



The United States Conference of Mayors

1620 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone (202) 293-7330 • Fax (202) 293-2352
E-mail: info@usmayors.org URL: usmayors.org

For Immediate Release
Saturday, June 3, 2006

Contact: Elena Temple
LV Paris Hotel 702-946-2122
USCM Office 202-861-6719

2006 CITY LIVABILITY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED *Chicago, Euless (TX) Receive Top Honors*

Las Vegas, NV — Mayors Richard M. Daley of Chicago (IL), and Mary Lib Saleh of Euless (TX), have been awarded First Place honors in the 2006 City Livability Awards Program, sponsored by The U.S. Conference of Mayors and Waste Management.

The Awards recognize and honor mayors for exemplary leadership in developing and implementing programs that improve the quality of life in America's cities. An independent panel of judges, selected by The U.S. Conference of Mayors, determined the winning cities from a pool of 250 applicants based on three criteria: mayoral leadership, creativity and innovation, and broad impact on the quality of life for residents.

Outstanding Achievement Awards for cities with populations of 100,000 or more were received by Mayors Will Wynn of Austin; Laura Miller of Dallas; Bill White of Houston; and, Manuel A. Diaz of Miami. Outstanding Achievement Awards were also given to mayors of cities with populations of 100,000 or fewer people: Mayors Judie Hammerstad of Lake Oswego (OR); Lionel C. Guay, Jr. of Lewiston (ME); Rosemarie Ives of Redmond; and James Baker of Wilmington.

Honorable Mention citations were awarded for cities with populations of 100,000 or more to: Beth Krom of Irvine(CA); John Peyton of Jacksonville (FL); Kay W. Barnes of Kansas City (MO); Oscar Goodman of Las Vegas; and Rick Baker of St. Petersburg (FL). Mayors of cities with populations of less than 100,000 receiving Honorable Mentions are James Brainard of Carmel (IN); Darwin Hindman of Columbia (MO); Donald D. Slesnick II of Coral Gables; Matt McKillip of Kokomo (IN); and Richard J. Kaplan of Lauderhill (FL).

The City Livability Awards were presented at the Conference of Mayors' Annual Luncheon by Mr. Barry Caldwell, Senior Vice President, Governmental Affairs and Corporate Communications of Waste Management, the nation's largest provider of waste management services. Waste Management's support makes the City Livability Awards Program possible.

"At Waste Management our goal is to be a trusted and valued community partner. We have enjoyed a great partnership over the years with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and it remains a great pleasure to continue to sponsor the City Livability Awards," said Caldwell. "Just like the cities being honored today, Waste Management is steadfastly committed to serving its communities. We applaud this year's honorees and commend their efforts to make their cities and communities a better place to live."

Tom Cochran, Executive Director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors added, "Our City Livability Awards Program gives the Conference a chance to highlight mayoral leadership in making urban areas safer, cleaner and more livable. We are grateful to Waste Management for its support of the City Livability Awards Program, and for the opportunity to showcase the creativity and commitment of mayors and city governments across the country."

Following are brief summaries of the award winning programs:

LARGE CITIES

First Place

CHICAGO - Mayor Daley's *Chicago Bicycle Program* is a program which demonstrates great mayoral leadership and truly is a great model for urban bicycling. Since his election, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley has made it his goal to make the City of Chicago the most bicycle-friendly city in the United States. Under Mayor Daley's leadership, the city has established a network of 100 miles of on-street bike lanes and 50 miles off-street trails. City agencies, particularly the Chicago Department of Transportation, Chicago Transit Authority, and the Chicago Park District, have incorporated bicycling into their mandates and programs. Citizens now have the option of bicycling not only as a form of healthy recreation, but as a viable means of transportation.

Outstanding Achievement

AUSTIN - In 2005, the City of Austin, through Austin Energy, invested over \$20 million in conservation programs and another \$15 million in to its *Green Choice® Green Power Program*. This investment provided savings to Austin Energy customers through the energy saved, and has helped maintain its quality of life through the reduction of power plant emissions. Current annual green power sales now top 550 million kWh with more 100% green subscribed businesses (344) than any other city in America. Over the past five years, more than 100,000 Austin Energy customers have participated in the utility's energy efficiency and green building programs reducing energy usage by 50 megawatts (MW) of capacity.

