

## In-Service Training Award in Memory of Clarence E. Ridley



**KENNETH J. FRITZ**

*ICMA's In-Service Training Award is presented to the administrator or administrators who have developed and implemented highly effective in-service training programs for local government employees. This award was established in memory of Clarence E. Ridley, a pioneer in the field of local government management. This year, ICMA presents the award to Kenneth J. Fritz, village manager of Schaumburg, Illinois.*

Just a few years ago, responsibilities for the orientation and training of employees of the Village of Schaumburg, Illinois, fell to individual departments. This resulted in inconsistent professional development, considerable duplication of some training efforts, and a

complete lack in some much-needed areas.

The Schaumburg Institute for Professional Development, instituted in 1998, has changed the scope of training for government employees. This is a comprehensive in-service program for all municipal employees, regardless of whether they are full- or part-time. The result is a well-trained and highly effective workforce that is challenged to excel and provided with the tools to meet the challenge.

The Schaumburg Institute began as a series of required courses in basic customer service and sexual harassment designed to provide a village-wide, unified message. But the program soon expanded to include monthly new-employee orientation sessions and other courses, including a required communications course, required training in leadership and other issues for supervisors, and a host of other courses to meet the needs of specific job classifications. Elective courses were also added. Some of these courses are scheduled for a half day, rather than a full day, making it easier for employees to attend (and others in their work group to do without them) and reducing the amount of overtime required for attendance.

From the first month they are hired, employees are encouraged to increase their understanding of local government and nurture their skills. New hires participate in a new employee orientation program, which gives an overview of local government, each department and the services it provides, and employee benefits. New employees also are introduced to a wealth of training opportunities available

through the village, which boasts more than 150 classes on topics from computer applications to team building.

After completing the initial program requirements, employees create action plans that incorporate the basic skills they have learned. When they return to their work group, facilitators assist employees in working through issues and implementing action plans. To improve teamwork, work groups are often encouraged to attend classes together.

The Institute is successful in part because of the commitment of top management, including Village Manager Kenneth J. Fritz. Mr. Fritz played a key role in the establishment of the program and has offered consistent support as it has grown. His emphasis on teamwork has contributed not only to building individual skills but on finding ways to make work groups more effective. Scheduling is initially approved at the department level to allow departments to maintain control over their work flow and personnel. Mr. Fritz also has facilitated the involvement of employees, supervisors, and department directors in improving the training program and individual courses.

The Schaumburg Institute attempts to go beyond the goals of traditional training programs. It seeks not only to build skills needed on the job, but also to improve employee morale, build team spirit, and support efforts to improve customer service. Thanks to the inspired leadership of Mr. Fritz, the Schaumburg Institute has resulted in immeasurable benefits not only to village employees, but also to the citizens they serve. ♣