Dear Floridian,

Now more than ever, I believe that educating our residents – both old and young – about their city is of the utmost importance. Teaching them about the fundamentals of city services and what it takes to effectively run a city is essential as we continue to tighten our municipal belt and do more with less, while still maintaining the level of service demanded by our citizenry. The passage of Amendment 1 last year showed us that our residents are unaware of how their property tax dollars are spent.

To make a difference, we all must help in this educational effort. I encourage you to take part in the Florida League of Cities' program, **"Building Citizenship in the Community: Back to Basics,"** which is my priority as League president. Through this program, we are designing a campaign to increase civic awareness and participation. Projects are being developed that will help you educate your constituents – to increase their awareness of municipal issues and help them become smarter municipal service consumers.

I encourage each municipality to stand with me in support of this initiative. I have enclosed a resolution for your council's or commission's consideration. It also is available online at *www.flcities.com*. There are 410 active municipalities in the Sunshine State – my hope is to have 100 percent participation! I appreciate your consideration of this request if we haven't already received a resolution from your city. If we have, please accept my sincere gratitude.

Along with the resolution, this packet also includes:
▸ a **"Building Citizenship in the Community: Back to Basics"** brochure;
▸ a list of available civics, ethics and civility resources;
▸ a form, which we would appreciate your completing, to let us know about any civics education programs your city is doing; and
▸ a list of 10 things your city can do to be actively involved in the **"Building Citizenship in the Community: Back to Basics"** campaign.

Other material is available on our Web site, *www.flcities.com*. We hope you'll find this information useful and that you will share it with all of the elected officials, administrators and employees in your city. If you have any questions, please contact League staff member Casey Cook at *ccook@flcities.com* or (850) 701-3609.

I appreciate your continued dedication to the Florida League of Cities. I want to stand side by side with you to protect the Home Rule power of Florida's cities. Together, we can make a difference… we already have…we will continue to do so!

Sincerely,

Carmine Priore, President
Vice Mayor, Wellington

Enclosures

Ten

Things Your City Can Do to Be Part of the "Building Citizenship in the Community: Back to Basics" Initiative

"Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

James Madison, 1788

The following is a 10-point checklist your city can use to implement its civics program.

While every city can't do everything, all cities can do something!

Get involved in helping to educate your citizens about their government. Your efforts will help build smarter residents, voters and leaders. Here are 10 things your city can do to help:

1 Adopt a resolution recognizing the "Building Citizenship in the Community: Back to Basics" initiative.

2 Develop a civic-education action plan.

3 Make civic resources available to your residents.

4 Establish a speakers bureau.

5 Create a citizens' academy and/or a youth council.

6 Establish a city/school partnership program.

7 Create "community tours" of city hall for all residents and shadowing opportunities for educators and students.

8 Use commission meetings as an opportunity to improve your community's civic health.

9 Sponsor community forums where critical issues can be discussed in even more detail.

10 Form community partnerships with civic groups and other businesses.

See the following pages for more information about these 10 ideas. ▸▸

1 Adopt the resolution recognizing the "Building Citizenship in the Community: Back to Basics" initiative.

By adopting the resolution, your city pledges its support for this effort and sends the message that civic education is important in your community. A copy of the resolution is included in this packet and also is available on the League's Web site at *www.flcities.com*. When the resolution is adopted, send a copy to the Florida League of Cities. (A list of cities that have already adopted the resolution is included in this packet.)

2 Develop a civic–education action plan.

What do you want your city's civic education program to include? Involve residents or civic organizations from throughout your community to assist you in developing your program. Use information from the League or other cities that have innovative models. Every city's effort will be unique to it.

A civic education plan for one city might include a multifaceted approach offering an array of activities and events to educate residents, such as citizens' academies and/or coordinating annual events like the celebration of Florida City Government Week. Another city may offer something simpler. You can start by offering tours of city hall, sponsoring a civics-related contest at a local school, having local officials or city staff speak to civic organizations about local issues, or providing schools and civic organizations with general information on municipal government.

