



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2011 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 11, 2011

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: A.V. Symington Bequest Projects

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Town of Leesburg

Jurisdiction population(s): 42,616

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2010, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: May Year: 2009

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 2011. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: John Wells

Title: Town Manager Jurisdiction: Town of Leesburg

Name: Kaj Dentler

Title: Deputy Town Manager Jurisdiction: Town of Leesburg

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Betsy Fields

Title: Communications Manager Jurisdiction: Town of Leesburg

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Town of Leesburg, Virginia
A.V. Symington Bequest Projects

Introduction. After receiving a generous donation from a resident, the Town of Leesburg took an innovative approach to identifying and financing recreational projects. In the spring of 2004, the Town of Leesburg Parks and Recreation Department was notified of a \$4.25 million donation to be used at Ida Lee Park. The donation was made possible by A.V. Symington, an avid swimmer at Ida Lee Park Recreation Center. Mrs. Symington stipulated that the money be used *“exclusively for the purchase or construction of improvements and/or purchase of equipment and services for public recreational and educational purposes at Ida Lee Recreation Center.”* After receiving word of the donation, Town staff and members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission embarked on an extensive community outreach effort to determine the best use of the donation. After conducting a telephone survey and holding several community input sessions, four projects were identified: expansion of the recreation center, construction of an outdoor pool, development of an indoor tennis center, and acquisition of adjacent land to expand Ida Lee Park.

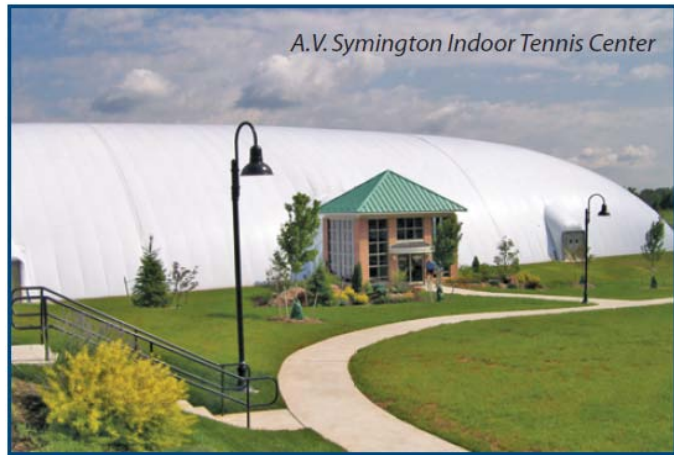


In April 2005, Mason-Dixon Polling and Research conducted a telephone survey of 625 adult Leesburg residents to determine the level of support for the four potential projects. The outdoor pool received an overall support of 82%, the expansion of the recreation center came

in second with 74%, acquiring the adjacent land received 68%, and the indoor tennis center received 44%. After conducting a feasibility study in the summer of 2005, the expansion of the recreation center was dropped from serious consideration due to the cost of construction and lack of financial performance. A financial model demonstrated that the remaining three projects were financially possible, as the outdoor pool and indoor tennis center would generate revenue. The Town was grateful for the generous donation, but \$5 million alone could not meet all the needs. With a market analysis demonstrating sufficient demand for three remaining projects, the Town came up with an innovative financial plan to meet as much of the community's needs as possible. With the help of the Town's financial advisor, a financial plan was devised to maximize the donation. The financial plan allowed for a maximum expenditure of \$7 million to construct the outdoor pool and \$2.5 million to add the indoor tennis center.

Background. At the time of the donation, while there were 24 private outdoor pools within the Town of Leesburg (including apartment and condominium complexes, HOAs, and health clubs), not one public outdoor pool existed. In assessing the need for an outdoor pool, the Town identified that of the 12,165 households within Town limits, more than half of them did not have access to an outdoor pool. These numbers clearly indicate the population potentially served by, and the need for, a public outdoor pool within the Town limits. Public support for an outdoor pool was also evident at the community outreach meetings. Once planning and design for the pool began, Town staff sought further input from the community on specific features to be included with the new pool. A wide variety of amenities were chosen to ensure appeal to the broadest possible audience.

