



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2015 Local Government Excellence Awards Program Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

(All programs nominated must have been fully operational for a minimum of 12 months, prior to January 31, 2015)

Deadline for Nominations: March 3, 2015

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: Little Rock Marathon

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Little Rock, Arkansas

Jurisdiction population(s): 197,357 (2013 Census estimate)

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 for at least 12 months prior to January 31, 2015, to be eligible. The start date [on or before January 31, 2014] should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: May Year: 2003

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, September 2015. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Bruce T. Moore

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Little Rock

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Scott Whiteley Carter

Title: Special Projects Administrator Jurisdiction: City of Little Rock

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City of Little Rock Marathon

ICMA 2015 Local Government Excellence Awards

Community Health and Safety

In the early 2000s, Little Rock was, like a lot of cities, seeking ways to encourage its citizens to become more physically active. City leaders were also working to create a closer bond between the citizenry and the Parks and Recreation Department. While people generally viewed the City's parks favorably, large segments of Little Rock's population did not necessarily feel a direct connection to the department or its programming.

A few members of the Parks and Recreation Staff had participated in marathons and realized there was potential to create one for Little Rock that would be not just a race--- but an event. After researching the idea further, they approached City Manager Bruce Moore for his approval. The 2003 Little Rock Marathon was born.

Race Co-Directors Geneva Lamm and Gina Pharis had both been involved in a variety of fundraisers and had worked on races of various lengths in the past. They pulled together a corps of key volunteers (many of whom, like the race directors, have continued to work on each subsequent marathon) and garnered support from City leaders as well as the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau.

In May 2003, 2,527 registered participants took part in the inaugural Little Rock Marathon activities. Some ran the entire 26.2 miles, others ran the half-marathon and others took part in a four-person relay. Some of the runners were surprised by the hills on the course (mistaking Little Rock for a flat city), and others discussed the May heat (temperate for spectators—a bit warm for runners). The consensus was, however, that

Little Rock Marathon

the event was a success. Runners that first year were already looking forward to the future. The next year, the Marathon was moved to the first weekend in March, which has been its traditional date since then.

Many of the first participants were from the Little Rock area. While the number of runners from Little Rock has grown since the first year, the number of tourists who visit Central Arkansas for the marathon has increased exponentially. Under the heading of Little Rock Marathon, there are now a series of races and events which create a festive weekend drawing visitors from all over the state, the United States and most continents of the world to Little Rock.

Obviously a key component of the Little Rock Marathon is the race course. Starting and ending in downtown, but winding through a variety of neighborhoods, the race showcases the City. Certified as a Boston Marathon qualifier, it is challenging to world-class runners, while remaining accessible to those who may be attempting their first 26.2 mile race. This attention to detail has been important to the growth of the race. The fact it is a qualifier for the Boston Marathon has brought even more elite runners to the city.

It is typical for races to have watering stations, portable toilets, and medical tents. What is not necessarily typical (and what adds to the race atmosphere for both runners and spectators) are the added touches along the route. Throughout the race course, music swells the breeze. The sounds may come from an individual on an acoustic guitar or a church choir fully decked in robes. Churches, museums, schools, families and businesses organize cheering sections along the route to offer encouragement to the runners and walkers. In addition, many private homeowners

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along the race course sit on their front porches and cheer the runners while they themselves are enjoying their Sunday newspaper and coffee. While not every single foot of the entire race route is filled with a spectator, there are enough to keep people motivated. This also creates a cadre of marathon ambassadors who help publicize the race locally as well as to their friends in other locations.

An added touch for the Little Rock Marathon is the lipstick station at mile 13 for the half-marathon and mile 26 for the full marathon. This provides runners the opportunity to look their best (or as much as possible after a lengthy run) when they cross the finish line and get photographed. The attention to details like this is one of the many reasons the Little Rock Marathon has proven to be popular. Other special touches include the personalized runner bib and the world-famous and oft celebrated over-sized medals which are given to everyone who finishes the race.

In an effort to bring people to Little Rock and keep them here longer, the Marathon weekend kicks off with a Health & Fitness Expo which starts on Friday before the Sunday race. In conjunction with the Expo, there are free seminars on a number of topics relating to running/walking, health, beauty and fitness, and an overview of the course, which helps familiarize tourists with the race they will be running. On Saturday, following the Marathon's 5K Fun Run/Walk, an awards ceremony is held at the Expo. Over the course of the weekend, the expo draws over 20,000 attendees.

To keep a festive atmosphere throughout the weekend, there is a pre-Marathon Pasta Party the night before the race for the runners and their families. More than just a plate of lukewarm spaghetti, this features a variety of hot and cold pastas prepared by gourmet chefs. Live music from a band ensures that marathon participants

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keep their spirits up as they are carbo loading before the race.

In the Athlete Village, there is a festive post-race celebration for those who have just completed running the course. Later that evening, there is the post-race party. While this is a nice way for the runners to unwind and fellowship, it also serves to keep more of them in town for an extra night. The post-race party again features live music as well as a DJ, plenty of food and drink. At a four hour party, the organizers have ensured that race participants have plenty of time to go back to their hotels and rest before enjoying the party.

The amenities and attention to details at the Little Rock Marathon are rare. For those local runners who have only run in Little Rock, these may be taken for granted. However, the out of town runners know that they are unique to Little Rock. The tourists who come to Little Rock constantly rave about the hospitality and the special services of the Little Rock Marathon.

The commitment to hospitality extends beyond the official Marathon itself. Hotels, restaurants and stores have embraced the Little Rock Marathon. Many hotels offer special rates, shuttles to the race, early morning breakfasts and other amenities for runners. Many restaurants and shops also offer specials which cater to runners and their families.

The 2014 marathon had an economic impact of approximately \$4.5 million dollars in Little Rock. This marked a 150% increase of the economic impact in 2005. While most of these dollars were spent at hotels and restaurants in the downtown area, it also extended throughout the city and region.

Over the years, there have been several changes made to the format of the

Little Rock Marathon

Little Rock Marathon. Many of these changes were the result of the overwhelming success of the event. Because marathons actually have limits on the number of runners who can be accommodated, the marathon four-person relay was eliminated in the early years to allow for more people to run the full and half marathon.

In an effort to reach younger audiences, in 2004 the Little Rock Marathon launched the Little Rockers Kids Marathon. At school or in organized groups, kids run 25.2 miles over a variety of days. Then, on the marathon weekend, they gather and run their final mile and receive their medals. Since 2004, an estimated 50,000 children have logged an estimated 1,329,000 miles in the Little Rockers Kids Marathon Training Program. The phenomenal success of this program has necessitated it being moved to the Saturday prior to Marathon Sunday in order to accommodate the crowds.

Due to the overwhelming success of the Little Rock Marathon, many other marathons and half-marathons have popped up throughout the state. Rather than view these races as competition, the Little Rock Marathon staff is happy to offer expertise to other organizers. By having more races in Arkansas, it creates a broader community which, in turn, helps solidify support for the Little Rock Marathon. Organizers have succeeded in making Little Rock citizens more physically active.

Also, the Little Rock Marathon has succeeded in broadening the community support of the Little Rock Parks and Recreation Department. From volunteers helping plant onions in a community garden to partnerships to build athletic fields, there is an increased community commitment to the Parks & Recreation Department. The Little Rock Marathon weekend creates civic pride which lasts throughout the year.