

# CITIZENS FORUM ON SELF-GOVERNMENT/NATIONAL MUNICIPAL LEAGUE, INC.

55 West 44th Street, New York, New York 10036 (212) 730-7930

October 2, 1986

Mr. George Kain  
Reston Homeowners Coalition  
11621 Quail  
Reston, VA 22094

Dear Mr. Kain:

We regret your community was not among those chosen during the evaluation process as finalists in the All-America Cities program. We realize the substantial energy that went into your effort and want to acknowledge that work by being as helpful as possible through review of staff and screening committee comments relative to the individual stories.

First, consider the fact that the entry procedure itself provides something of a pre-screening filter. Many who receive information decide they have not made enough progress to qualify. In fact, the documentation of results with clear measures of achievement is one of the factors which separates successful from unsuccessful entries. The use of quantitative information -- number of housing units completed, added value to the tax base from commercial development, number of clients helped in a social service project -- is more useful than descriptive language, such as "more housing units were added to the overall housing stock."

Second, the All-America Cities program is one which recognizes citizen group initiative and action, not action taken solely by public officials. The balance of civic, public and private sector action is carefully weighed.

The achievement of civic excellence usually requires exceptional effort and the screening committee's evaluations reflect that expectation. It is looking for innovation and creativity complemented by the more traditional elements that lead to success -- persistence, effective communications, sound leadership, adequate funding, etc.

In the case of communities who had entered previously, it is important to remember that in order to qualify, programs described must be sufficiently different from those included in the former entry. In some cases the distinction was not clear and, therefore, the entry was not given strong consideration.

Single issue entries, while clear in describing their value to a distinct constituency or geographic area, like a neighborhood, must, for purposes of this program, demonstrate a community wide impact as well. In many cases, the story was sound but its impact was described in a way that was difficult to evaluate for community wide or overall impact.

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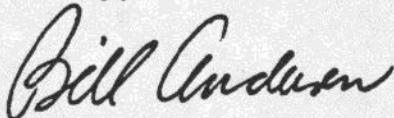
More than half the entries contained at least one project relating to downtown revitalization. It is commendable that in large and small places community leadership is recognizing the distinctive role the traditional CBD can play as a complement to suburban or regional malls. When there are so many similar stories and successful results the evaluation hinges on "added value" factors, the difficulty of the accomplishment and innovative means used to overcome the difficulties.

We hope to be able to spend more time with you in addressing specific questions you might have. Because of program demands between now and the All-America Cities Jury Hearings, November 8-9, we will be unable to answer specific questions. We are setting aside the week of November 17-21 to answer specific questions. You can call us between 9AM and 5PM at 1-800-223-6004.

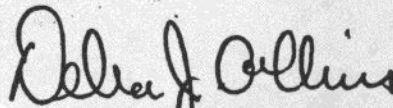
The disappointment many feel, particularly those who have been unsuccessful in the past, is quite understandable. As the entry procedures have become more rigorous, the quality of the entries has increased and, therefore, the competition is much keener.

One of the ways we hope to stay in touch with you is through our magazine, the NATIONAL CIVIC REVIEW. You will be receiving it for the coming year. It will be a way not only to keep posted on major civic issues but also on news about changes in the All-America Cities program which are to be effected in 1987-1988.

Sincerely,



William G. Andersen, Jr.  
Assistant Director



Debra J. Collins  
Program Coordinator

/kb





OFFICIAL ENTRY  
1986-1987



I hereby nominate Reston Fairfax Virginia  
(community) (county) (state)

**ALL-AMERICA CITY AWARD**  
for  
**Citizen Action, Effective Organization  
and Community Improvement**

co-sponsored by

**Citizens Forum on Self-Government  
National Municipal League  
and  
USA TODAY**

For the information provided below, please indicate the year upon which the statistics are based.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT Unincorporated