While the Town was in the process of evaluating potential uses of the Symington bequest, the only indoor tennis facility located within Town limits closed. With the closure of the Loudoun Racquet Club, increased pressure fell on



the Town to meet the needs of citizens and provide these services in the club's absence.

Expanding the tennis facilities and programs, with the help of the donation, could not have come at a better time. While indoor tennis was initially the lowest activity identified, the closure of the Loudoun Racquet Club moved it up in priority. Initially, the Town of Leesburg discussed covering several existing tennis courts; however, the tennis community expressed strong support for additional indoor courts that could be used year-round. A semi-rigid structure covering four new courts was deemed the best long-term solution and would expand the Ida Lee Park Tennis Center to eleven courts.

Financial Plan. Once the top projects were identified for the A. V. Symington bequest, staff prepared a financial plan that allowed for maximum project development with minimal tax dollar impact. A package of three revenue sources was developed. This package consisted of the \$4.5M from the Symington donations, \$1M of a reallocated proffer from a local multi-use land developer, and an estimate of \$225,000 of annual net operating revenue. These funds would be used towards the purchase of Bond Anticipation Notes (BAN) in the amount of \$10M. For interim financing, the payment for the interest-only BANs would be paid for by the annual interest earned from the Symington bequest and the annual payment from the developer

proffer. After five years, the permanent financing would begin. The \$10M principal for the BAN would be paid off with the \$4.5M of the Symington bequest principal and the remaining \$600,000 of proffer funds. This plan would leave the Town with a \$5,150,000 general obligation bond for 20 years. Annual debt service on the bond would amount to \$375,000. The net operating revenue, estimated at \$225,000 annually, from the tennis and pool operations would be used to pay a portion of the debt service. The balance of the debt service, \$150,000, would be paid from the General Fund. As the financial performance of these facilities improves the debt service balance amount will be reduced proportionally.

The operational budgets for both projects were also streamlined to provide efficient running of the facilities. For example, only one new full-time staff member has been added to the department. The decision was made to hire a head tennis professional to oversee the new tennis facility and programs. This decision allowed the department to expand existing offerings and to raise the level of service as the members of the Loudoun Racquet Club were absorbed. For the outdoor pool, the current aquatics staff revamped their duties to include the management of the third pool. Several other cost saving measures were implemented in order to absorb the new facilities into current staff work schedules. For example, the department's grounds crew, which designed and installed the landscapes of both facilities, chose plant material and grasses that require minimal maintenance. The concession stand at the outdoor pool was contracted out to minimize costs as well.

Project Completion. The construction of the A.V. Symington Indoor Tennis Center was completed in December 2007. The entire project included construction of four new indoor tennis courts in a semi-rigid "bubble," renovation of the existing tennis pavilion and resurfacing

of the seven existing outdoor tennis courts. Annually, the center now hosts more than 320 classes, approximately a 30% increase from previous years. Revenue generated by the indoor tennis center has exceeded projections by more than 60%, reducing the amount from General Fund needed to cover the debt service for the project.

The A.V. Symington Aquatic Center opened Memorial Day Weekend 2008, following a very aggressive construction schedule. The outdoor pool complex includes a lazy river, two water slides, lap lanes, zero-depth “beach” entry, fountain sprays, tumble buckets, floating toys, snack bar and bath house. In 2010, the design of the A.V. Symington Aquatic Center was featured in Aquatics International’s annual “Dream Designs Showcase.”

Similar to the indoor tennis center, demand for the outdoor pool was evident from the day it opened. During the first summer it was open, the outdoor pool attracted an average of 1,000 visitors per day – 25% more than projected. Because the pool is often at capacity, particularly on the weekends, Parks & Recreation staff established a Twitter account to provide timely updates to customers about wait times.

Conclusion. The two new recreational facilities have both demonstrated significant financial success in their first two years of operations. Town staff attribute this success to the careful planning and community input that went into identifying potential projects. Hopefully, the Town of Leesburg’s community outreach approach and innovative financial plan will give other government agencies a successful example of how to develop new facilities or expand existing services with little to no cost to their constituents. The facilities built by the Town of Leesburg were not complicated in concept or design. However, they were designed to meet the needs of the community while providing a high-quality experience.