The City of Safety Harbor has done everything from offering a Citizens' Academy — now in its fourth year — to offering community-wide education programs on the effect that local government has on residents' lives. To learn more about Safety Harbor's Citizens' Academy, call Brad Purdy, the city's public information officer, at (727) 724-1555 or e-mail him at *bpurdy@cityofsafetyharbor.com*.

3 Make civic resources available to your residents.

There is a wealth of available information on civic education. The League offers resources on its Web site at *www.flcities.com*. We encourage you to use this material. Why not create your own civic education page on your municipal Web site? Offer civics material to your residents in city newsletters and on city-access television stations.

2

The City of Coral Springs, a recipient of the 2007 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, offers a number of great resources for its residents. Residents can join the city's text community and receive information about special events and city announcements directly to their phones. For more information, contact Liz Kolodney, webmaster, at (954) 344-1008 or *lkolodney@coralsprings.org*. Coral Springs also highlights events and topics of local interest and provides public outreach via its City TV 25 access channel. In addition, they have developed a program titled *A Bridge to the Past*, which focuses on the history of Coral Springs. To learn more, contact Matt Hoffman, broadcast communications coordinator, at (954) 346-1724 or *mhoffman@coralsprings.org*.

Another good resource is Fort Walton Beach's FWBTV — recognized during this past year's Florida Cities of Excellence Awards luncheon as a finalist for the City Spirit Award. For more information about FWBTV, contact Cam Johnson, public information officer, at (850) 833-9505 or *cjohnson@fwb.org*.

The City of Tallahassee also has a great access channel in WCOT, which provides information about city events, broadcasts City Commission meetings and informs residents about different city departments. Contact Tom Bronakoski, WCOT station manager, at (850) 891-8081 or e-mail him at *tom.bronakoski@talgov.com*.

Many cities have city-access television stations and also newsletters that can be used to make civic resources available to your citizens. For information on various city newsletters, call Sharon Berrian, the League's associate director of public affairs, at (850) 222-9684 or e-mail her at *sberrian@flcities.com*.

4 Establish a speakers bureau.

Speakers could be city officials and staff. They could be available for area schools and civic groups and other organizations. Cities are encouraged to promote their bureaus to local organizations to help residents develop a better understanding of their city's functions and services. Establishing a bureau does not have to be complicated. The idea can be as simple as making city officials and staff available to speak about their government when called upon.

The City of Delray Beach has a fantastic speakers bureau that offers a list of speakers available to make presentations to local civic organizations. To find out more about Delray Beach's speakers bureau, visit *www.mydelraybeach.com/Delray/Government/ Speakers+Bureau.htm* or contact Rosanne Dechicchio, public information assistant, at (561) 243-7190 or *dechicchio@ci.delray-beach.fl.us.*

5 Create a citizens' academy and/or a youth council.

Citizens' academies or youth councils are excellent ways to educate residents, build positive relationships and increase communication between city government officials and residents, as well as inspire future municipal leaders. The League's Web site offers a detailed "how-to" publication titled "A Guide to Creating a Citizens' Academy." Featured are a variety of citizens' academies from the cities of Cape Coral, Delray Beach, Gainesville, Kissimmee, Lakeland, Lauderdale Lakes and Weston. Though recently canceled due to budget cuts, the City of Kissimmee had a very comprehensive citizens' academy. The city still provides a model that others can use. It is reprinted in the citizens' academy guide mentioned above.

Youth councils are composed of students from different high schools within a city and serve as an advisory board to the city commission/council. The League's Web site provides a template for forming a youth council, as well as information provided by Dade City, West Palm Beach and Destin.

Another well-known teen council was established in 1998 by the City of Gulfport. Among other things, this council makes recommendations for city recreation programs, provides suggestions and assistance with youth events for city-sponsored programs, and serves as an advisory board on issues related to young people. For more information, call Marivel Gutierrez, recreation supervisor for the City of Gulfport, at (727) 893-1068 or e-mail her at *mgutierrez@ci.gulfport.fl.us.*

Wellington offers both a teen council and residents' academy. The council is part of a series of life-enrichment programs designed to involve all ages and interests in Wellington. For more information on the teen council, contact City Manager Paul Schofield at (561) 791-4000 or *pschofield@ci.wellington.fl.us*. For information on the residents' academy, contact Kathy Tatgenhorst at (561) 791-4000 or *ktatgenhorst@ci.wellington.fl.us*.

