and helped bring the desperately needed recreational facilities to Casa Grande on a shorter timeframe. Under the partnership, the city paid for the land and necessary capital improvements, while the resort was responsible for the ongoing operation and maintenance of CGPI. As part of the agreement, the city was also guaranteed that it would receive at least \$7 million in revenue from the facility over the course of its first ten years.

With this long-term partnership and financing in place, the city began construction on the facility in summer 2009. Throughout construction, Deputy City Manager Larry Rains operated extensively from the worksite in order to handle the day-to-day demands of the project, thereby ensuring an efficient and timely completion. Because of city management's commitment to the success of the project, CGPI was able to be built in an astonishing 97 days. This quick construction timeline provided Casa Grande residents with an almost immediate solution to their demands for athletic facilities, yet also ensured that the project stayed on budget. Between the land acquisition and construction of the athletic facilities, Casa Grande spent approximately \$20 million.



Tangible Results and Outcomes

CGPI has had a tremendous impact on the local economy. In addition to the hundreds of jobs created and \$20 million infusion into the local economy because of construction, millions of dollars in additional local spending have been generated since CGPI opened. The demand for hotel rooms in the area has risen significantly, with visitors booking thousands of room-nights

that are directly attributable to the operations at CGPI (including almost 3,000 room-nights in February/March 2011). Moving forward, the year-round operations and events that will take place at CGPI will bring new life to every facet of the city's economy. Various national (and Olympic) teams, thirteen different Major League Soccer (MLS) teams, the nation's only MLS-sponsored player development league, and numerous clinics and tournaments have brought tens of thousands of players, staff, families, friends, and spectators to Casa Grande. These athletes and spectators fill hotels, eat at restaurants, shop in local stores, and ultimately generate approximately \$6,000,000 per year in additional local spending and \$250,000 annually in new tax revenue to the city. In addition, the increased media exposure has established Casa Grande as a destination for sports fans and recreation lovers, and has created additional economic growth. Businesses and service-related industries will continue to look at building or expanding their operations in the community in order to take advantage of the synergy surrounding CGPI.

CGPI has not only had a positive economic effect on the community, but has also enhanced the social and cultural well-being of residents by igniting greater interest and participation in sports and fitness. The residents of Casa Grande are able to use top-of-the-line fields, physical therapy equipment, and rehabilitation facilities. CGPI will make Casa Grande a healthier place. The community will further benefit from the professional environment surrounding CGPI. Clinics taught by professional coaches are held for local coaches, and professional teams have held countless exhibition games through which residents can not only enjoy an exciting game but also have a chance to interact with world-class athletes – all at no charge. The opportunity to watch professional athletes play, to train with them and their coaches, the exposure to other youth from around the world, and access to the finest facilities in the country, has helped increase community pride and Casa Grande's "sense of place". It also

provides local youth with the feeling that they can be part of something special and will hopefully lead them to turn their energy towards athletics and other positive life experiences.

Lessons Learned

Many lessons were learned throughout the creation of CGPI. The first lesson is that public participation is key in order to have a successful public-private partnership. A year prior to the creation of CGPI, the city of Casa Grande conducted its Community Services Master Plan. This master plan required extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, community-wide public meetings and a statistically-valid community opinion survey. Throughout the public process, Casa Grande residents clamored for a new sports complex. In the survey conducted as part of the master plan, residents demonstrated their willingness to support a tax increase in order to fund the creation of a new sports complex. Voters approved a .2% sales tax bond, which provided the initial funding mechanism for the creation of CGPI. Had the city not spent the time and effort to reach out to the public through the master planning process, it is quite possible that the initial funding mechanism to build CGPI never would have been approved.

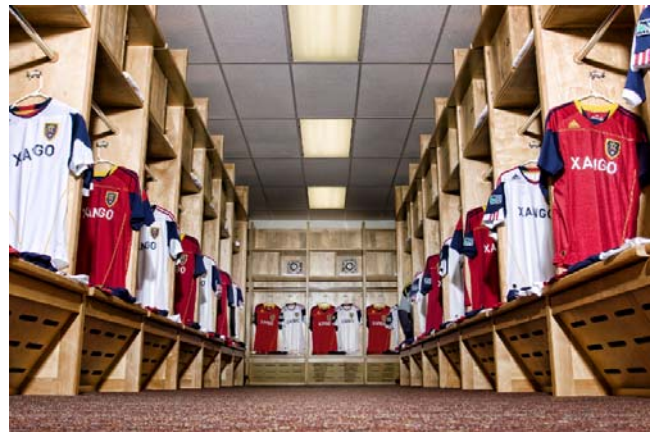
Perhaps the most important lesson learned from this project is that city management should never be afraid to step outside the box. Although public-private partnerships had previously occurred in Casa Grande, the city had never before attempted to fund a project through the creation of a business enterprise. Furthermore, because of the tight timeline for construction that was required to keep construction costs low, the city had to try new techniques to become more flexible and nimble. One solution was to create a team-oriented atmosphere between all parties (including contractors, partners, and city staff). Another solution was to look at non-traditional building materials. One of the most sustainable aspects of the project was that

the athletic facility was built using pre-fabricated, modular technology. The city had never used modular buildings before, but great advancements have occurred in the past decade which have made these structures more environmentally sustainable, cost-effective, and visually alluring. In fact, the modular building at CGPI has won architectural recognition for its beauty and functionality. Using a new technology was a leap of faith for management, but one that has paid great dividends.

Other municipalities and private entities can learn many things from Casa Grande's experience of creating CGPI. First, although public-private partnerships are sometimes risky, these partnerships can dramatically increase quality of life within a community. Secondly, partnerships can help fund projects, in turn providing a venue through which the projects can be completed on a condensed timeline. Third, creative solutions are available to everyday problems. Finally, other communities should view the current economic climate as an impetus for excellence. On one hand, the concept of CGPI is certainly outside the box and uncommon – especially in difficult financial times. On the other hand, with below average construction costs and increased political pressure to get things done at the lowest possible price, the current market presented Casa Grande management with an unparalleled opportunity for success.

The Casa Grande Performance Institute stands out as a unique economic generator which encourages healthy lifestyles of Casa Grande residents. Its quick implementation, as an answer to vital economic and community needs is truly remarkable. The method of financing and example of public-private partnerships is a sustainable method for expanding a municipality's assets, and should be assimilated by others. The Casa Grande Performance Institute's unparalleled success is certainly something worth mimicking in other jurisdictions.

Additional photos of the Casa Grande Performance Institute



(AT LEFT:)

Thierry Henry,
French superstar and
three-time World
“Footballer of the Year”,
during practice at CGPI.