POPULATION 1980 33,000

± PERCENT CHANGE 1970-1980 + 195%

POPULATION DENSITY (per sq. mi.)  
1980 2,870

PERCENT MINORITY 11.1%

Black 7.3%  
Hispanic 1.2%  
Asian 2.4%  
Other .2%

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME \$42,635

% FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL 12.6%

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 3.3%

POPULATION BREAKDOWN (if available)

below 18 years 36.8%  
18-25 6.6%  
26-35 23.4%  
36-50 21.9%  
51-65 8.1%  
Over 65 3.2%

EMPLOYMENT (% employed)

Manufacturing 20%  
Trade 30%  
Agriculture 0%  
Service 50%

AGE OF HOUSING STOCK Average 10 years

NO. OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS 208

1. What are the main projects (concentrate on three) which citizens have accomplished in the community to merit an All-America City Award? (Give dates; refer to brochure for guidelines.)

A. Art-in-the-Schools

The Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE) recognized that (due to educational priorities) there was a minimal art program established in the elementary schools in Fairfax County, including Reston. They took up the challenge and established a special program of their own which would reach out to children who would otherwise be denied hands on experience that would permit them to translate visual impressions into expressive forms of their own. However, no one, including GRACE, expected the tremendous population boom in the schools starting in 1984 which would severely strain already tight school budgets and further erode school programs and facilities alike. Nevertheless, GRACE undauntingly not only pursued their program but increased its outreach from some 5628 students in 1985 to 10,000 in 1986. The program has been so successful that this year, for the first time, it will reach students in the neighboring communities of Herndon and Great Falls as well as Reston.

B. The Reston Triathlon Physical Fitness Awareness Project

In 1984 a small group of Restonians became concerned about the lack of physical fitness in the community. As a result, they formed an ad hoc committee to promote improvement in same. Specifically, they organized a community Triathlon as a means of focusing attention on this problem. The committee set a goal to hold the Triathlon annually, allowing all ages and both sexes to participate and have it run totally by volunteers. The first Triathlon had 200 participants including both men and women of various age groups. Over 200 volunteers worked long and hard to make it a success. Hundreds of Restonians lined the lake shores, pathways, streets and high school stadium to cheer the participants on. This year the Triathlon will have 400 participants and over 500 volunteers. Thousands of Restonians are expected to be spectators along the swim, bike and run course. Physical fitness and awareness of its importance among Restonians has dramatically accelerated as a result of this project.

C. Fund raising for Children's Hospital

The Children's Hospital, National Medical Center, Washington, D.C. has for years been relying on private donations to augment vital resources provided by Federal and foundation entities. With the drying up of funds from these latter sources in the past few years, the Hospital has been faced with either finding new sources or the possibility of curtailing some of its vital services. The only solution available has been increasing private sector donations. In 1984 the Reston Chorale, understanding these needs and in keeping with their volunteer spirit, organized a special Christmas Caroling tour throughout Reston to raise funds for the Hospital. In addition, this specific charitable venture has led them into performing additional fund raising concerts for the Hospital and other worthwhile charities.



## 2. What prompted the citizen action and how was it organized?

- A. GRACE was founded in 1974 by seven concerned Restonians who saw a lack of cultural art activities in the community. Over the years GRACE has grown to some 450 members from all walks of life. All are volunteers except for a small paid staff. The need for an art-in-the-schools program was jointly recognized by GRACE Staff, the Board of Directors and other volunteer members. Funds to operate this program are a part of the overall programs budget which relies on membership dues, special fund raising events, corporate gifts and public sector grants. One unique fund raiser is an art auction where resident Reston artists donate their works for the event.
- B. In 1984 local residents, Norm Happ and Bruce Titus, were seriously concerned about the need to improve physical fitness of Restonians. This resulted in their meeting with various Reston recreational and sports groups to determine how they could solve the problem. From their inquiries and discussions emerged the idea of the Reston Triathlon. An ad hoc committee of twenty was formed to organize the event. Contributions were obtained from the residents and business community. Thus, the Reston Triathlon Association was founded.
- C. The Reston Chorale, founded in 1966, filled a cultural gap in the community for singers of all types of music. From 35 members they have grown to 100. All are volunteers. The fund raising efforts are special events for which no budget exists, only the time and toil of many members including community leaders such as; Madeline Flynn, former teacher and now art therapist for the handicapped and Lloyd Kinzer, a businessman. The project is sustained solely by the enthusiasm of the Chorale members in wanting to help worthwhile causes.