6 Establish a city/school partnership program.

Coordinate partnership programs with schools and encourage opportunities for integrating city government into the school curriculum. For example, there could be integration of the local government curriculum into all social studies classes (government, civics, history, geography, and economics). This could lend itself to in-service training of teachers on what resources and information about city government are available in their particular county; the development of localized teaching materials; more use of speakers from city government in the classroom; one-on-one mentoring opportunities with city personnel; and "hands-on" special class projects related to city government. There are many great examples of city-school partnerships in Florida.

The City of Lauderhill developed a curriculum using city and League material and worked with the middle schools in the city.

The City of Weston hosts an annual Principals' Luncheon. This luncheon starts the year off with civic information and offers of assistance to the schools. For more information, call Denise Barrett of the City of Weston at (954) 385-2000 or e-mail her at *barrettd@westonfl.org*. On the League's Web site, there is a list of city-school partnership ideas that can be modified for various grade levels.

7 Create "community tours" of city hall for all residents and shadowing opportunities for educators and students.

The tour/field trip could be to a public site, such as a water treatment facility, recycling center or city park. Shadowing opportunities help participants get a real understanding of what municipal governance is like. Many cities throughout the state offer community tours. One example of how these tours are offered can be seen in Windermere, where students are given a firsthand look at how many of their city services are provided.

8 Use commission meetings as an opportunity to improve your community's civic health.

How can we expect democracy to be effective when many city residents have never attended a commission meeting? Public policy affects everyone. We must work to establish the relevance and importance of these meetings. It is not enough to ask our residents to vote. While

that is important, we must continually educate and engage them so that they can understand the value of their vote, engage in thoughtful and civil discourse on these issues, and become more active community leaders as a result.

9 Sponsor community forums where critical issues can be discussed in even more detail.

While commission meetings provide a good opportunity for residents to understand important community issues, community forums on select issues offer citizens an opportunity to ask even more questions and delve deeper into a particular topic.

10 Form community partnerships with civic groups and other businesses.

Work with your chamber of commerce on a joint downtown city festival, set up city exhibits at local shopping malls with information on your municipal services, contact your local library and have them feature books and material on civic education, work with your local newspaper to do a series of articles on the subject, or enlist businesses to assist you with a municipal initiative that helps your citizens.

An excellent example of a joint partnership between a city and local businesses was developed by Mayor Rick Baker and the City of St. Petersburg called Mayor's Mentors & More.

Mayor's Mentors & More was launched on January 24, 2002. Today there are more than 100 business partners; every school has one or more partners. This multifaceted program offers school scholarships, mentors, volunteers and more. The city staff also is encouraged to mentor at schools. Baker and his schools program staff are constantly working with the schools to mentor and provide information on city programs and resources and help students improve their grades. For more information about St. Petersburg's Mayor's Mentors & More, contact Lori Matway, schools program administrator, at (727) 893-7174 or e-mail her at *lori.matway@stpete.org*.

The Historical Society of Palm Beach County, the School District of Palm Beach County, the *Palm Beach Post* and other historical organizations partnered to develop a Palm Beach County History and Civics Program as part of a larger civics/social studies curriculum for seventh grade. There is more information about this program and others on the League's Web site.

4

Florida League of Cities President Carmine Priore, vice mayor of Wellington, encourages all cities to adopt the following resolution expressing support for the League's civics initiative. For a Word version of the resolution, contact Casey Cook at the League (contact information is below). See the back side of this page for a list of cities that have already sent us a copy of their adopted resolution.

Sample Resolution

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY/TOWN/VILLAGE OF _____ RECOGNIZING THE "BUILDING CITIZENSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY: BACK TO BASICS" INITIATIVE OF THE FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES, INC., AND PLEDGING SUPPORT FOR THIS STATEWIDE EFFORT.

