

# 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

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of program being nominated: | On The Road Together: Safe Teen Driving Circles | | |
| Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: | City of River Falls | | |
| Jurisdiction population(s): | 14,343 | | |
| 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: | June | Year: | 2007 |
| 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: | Scot Simpson | | |
| Title: | City Administrator | Jurisdiction: | City of River Falls |
| Name: |  | | |
| Title: |  | Jurisdiction: |  |
| Name: |  | | |
| Title: |  | Jurisdiction: |  |

### SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of contact: | Angel Smith | | |
| Title: | Management Analyst | Jurisdiction: | City of River Falls |
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| City: | River Falls | State/Province: | WI |
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**Problem Assessment**

According to the Center for Disease Control (2006), car crashes accounts for 36 percent of all deaths for teens in the U.S. In 2004, more than 4,767 teens in the U.S. ages 16 to 19 died of injuries caused by motor vehicle crashes. During 2005, nearly 400,000 motor vehicle occupants in this age group sustained nonfatal injuries severe enough to require treatment in an emergency department (CDC, 2006). The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among 16 to 19 year olds than among any other age group. In fact, per mile driven, teen drivers ages 16 to 19 are four times more likely than older drivers to crash (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2006).

In 2007, the Executive Director of St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice Program (SCVRJP) realized that there were no programs available in the community which offered Drivers Education Classes combined with Restorative Justice Circle process. In 2008, this local non-profit partnered with with the River Falls Municipal Court and River Falls Police Department in providing Safe Teen Driving Circles. Through this unique program, SCVRJP, River Falls Municipal Court and River Falls Police Department are able to maintain a strong commitment to supporting victims, offenders and engaging community Restorative Justice programs.

**Program Implementation and Costs**

All SCVRJP services are grounded in Restorative Justice best practices. Restorative Justice is an innovative approach to conflict resolution which focuses on repairing the harm caused by crime and conflict rather than simply punishing the offenders. It is imperative to understand that relying on harsh punishments like incarceration can be expensive and counter productive expecially when dealing with youth offenders. Therefore, Restorative Justice processes and practices can serve as a cost effective and useful alternative. It promotes healing, is based on respect and helps the offender understand the impact of their actions.

The program was initially funded by the Allstate Foundation for $30,000.  The grant covered start-up expenses. Additionally, SCVRJP wrote the curriculm, trained the speakers and circle keepers and co-produced the Minnesota Twin Cities Public Television documentary about the process.  A copy of the DVD can be provided upon request. Allstate provided a second partial grant to help fund creation of a Reference Manual. Once additional funds are gathered, the Reference Manaual will serve as a guide to assist other communities in duplicating this program.

Safe Teen Driving Circles provides a social and emotional presentation, engaging area community members in prevention of teen traffic fatalities. Safe Teen Driving Circles Restorative Justice Talking Circle, features a storyteller /guest speaker highlighting the potential consequences of unsafe driving.  The Circle objective is to teach kids to make safer choices around seatbelt use, speeding, cell phone use and driving impaired.  The lesson is delivered by the personal story of a victim/survivor or offender.  A River Falls reporter wrote about her experience attending the Safe Teen Driving Circle Program. In her article she explained the process of how everyone sits in a big circle in the room, listen to the guest speaker and tell small stories of their own. On the day of her visit the teens attending the program sat quietly as the guest speaker told a detailed story about her 19-year-old daughter. Her daughter had chosen to drink, drive, use her cell phone and not wear a seat belt. The combination of bad choices killed her. The speaker told how her daughter’s death will always affect her family and pleaded with the circle participants to make better choices. She said if reliving the pain of her daughter’s death would prevent even one person from suffering a fate similar to her family’s, she would do it again and again. The reporter expressed how deeply powerful the speaker’s words were and that her sharing had influenced everyone in the room. The reporter stated that she felt encouraged and uplifted to know that these kinds of driving circles were happening, here and many other places. The cost for participants to attend the two hour session is $40. Participant are referred as part of their school’s driver’s education program or because they were issued a ticket from the River Falls Police Department or consequence from the River Falls Municipal Court.

**Measurable Outcomes of the Program**

Participants are given an evaluation form at the end of the session. The questions asked helps assess program effectiveness so improvements are made. Please see survey questions and results from 2010 below:























The survey also asks participants what did they like most about the experience, what did they like least about the experience, as well as for additional comments and whether they would like to receive SCVRJP monthly newsletters. Another goal of the survey is to make sure that participants in this program understand that Restorative Justice Circle process extend beyond what is typically learned from a drivers education course. Secondly, it is important that at the end of the program participants make a public commitment to the circle about: wearing their seatbelt, not driving over the speed limit, staying attentive by not using their cell phone while driving, not drinking and driving, not texting and or any other commitment they desire. This program demonstrates leadership, excellence, and innovation and can be replicated in other communities. In fact, it was selected as part of the inaugural group of Bright Ideas recognized by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. The new Bright Ideas program serves to recognize promising government programs and partnerships that government officials, public servants, and others might find useful when faced with their own challenges.

**Lessons Learned**

Through planning and implementation of this program SCVRJP, River Falls Municipal Court and River Falls Police Department are able to maintain a strong commitment to supporting victims, offenders and engaging community Restorative Justice programs. Based upon the Safe Teen Driving Circle Program 2010 survey results, 99 percent of program participants indicated that they were impacted by the main speaker and 99 percent of program participants indicated that they made a public commitment to the circle. The Safe Teen Driving Circle Program:

* engages the community and has received positive feedback from participants;
* can serve as a cost effective and useful alternative to punishing the youth offenders and helps the offender understand the impact of their actions;
* can be replicated in other communities;
* demonstrates leadership, excellence and innovation; and,
* aligns with ICMA’s core beliefs.