## 3. List the principal groups and organizations and the number of members actively involved in these efforts. Include community action groups organized around the specific issues.

Name	Active membership	Contribution
A. The Greater Reston Arts Center	450	Gallery space, 30 contributing and 19 resident artists, exhibits, school out-reach program and art classes and shows.
B. Reston Triathlon Association	20	Annual event to improve physical fitness and awareness
Reston Bike Club	240	Provide volunteers to work on Tri-athlon.
Reston Masters Swim Team	75	
Reston Runners	200	
C. Reston Chorale	100	Concert performances in Reston, The Kennedy Center, Wolf Trap and Washington National Cathedral.

4. How did these groups attempt to involve the citizens directly affected by the projects and to what extent were they successful?

A, B & C. In all these organizations the membership uses personal contact, newsletters, correspondence and public media, including two local weekly newspapers, (The Reston Times and The Connection) and a cable TV station in Reston, to promote their activities and raise funds to support same. By delegation of tasks among the volunteer members and effective use of person to person communications they have been successful in obtaining and sustaining support from fellow Restonians and many different organizations. The latter include: corporations such as, Mobil Oil, AT&T, Sperry Corp; County Departments such as, Council for the Arts, Fire and Police; the Virginia Commission for the Arts and local groups such as the Reston Homeowners Association, Northern Virginia Cycle Assoc., Boy Scouts of America, REACT and South Lakes High School. Measurement of success can be gauged in terms of the tremendous increases in membership of the organizations, coupled with dramatic growth in the number of students reached by GRACE, the number of participants and spectators in the Triathalon and the expansion of the Chorale's fund raising efforts. All of these can be classified as outstanding.

5. Identify five individuals who were active leaders in the effort. (If possible, include leaders from both the public, private and non-profit sectors.)

Name	Local Address/Phone *	Occupation	Leadership
A. Ann Thomas	1590 Moorings Drive 703-471-9242	GRACE Staff	Executive Director
Robin Sims	2020 Upper Lake Drive 703-476-5430	Art Consultant	President, GRACE
B. Norm Happ	2461 Freetown Drive 703-860-1845	Engineer	Founder, Reston Triathalon
Ruth Overton	2346 Paddock Lane 703-860-8845	Homemaker	President, Reston Chorale
Madeline Flynn	11241 Handlebar Rd. 703-860-1692	Coordinator-Very Special Arts, Reston and Consultant	Past President, Vice President and Secretary, Reston Chorale

\* Reston, VA.

6. (a) What was the nature of any opposition to the efforts of the citizens and from what segment of the community did this originate?

A, B & C. There was no opposition. However, for GRACE and the Reston Chorale the major challenge has been fund raising and the need to increase the donations. With the Triathalon there was an initial concern about safety and interference with traffic flow in Reston during the bike and foot race.

(b) How were the specific obstacles overcome?

A, B & C. Through positive articles in the newspapers, excellent person to person communications, good police traffic control in the case of the Triathalon and just an upswelling of community pride, these difficulties have been overcome.



7. Summarize your community situation\*—Set the background for your community story.

- (1) the most basic problems and concerns of the community,
- (2) extent and nature of citizen participation,
- (3) degree of success attained, and
- (4) emphasize activity since 1982

\* Not the projects described in 1 above, but events which contributed to and/or resulted from those projects.