WHEREAS, municipal government is the government closest to most citizens, with tremendous daily impact upon its residents; and

WHEREAS, city government is administered for and by its citizens, and is dependent upon public commitment to, and understanding of, its many responsibilities, and city government officials and employees share the responsibility to pass along their understanding of public services and their benefits; and

WHEREAS, Florida's citizenry receives public services from state, county, school district and other government levels, educating Florida's citizens of all ages as to the structure and function of all the levels of government, and how to be wise consumers of such services is therefore critically important; and

WHEREAS, the Florida League of Cities and its member cities have joined together to teach students and all citizens about municipal government through a variety of different projects, resources and information;

WHEREAS, this initiative will make resources available to cities and their citizens to utilize in furthering their goals for civic education.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF _____ AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. That the City/Town/Village of _____ does hereby encourage all citizens, city government officials and employees to utilize the opportunities and resources available through this initiative.

Section 2. That the City/Town/Village of _____ does encourage educational partnerships between city government and schools, as well as civic groups and other organizations.

Section 3. That the City/Town/Village of _____ does support and encourage all city governments to actively promote the "Building Citizenship in the Community: Back to Basics" initiative.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City/Town/Village of _____.

For a Word version of the resolution, contact Casey Cook at ccook@flcities.com or (850) 222-9684. Please forward a copy of your adopted resolution to Casey Cook by e-mail or by mail to: Florida League of Cities, P.O. Box 1757, Tallahassee, FL 32302-1757.

Municipalities Adopting Resolution

Altamonte Springs	Greenacres	Orange Park
Apalachicola	Gulf Breeze	Orchid
Atlantic Beach	Gulf Stream	Palatka
Auburndale	Haines City	Palm Beach
Baldwin	Hallandale Beach	Palm Coast
Bay Harbor Islands	Hastings	Palm Springs
Belle Isle	Hialeah	Palmetto
Belleair Beach	Highland Beach	Pembroke Pines
Belleair Bluffs	Indian Harbour Beach	Pierson
Boynton Beach	Indian River Shores	Port Richey
Bunnell	Indian Rocks Beach	Rockledge
Callahan	Jasper	Satellite Beach
Cape Canaveral	Jupiter Island	Sebring
Cape Coral	Keystone Heights	South Daytona
Casselberry	Kissimmee	St. Augustine Beach
Clearwater	Lake Alfred	St. Cloud
Cocoa	Lake Butler	St. Petersburg
Cooper City	Lake Wales	Tallahassee
Coral Springs	Lakeland	Tamarac
Crestview	Lauderdale Lakes	Tarpon Springs
Dade City	Layton	Valparaiso
Davenport	Leesburg	Wellington
DeFuniak Springs	Madison	Williston
DeLand	Malabar	Wilton Manors
Delray Beach	Margate	Windermere
Deltona	Mayo	Winter Springs
Destin	Melbourne	Zolfo Springs
Eatonville	Miami Shores	
Eustis	Midway	As of March 17, 2009
Fellsmere	Minneola	
Fort Lauderdale	Mulberry	
Fort Myers	Neptune Beach	
Freeport	North Palm Beach	
Fruitland Park	Oak Hill	
Gainesville	Ocean Ridge	
Golden Beach	Okeechobee	
Green Cove Springs	Opa-locka	

2009 City Civic Education Projects Form

Many Florida cities offer educational programs that teach residents about the inner workings of their municipal government. The Florida League of Cities is compiling a resource base of municipal civic education programs and will showcase them on our Web site, *www.flcities.com*. If your city has a program or programs you'd like to include, please use the following format and e-mail your entries to Casey Cook at *ccook@flcities.com*. The backside of this form includes two sample civic education projects, along with a list of cities and projects that we have already received.

Project title: _____

Date program started: _____. Please specify if the program is ongoing.

FLC Member Name (i.e. City or County of): _____

Summary (200 words or less):_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Contact's full name/title: _____

Divison/Office/Department: _____

Mailing address: _____

Telephone number: _____

E-mail: _____   Fax Number: _____

PHOTOGRAPHS ("Instant" Photos Are Not Acceptable)
Digital photographs must be 300ppi, TIF or JPEG format. Please package materials carefully so that they are of DISPLAY QUALITY.

