



Media Advisory
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Kingsport receives Municipal League award

NASHVILLE, Tenn. ---Kingsport's extraordinary achievements in all areas of municipal government ranging from education to housing, public works, infrastructure, and outstanding city services have made a tremendous impact upon the community and the citizens it serves. The city was recognized with a 2009 Tennessee Municipal League Achievement Award for Community Progress on Tuesday, June 16, 2009, during TML's 70th Annual Conference at the Chattanooga Convention Center.

Kingsport is a place where present and future goals intersect, where top-notch leadership and administrative teams work as one in continuously guiding the community toward extraordinary heights and opportunities," said Pat Hardy, municipal management consultant with the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

Hard times were the catalyst that brought education into play in Kingsport. Community leaders were dealing with a steep decline in the area's historically strong manufacturing base and lacked a skilled workforce conducive to economic diversity. A desire to diversify Kingsport's economic base became a motivating factor to re-educate the city's workforce. Now, an \$18 million plus Academic Village in Kingsport's downtown area is changing the face of education across the region.

The Kingsport Center for Higher Education, the first Leed certified green education building in Tennessee, will open in August 2009 and the Pal Barger Center for Automotive Technology in 2010. Kingsport's Educate/Grow scholarships pay full tuition towards an associate degree for any high school graduate of Kingsport or Sullivan County. This higher education initiative has placed in the top 16 among Harvard University's choice of top 50 Innovation in Government programs across the nation.

Revitalizing and replacing run down housing with new affordable options became part of the city's \$30 million effort to renew two area neighborhoods thanks to a \$11.9 million Hope VI Grant from HUD. Kingsport is one of the smallest communities to receive the funds.

The city has also committed \$7 million toward reconstructing the V.O Dobbins Community Center where new education and recreation spaces will benefit the community and a new Non-Profit Center will create a one-stop shop for many of the city's non-profit agencies.

When defunct book plant Quebecor deeded their facility to Kingsport, the city ran with the opportunity to develop it into a mixed-use project in the downtown area. Today, the facility is now the permanent home of a very successful downtown Farmer's Market, and will soon host an \$18.5 million physician practice, Mountain Region Family Medicine area. Plans are also underway to include downtown loft living as the former book manufacturing facility is reborn into a modern, commercial, retail and residential facility.

Kingsport's energy initiatives are also gaining ground. The city's Board of Mayor and Aldermen approved \$750,000 for the new John Adams Elementary School to use geothermal energy and newly installed automated radio-read water meters should save the city up to 5 percent annually by reducing operating costs and improving billing accuracy. The addition of hybrid vehicles and an all-electric vehicle along with automated garbage trucks, deployment of Global Positioning technology in service vehicles, energy audits and the Greenbelt Enhancement Plan, protecting 3,000 acres of flood plain to filter runoff, is keeping the city in the green.

"The elected and administrative teams in Kingsport are pushing forward in ways they have never done before, having to learn new methods of accomplishing goals and having to find and utilize resources which are largely non-traditional," said Hardy. "These are selfless initiatives, with payoffs that extend far beyond the current generation."

Each year the Tennessee Municipal League honors cities throughout the state for overall excellence, improvement, specific outstanding programs, or department accomplishments.

Other award winners for 2009 include: Alexandria, for Small City Progress; Chattanooga, for Excellence in Human Resource Programs; Dyersburg, for Excellence in Quality of Life Initiatives; Erwin, for Excellence in Governance; Gallatin, for Excellence in Police Services; Knoxville, for Excellence in Green Leadership; and Sparta, for Excellence in Public Works.

The Tennessee Municipal League is a voluntary, cooperative organization established by the cities and towns of the state for mutual assistance and improvements. The League's primary function is to advocate on behalf of city governments. TML works with the Tennessee General Assembly promoting legislation helpful to cities and opposing legislation harmful to cities.