**2013 Texas Municipal League**

**Municipal Excellence Awards**

**Award Application**

**City Name:** City of Colleyville and City of Keller

**Population:** 23,270 (Colleyville) and 41,090 (Keller)

Source: NCTCOG Population Estimates for January 1, 2013

Note: For the purposes of this award application, TML staff recommended submission for the “Greater than 25,000” population category

**Subject Category of Entry:** Management Innovations

**Title of Entry:** Combined Municipal Court Operations for the cities of Colleyville and Keller

**Project Summary (200 words or less):**

Keller and Colleyville leaders began discussing a municipal court merger years ago, with discussions starting in earnest in early 2011. The desire to be good stewards of citizens’ resources and to maximize budget dollars led the cities to look for ways to continue to provide high quality services in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible. It became evident that leveraging the combined resources of both cities through a combined municipal court would offer substantial savings and an opportunity to build on regional efforts in Northeast Tarrant County. The implementation process required passage of new legislation at the state level, merging systems, transferring staff, and ultimately a significant amount of collaboration and communication, but has ultimately been an overwhelming success.

**Project Description:**

The Texas Legislature created municipal courts in the Corporation Court Law of 1899, and for the next 113 years, municipal courts were defined by the individual cities they served. That changed in October 2012, when the cities of Keller and Colleyville merged their respective courts to create the first shared municipal court in the state of Texas.

Years in the making, this groundbreaking partnership serves as a model of regional collaboration and cooperative solutions to 21st century challenges.

Keller and Colleyville leaders began discussing a municipal court merger years ago, with discussions starting in earnest in early 2011. The desire to be good stewards of citizens’ resources and to maximize budget dollars led the cities to look for ways to continue to provide high quality services in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible. It became evident that leveraging the combined resources of both cities through a combined municipal court would offer substantial savings and an opportunity to build on regional efforts in Northeast Tarrant County. A feasibility study group comprised of key staff from both cities determined that we shared similar municipal court operational policies and procedures, and used the same service providers for prosecution, software and warrant collections, which would allow for a smooth transition to a single court operation that would provide streamlined service and significant cost savings.

Keller then took the lead in working with then State Rep. Vicki Truitt, R-98, to initiate legislation that would pave the way to allow such a court, reflecting a changing attitude among municipalities that service to citizens is more important than city limits. Our work was rewarded on May 19, 2011, when the passage of HB 984 made it legal for municipalities with borders within a half-mile of each other to establish concurrent jurisdiction of their municipal courts.

With that major roadblock hurdled, both city staffs began working behind the scenes with regular collaborative meetings aimed at merging systems, transferring staff, crafting a joint website and online citation payment system, and smoothing operational wrinkles ahead of the launch. Council members, too, were heavily invested, forming a joint committee to provide oversight to assist with the merger, including selecting a joint municipal judge.

The first Keller cases were heard at the Colleyville Justice Center in November of 2012. Citizens from both cities have the option, when applicable, to pay citations online, by mail or by phone. And Keller has added a kiosk to its after-hours lobby at the Keller Police Department, allowing citations to be paid on site 24 hours a day.

In addition to providing a roadmap for other cities willing to look beyond their borders to find efficient and cost-effective solutions to serve their citizens, this collaboration has saved thousands of dollars that can now be redirected toward other projects and programs. With the costs of the combined court split between us in direct proportion to the percentage of citations issued, Keller anticipates an annual savings of $146,000 as a result of this merger, while Colleyville expects to save nearly $53,000 annually. The agreement also saved Keller and its taxpayers an estimated $3.5 million in capital costs that would have been required to construct a new municipal court facility to serve its growing population.

Our merged municipal court is only the latest in a series of partnerships Keller and Colleyville have forged in the interest of eliminating redundancies and providing improved services through a regional mindset. In 2010, Colleyville joined a partnership between the cities of Keller and Southlake for shared 9-1-1 regional dispatch and jail facilities. And in 2012, Keller and Colleyville, along with Southlake and Westlake, merged our Animal Services operations, taking a regional approach to animal control and pet adoption. Recognizing the success of these programs to date and the similarities in our community demographics and expectations, our city leaders and staffs remain committed to regionalism and look forward to finding new ways to work together in the future.

***HB 984:*** *“A municipality may enter into an agreement with a contiguous municipality or a municipality with boundaries that are within one-half mile of the municipality seeking to enter into the agreement to establish concurrent jurisdiction of the municipal courts in the municipalities and provide original jurisdiction to a municipal court in which a case is brought as if the municipal court were located in the municipality in which the case arose.”*

**Signature of Chief Elected or Appointed Official:**

**City of Colleyville City of Keller**

Name & Title: Jennifer Fadden, City Manager Name & Title: Steve Polasek, City Manager

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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