Reston, Virginia is one of the most unique planned communities in the country. Founded by Robert E. Simon in the early 1960's, it is an unincorporated area of some 11.5 square miles within Fairfax County. Having no local government, its key to success and leadership has been the participatory spirit of its residents in over 208 volunteer organizations. Rapid development, both commercial and residential, with an attendant population boom during the past two years have put a severe strain on the resources of volunteer groups due to the skyrocketing cost of property and doing business in the community and the need to serve considerably more people. Cultural and recreational issues are of primary concern since the "quality of life" is the glue that holds the community together. GRACE, the Reston Triathlon Association and the Reston Chorale are succeeding with their programs and projects because they are good communicators of their needs and their ability to serve the community. Their success has snowballed to the extent that:

- o GRACE is presently embarked on the establishment of the first major arts center for Fairfax County. This involves the restoration and utilization of a historic building in Reston which will greatly expand cultural offerings.
- o The Triathlon has doubled its participation in the past two years and greatly increased the volunteers that are the backbone of its support. This has resulted in increased cash flow creating surplus funds which the Association is donating to a local charity to fight drug and alcohol abuse.
- o The Reston Chorale's professionalism and enthusiasm has resulted in invitations to perform concerts at the Kennedy Center, Wolf Trap and The Washington National Cathedral. Concert audiences continue to grow from the hundreds to thousands. With this exposure they have expanded their horizons and programs. They are a significant contributor to the creation of community pride.

8. What major problems remain unresolved in your community? (For example—in city government, human relations, municipal services, housing, etc.) What constructive steps have been taken toward their solution?

A significant, yet unresolved problem is the lack of a community government. There is no "one voice" that can be claimed as Reston's own. The residents must rely on a County Government whose policies, regulations and interests do not necessarily reflect the needs of Reston. In addition, Restonians are unable to benefit from resources available to incorporated communities through State and Federal organizations. Many groups including: the Reston Homeowners Association, the Reston Community Association and the Reston Homeowners Coalition are studying methods of achieving self governance.

A second serious problem is the increasing traffic on Reston roads. This has caused not only lengthy delays at intersections but an increase in accidents. The boom in development and a burgeoning population coupled with an antiquated road system throughout the country are the culprits. Local Reston groups working with the County and the State have proposed solutions. However, actual resolution will be dependent on generation of road building funds and their allocation to needed new construction projects. 1987 looms as the year when actual improvements are currently scheduled to commence.

9. Of the specific techniques that contributed to your success, which ones do you feel others might adopt? (If you need more space, for this answer, please use only one side of one additional sheet.)

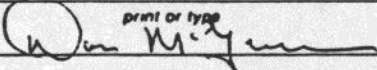
Communications with the residents of the community is the key. GRACE, the Reston Triathlon Association and the Reston Chorale have succeeded because they utilized every available mode of communications. Special center section inserts in both local newspapers have been of particular value in reaching the community.

As part of communications these organizations listened to and understood the needs of the community. They reacted in a timely manner using motivated volunteers to take actions and work with the business community and County/State Government agencies to obtain the funding which could not be generated by the community itself.

Name\* Dan McGuire, President

Person to Contact George Kain, Vice President

Signed



Organization Reston Homeowners Coalition

Organization Reston Homeowners Coalition

Street Address 11621 Quail Ridge Court, Reston

Date September 8, 1986

(Zip Code) 22094 Telephone <sup>Area Code</sup> (703) 481-0241

(Person whose name appears as signee does not have to be the same person designated as the program contact.)

Please use preferred name, address and phone number of person who will be major contact throughout the competition.

This entry blank should be completed and mailed, along with two (2) photocopies, to the All-America City Award Program, Citizens Forum/National Municipal League, 55 West 44th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036, at the earliest possible date but must be postmarked not later than September 12, 1986. Enclose \$100 filing fee.

A Screening Committee of public affairs experts will pick the finalists which will be invited to send representatives to appear before the All-America Cities jury at the National Conference on Government in Kansas City, Missouri, November 7-9, 1986, to present the finalists' cases. The jury will then select the winners.