DALLAS - When Dallas' landfill opened in 1975, it was the largest in the state of Texas and it continues to be the largest landfill in Texas today. It is a little unusual for a city to operate a landfill site of this size. Dallas leaders combined two services (energy

generation and solid waste disposal) into one Landfill program. Now the city is transforming what used to be a “nuisance” by-product and turning it into an on-going source of green energy on a scale no other city has yet attempted. Dallas Mayor Laura Miller continues to seek new and better ways to optimize this asset, finding more methods each year to transform “wastes” into “resources.”

HOUSTON - Upon taking office in 2004, Houston Mayor Bill White made education a top priority. He formed a partnership with the Houston Independent School District (HISD), and mobilized community groups and businesses to launch *Expectation: Graduation*. The goal of this program is to ensure that all students have the skills they need to go on to college, secondary training, or good jobs. There are four major roles that Mayor White and the city government play in *Expectation: Graduation* - action, reclamation, prevention, and retention. Mayor White and hundreds of volunteers walk door-to-door each fall to convince students who have not returned to school to come back. The Mayor sends a letter to every ninth-grader in the HISD, asking them to commit to him in writing to stay in school. Support and encouragement are given throughout the year to enable students to graduate.

MIAMI - In response to a well-documented need for public water access, Mayor Manuel A. Diaz led the city’s administration to focus renewed attention on the city’s prized waterfront. Miami Riverwalk provides city residents and visitors with continuous access to Miami’s prized waterfront where previously none existed. A once neglected land in a vital downtown location, the Miami Biscayne Access/ Riverwalk project is now a walkable outdoor museum, and a continuous pedestrian and waterfront access between the Biscayne Bay, waterfront parks and green spaces, the Miami River, and the Greenway trail. Under the leadership of Mayor Diaz, the Miami Riverwalk has positively affected the city’s quality of life by offering people the opportunity to reclaim the water while providing free public access to museum-quality artwork.

Honorable Mention

IRVINE (CA) - The City of Irvine, turned vacant, weedy, unproductive land unsuitable for conventional landscaping into the *Incredible Edible Park* through community action and a strong partnership of public, private, and non-profit agencies. Beginning in 1999 with the seed of an idea, this adventure in “metro-farming,” which includes row crops and a citrus grove, has blossomed into a community park that has produced over one million pounds of fruits and vegetables. This produce not only serves the nutritional requirements of the county’s neediest residents, but it also provides tremendous educational opportunities for the many community members who care for the land. Since its inception, 10,000 volunteers, 4,000 of whom are local school children, have contributed to the success of this truly unique project.

JACKSONVILLE (FL) – *RALLY Jacksonville!* Mayor John Peyton’s early literacy initiative is a comprehensive plan to have every child in Jacksonville ready to read and prepared for kindergarten. Now in its second year, *RALLY Jacksonville!* strives to make early literacy a core value, improve the quality of child care and increase the number of

children who are ready for kindergarten. In 2004, Mayor Peyton formed a Policy Council of leaders in business, education, health and the non-profit sector to develop and oversee the plan. To date, 70+ coaches are working in 89 childcare centers, reaching 858 practitioners and 8,329 children. The Mayor's Book Club has recruited a total of 16,000 4-year-old members.

KANSAS CITY (MO) - The *10,000 Rain Gardens* initiative is a collaborative, community-wide effort to plant and cultivate 10,000 rain gardens throughout Kansas City. A rain garden is a small garden planted with the specific goal of capturing water runoff and cleaning it of pollutants through the use of deep-rooted native plants. The rain gardens will significantly reduce the amount of runoff polluting Kansas City waterways while involving citizens as active, participating stakeholders committed to protecting and nurturing their environment.

LAS VEGAS - Once a month, the pedestrian-friendly streets of downtown Las Vegas transform into a huge block party also known as, *First Friday*. Each month local bands perform throughout the evening, and the streets turn into canvasses for children (young and old) to decorate with chalk. *First Friday* is a stage for more than 70 local art studios, galleries, shops, artists and cafes. Since it began in October of 2002, *First Friday* has continued to grow, doubling as a generator for redevelopment of the Las Vegas downtown Arts District. It is now considered the premier arts event in Las Vegas, drawing approximately 80,000 people annually and providing an opportunity to support Las Vegas' art revolution. *First Friday* is not only meeting economic needs for downtown development, but has reacquainted the outer Las Vegas communities with the downtown area.