Submit all entries no later than Friday, May 1, 2009, to Casey Cook by e-mailing your submissions and photographs to *ccook@flcities.com*. Please send one entry, and the photographs that go with that entry, per e-mail. You will receive a confirmation e-mail — if you do not get one, please check with Casey. Mail submissions to: Florida League of Cities, Inc., P.O. Box 1757, Tallahassee, FL 32302-1757. For further information, call or e-mail Casey at the League office, (850) 701-3609.

Sample Programs

"The Valley of Tropical Dreams" – *City of Greenacres*
The City of Greenacres introduced an interactive project that sparked the ingenuity of students by challenging them to create and design their very own city, "The Valley of Tropical Dreams." This creative initiative was a two-month activity that engaged 170 elementary and middle school students. The students chose a city name and logo, site plan, and elected a mayor, deputy mayor and council members. After two months of planning and brainstorming, "The Valley of Tropical Dreams" was constructed using cardboard boxes, recycled products and other donated materials. Elected "Valley" officials wrote and gave acceptance speeches during the mock election process. The culminating event took place during Florida City Government Week in October at an open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony involving their parents and dignitaries from the City Commission and state Legislature. This experience was recorded and promoted in the local newspaper, *Greenacres Observer.*
Contact: Michele L. Thompson, CPRP, Director, Leisure Services Department
5800 Melaleuca Lane
Greenacres FL 33463
Office: (561) 642-2180
Fax: (561) 642-2190
E-mail: *MThompson@ci.greenacres.fl.us*

"Government on Wheels" – *City of North Port*
The City of North Port promotes civic education by taking city government to the people. With the theme "Government on Wheels," city officials speak to various community groups and school children about North Port. Participants include city commissioners, police and fire rescue, general services, public works, planning and zoning, parks and recreation, the city attorney and city manager's office. North Port also has a "Why I Like My City" essay contest. The award winners receive a plaque and gift certificate during a City Commission meeting.
Contact: Erin Bryce, Community Outreach Manager
4970 City Hall Blvd.
North Port, FL 34286
Office: (941) 429-7165
Cell: (941) 628-0228
E-mail: *ebryce@cityofnorthport.com*

Municipal Government Civic Education Activities

The following is a list of the programs that we have received to date:
Belle Glade, Mock City Commission Meeting; **Cape Coral**, Citizens' Academy; **Casselberry**, Essay Contest: "How City Government Benefits You"; **Coral Springs**, Teen Political Forum; **Delray Beach**, Municipal Job Shadowing Day, Residents Academy; **Deltona**, Social Services Summit, Deltona Fire Department Open House and Safety Day, Destination Deltona; **Gainesville**, Citizens' Academy: Gainesville 101; **Greenacres**, Cool Zone Shadowing Project, Create Your Own City: Valley of Tropical Dreams; **Groveland**, "Groveland – I'm Part of It, I Proud of It!"; **Hallandale Beach**, Is Your City Smarter than a 5th Grader?; **Indian Rocks Beach**, City Officials Go Back to School; **Keystone Heights**, Kids Voting; **Kissimmee**, Interactive City Hall Tour; **Lake Wales**, Essay Contest: "My City, I'm Proud of It," Lake Wales Municipal Coloring Book; **Lakeland**, Citizens' Academy: Governmentology 101; **Lauderdale Lakes**, Citizens' Academy; **Lauderhill**, Student Government Day Curriculum; **Live Oak**, Fields Trips to City Hall Hosted by the Mayor; **Lynn Haven**, Take Your Mayor to School Day; **Margate**, Municipal Express: Margate Student Council City Tour; **Miami Lakes**, Project Citizen Class; **Milton**, Municipal Government Seminar; **Naples**, Youth in Government Program; **North Port**, Government on Wheels; **Oldsmar**, Municipal Leadership Forum, Citizens' Academy; **Orlando**, City Hall Open House; **Palm Coast**, Student City Government Day; **Palatka**, Government in the Sunshine; **Palm Bay**, World of Work Program; **Safety Harbor**, Florida City Government Week Puppet Show; **St. Cloud**, St. Cloud City Services Showcase; **St. Petersburg**, TASCO Teen Councils; **Stuart**, Stuart Services Expo; **Tamarac**, City Service Spotlight: Emergency Operations Center, Tamarac University, Fire Rescue CERT and Cadet Program; **Weston**, Weston Government University Program