

Program Excellence Awards for Outstanding Partnerships: Public- Private Partnerships

POPULATIONS 50,000 AND UNDER



JAMES V. THOMPSON

ICMA's Award for Public-Private Partnerships recognizes a local government and its private-sector partner (including nongovernmental organizations) that have demonstrated the value of public-private partnerships as an effective technique for introducing greater efficiency, innovation, and civic awareness into a variety of local government services. The recipient of this year's award in the 50,000-and-under population category goes to the city of Bothell, Washington, and City Manager James V. Thompson for their success in providing activities for junior high students.

One day in 1996, Pete Anthony, owner of Little Caesar's Pizza in a strip mall in Bothell, Wash. (pop. 28,000), mentioned to the fire department's public information officer (PIO) that he had noticed a large number of junior high boys hanging around his establishment during the early evening hours. He noted that while the boys weren't

causing any trouble, they seemed to have no place to go—there wasn't anyplace within the area that offered after-school activities for carless young people. Mr. Anthony and the PIO agreed that scheduling some activities for the students once a week would help keep them out of trouble.

Together, Mr. Anthony and the PIO contacted the Northshore School District and obtained permission to use space in the nearby Frank Love Elementary school every Monday. Mr. Anthony offered to supply free pizza and drinks between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.—which was enough to entice the boys to come to the school to hang out—and to serve as a mentor. In addition to Mr. Anthony, firefighters from the nearby fire station joined the teens each week to play basketball, demonstrate how the equipment on the fire engines works, or chat one on one. Thus, the Frank Love Junior High Gym Night was born.

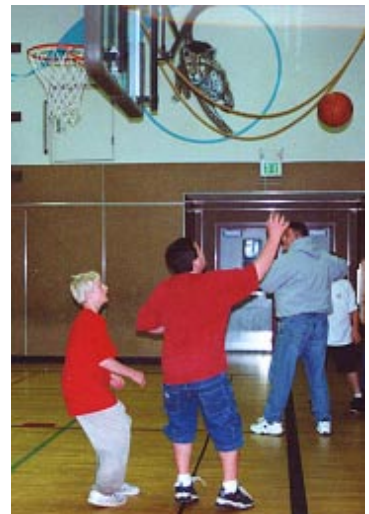
In 1998, the city of Bothell increased its involvement by assigning a staff member from its recreation division to lead the boys' activities. In addition to setting up basketball games, the staff member also brought board games and cards. On weeks when there are other activities taking place at the school, the fire department hosts the program at the local fire station, providing a movie and games for the students who attend. Because the fire station, the elementary school, and Little Caesar's Pizza are within an easy three-block walk of each other, students in the neighborhood can attend no matter where the program is offered without having to get a ride from their parents or someone else.

To get the word out about the Monday night activities, Bothell's recreation division advertises the program in its quarterly recreation brochure. In addition, the fire de-

partment PIO occasionally attends lunch at the junior high school to invite students personally. At the outset of the program, about 12 students came to the weekly sessions. Today the program attracts roughly 30 young people each week.

The Frank Love Junior High School Gym Night is simple in concept and inexpensive to manage, relying mainly on volunteers who are willing to spend a little time with a group of young people. The program not only provides teens with someplace to go and something to do, but it also offers them an opportunity to interact with role models and adults.

The success of the Frank Love Junior High Gym Night demonstrates that a lot can happen with very little money and a little initiative on the part of a single citizen and one city employee. For his part in the program, Mr. Anthony received the Alex Sidie Random Acts of Kindness Award in 1999. And for its part, the city of Bothell has received ICMA's Program Excellence Award for Outstanding Public-Private Partnerships. ♣



Junior high students enjoy pizza and shoot hoops as part of Bothell's Junior High Gym Night.