ST. PETERSBURG (FL) – The *Mayor's Mentors & More* education initiative evolved from Mayor Rick Baker's advocating for quality education and encouraging the community to work and contribute resources to improving the public education of St. Petersburg's students. The mayor began his work to improve schools one child at a time. Since 2001, he has raised \$1.554 million- matched dollar for dollar by the state- in private funds for 500 Doorways Scholarships. Mayor Baker has committed to raising a total of 1,000 scholarships. Each student awarded a scholarship is required to have a mentor. One hundred new scholarships each year require 100 additional mentors. Recruiting new mentors has expanded the program to include over 200 city employees who are using paid time to mentor and 75 corporate partners, which provides at least one partner for each public school.

SMALL CITIES

First Place

EULESS (TX)- There are approximately 12,500 single-family households in Eules. According to EPA estimates, 59.3% of the municipal solid waste disposal can be diverted through backyard composting and vermicomposting (using worms). In an effort to reuse and recycle items in Eules and reduce the amount of waste going into landfills, Mayor

Mary Lib Saleh created a composting education program, *Compost-ology. Compost-ology, The Science and Fun of Backyard Composting*, provides interactive educational opportunities for composting and vermicomposting to teachers, students and residents through workshops, hands-on learning opportunities and school presentations. Eules provided bins and thermometers for plant composting, as well as worm bins and red worms for vermicomposting, to the residents. Both types of composting help accomplish goals such as water conservation, waste stream reduction and a method to continually teach students and all residents the ease and benefits of waste diversion. Tonnage reports results show the *Compost-ology* program diverted 110.28 tons of material from Eules' waste stream in January - March 2005 when compared to January - March 2004 figures.

Outstanding Achievement

LAKE OSWEGO (OR) - In 1991, the City of Lake Oswego acquired *Luscher Farm*, one of the most historically intact farms in Clackamas County. Mayor Judie Hammerstad, in collaboration with the Oregon Tilth, has developed an organic education program at the farm. Lessons are offered in urban farming, organic gardening, and landscaping. There are over 150 organic community garden plots for city residents and twelve acres of farmland in cultivation. Local garden clubs support a Children's Garden Program, a Junior Master Gardener Club and various gardening related classes for adults and children. Luscher Farm is host to the world-renowned Brewster Rogerson Clematis Collection and is recognized as a "Backyard Wildlife Habitat" site.

1

LEWISTON (ME) – Since 2003, Lewiston, Maine, has been at the forefront of the successful "*Lewiston Tax Credit Awareness Coalition.*" Stepping out of the traditional municipal government role, Mayor Lionel C. Guay, Jr., along with community partners, have advocated on behalf of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Since 2003, including the current 2006 tax season—this effort has returned well over \$2 million to the Lewiston community—monies that go directly into the pockets of residents and subsequently back into the local economy. The City of Lewiston facilitated the launching of an EITC "*community team*" partnership coalition in 2003, and the Coalition's efforts have been heralded as the state-wide leader in EITC awareness and follow-up. The Coalition annually establishes free tax preparation sites, recruits volunteers to prepare/e-file tax returns; provides volunteers with IRS training, and provides asset building informational opportunities for those seeking financial literacy.

REDMOND (WA) – The Redmond Trip Reduction Incentive Program (R-TRIP) enhances the quality of life in Redmond by improving overall mobility, bicycle and pedestrian friendliness, and regional air quality. R-TRIP encourages walking, bicycling, transit use, and ridesharing as alternatives to driving alone by providing outreach, financial incentives and personalized assistance to commuters who live or work in Redmond. Mayor Rosemarie Ives recognized that attempting to build Redmond's way out of the traffic problem with new roadways was not a realistic solution. Funding has

been made available, as well as technical assistance to help employers initiate or expand their trip reduction programs. Over the past eight years, R-TRIP has eliminated over three and a half million vehicle trips, encouraged 5,000 Redmond commuters to consistently choose alternatives to driving alone, and worked with 40 businesses to initiate or enhance their commuter-assistance programs.

WILMINGTON (DE) - "The City of Wilmington, there are in approximately 30,000 residential dwellings spread among 30 distinct neighborhoods. When Mayor James Baker decided to address the problem of vacant and abandoned properties, he gave property owners three options. Either rehabilitate vacant properties and get them occupied, sell the properties to others who will fix them, or pay the consequence. Revising Wilmington's vacant property code, by increasing the registration fees, has produced dramatic and sustained reductions in vacant properties. From the onset, the goal of the program has been to restore properties, provide housing, to preserve and strengthen neighborhoods, and not to collect fees from derelict property owners. As of March 30th, The Vacant Property Program has collected \$331,000 in fees. With collection efforts, court actions and property sales, this amount will likely double by the end of this year.

Honorable Mention

CARMEL (IN) - When Mayor James Brainard saw the population growing and the Carmel citizen's dependence on their vehicles increasing, he began lobbying for the installation of roundabouts by promoting their proven safety record, cost savings, environmental friendliness and ability to smooth traffic flow. Carmel began installing roundabouts at some intersections in 1996 and now has 20 on city thoroughfares. The combination of rotary design and slower speed at the entrance of roundabouts has additional safety benefits. Aggressive driving is limited at these intersections. The Carmel Police Department has reported a significant drop in the seriousness of injuries and dollar value of damages suffered by motorists in roundabout accidents (\$3,000 - \$3,500) vs. right angled intersections (\$7,900 - \$14,800). In addition to saving taxpayers money by installing roundabouts, it's estimated that residents burn 470,000 fewer gallons of gas equaling approximately \$11,750,000 per year in out-of-pocket expenses.

COLUMBIA (MO) - Mayor Darwin Hindman, a champion of active living, developed the annual *Mayor's Challenge: Bike, Walk, & Wheel Week (BWWW)* initiative to encourage Columbians to become more active. In 2001, the Mayor's vision led to a campaign that challenged Columbians to leave their cars at home and travel by human power — foot, bike, or wheelchair — to work and other destinations. BWWW includes a kick-off community bike, ride or walk on a trail led by an honorary chair, free breakfast stations for participants throughout the city sponsored by local businesses. All activities were designed to encourage increased activity by using self-propelled transportation.

CORAL GABLES (FL) - Under the leadership of Mayor Donald Slesnick Coral Gables became the first municipality in the United States to offer customers a more convenient

way to pay for parking: through the use of their cellular phone. Instead of having to find the right number of coins to feed the meters, residents and visitors can now use a cellular phone to pay for parking in Coral Gables. To date, close to 4,000 subscribers who frequently visit or work in Coral Gables have opted to use this modern and convenient way to pay for parking. By partnering with a company that provides electronic payment solutions, the City of Coral Gables made an initial investment of approximately \$10,000, with the vendor recuperating its cost by charging a user fee of .25 cents per parking transaction or a flat monthly fee of \$7 for unlimited parking transactions.

KOKOMO (IN)- The two components of Kokomo's public transportation system, First City Rider and Spirit of Kokomo, dovetail to provide needed, specialized transportation to city residents who really need it. Since 1991 First City Rider has provided subsidized taxi service to anywhere within its Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). Anyone in the MPA only has to provide the required information by phone to become eligible. Patrons receive a subsidy of \$3 for a door-to-door taxi ride 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Spirit of Kokomo bus service targets citizens who are seniors (60 and over) and/or disabled (16 and over and receiving disability benefits). Door-to-door pickup and delivery are provided within city limits. All transportation is free, though donations are accepted. Priority is given to passengers attending medical appointments or obtaining prescriptions.

LAUDERHILL (FL) –The state of Florida sits squarely in the hurricane belt and suffers major wind events on an almost annual basis. Located in South Florida, Lauderhill has been spared a direct hit by a hurricane since Hurricane Cleo in 1964. Statistically, cities in South Florida suffer hurricane damage every eight years. Mayor Richard Kaplan and the city of Lauderhill have made significant preparations for such an event. The City of Lauderhill's successful handling of Hurricane Wilma, which hit on October 24, 2005, was a result of years of planning and refinement of its Hurricane Preparation Program. Lauderhill was the only city, out of thirty one cities in Broward County that was able to maintain water pressure after Hurricane Wilma.

###