



2011 All-America Cities Project Summaries

To be named an All-America City each community must describe three projects that to address serious challenges they are facing. One project must be focused on young people. Listed below are the summaries of the projects of the ten 2011 All-America Cities.

Kenai, Alaska

The Kenai River Working Group – Protecting the Health of the Kenai River

In 2008 the Kenai River was designated as a Category 5, or impaired water body, by the State of Alaska in accordance with the federal Clean Water Act. The Kenai River Working Group (KRWG) was formed to address the issue of water pollution. Tasked with finding agreement amongst diverse user groups, the KRWG united surrounding communities in an effort to protect the health of the River. The KRWG recognized that the Group needed to recommend a solution that would be acceptable to all user groups. The result was a joint resolution of the communities surrounding the river that the State adopt a regulation change which would ban 2-stroke motors from being used on the Kenai River, thereby reducing hydrocarbon discharge into the River. A key part of the project was the Kenai River Motor Buy Back Program that offered a cash incentive to replace older outboards with models that would meet EPA standards. The program resulted in the replacement of 200 outboards in a single year. In July 26, 2010, the status of the Kenai River was changed to a Category 2, or “water that attains its designated uses.”

Wildlife Conservation Community Program

The Wildlife Conservation Community Program (WCCP) is a community-based cooperative effort involving municipal, state and federal agencies, businesses, non-profits and the citizens of Kenai to foster better stewardship of wildlife resources within the city and create safer neighborhoods for people and a population of brown bears that have been habituated to human generated attractants in residential areas. This was accomplished through a community driven effort by private landowners, the City of Kenai and program partners to install and maintain bear-resistant garbage containers and reduce the availability of other human-caused bear attractants to help to minimize this major source of brown bear mortality. Newsprint versions of “*Living in Harmony with Bears*” were mailed to every resident within the municipal boundaries. Volunteers from non-profit agencies as well as state and local enforcement agencies went door to door handing out information on the WCCP, answering questions and assuring that residents understood that equipment was being made available. The resulting effect is safer neighborhoods for people and bears; less agency time spent dealing with bears in neighborhoods; and better stewardship of public trust wildlife resources.

Caring for the Kenai

Caring for the Kenai (CFK) is an environmental awareness contest that is an on-going and unique partnership between industry, government, educators, students, and nonprofit organizations, where high school students generate new and inventive ideas to address environmental challenges. CFK poses the question “What can I do, invent, create or improve to better care for the environment of the Kenai Peninsula or improve the area’s preparedness for

natural disaster?” Over 500 participants research, experiment, and conduct interviews to learn as much as possible about an environmental issue they wish to solve. Working with community and business leaders, government agencies, and policy makers, CFK students learn about the practical application of their ideas and gain real world experience implementing their projects. Parents learn about CFK when students discuss and work on their projects at home. Local media assist in getting the message out to the public. Industry, government, educators, regulators, and private citizens collaborate to promote both educational and environmental innovations. In 2011, Caring for the Kenai will be introduced as a national program, available to students in every school district across the United States.

Dublin, California

Dublin’ Affordable Housing Programs – A Home for Everyone

The City of Dublin has been a trailblazer and leader in affordable housing in the San Francisco Bay Area. Over the last 10 years, the City of Dublin experienced incredible growth and saw the opportunity to put the full weight of the community behind the development of affordable housing programs. During this period, the City’s programs created an astounding 900 below market rental and owner occupied units, which now comprise about 7% of the City’s overall housing stock. Programs include Dublin’s Below Market Rate Home Program, which provides a supply of deed restricted below market rate units, and a First Time Homebuyer Loan Program that provides down payment assistance. In addition, the Tri-Valley Housing Opportunity Center (TVHOC), a joint venture with the cities of Livermore, Pleasanton, San Ramon, and the Town of Danville, provides homebuyer education and counseling services. This program also allows developers who cannot build the required number of below market rate units to contribute to the Inclusionary In-Lieu Fee Fund, which the City uses to support non-profit developers in the construction of below market rate senior and multi-family rental developments.

Sustainability Through History, Community, and Environment

The City of Dublin views the issue and implementation of sustainability as more than just an environmental concern. The City has viewed sustainability in the preservation of its history; how it supports and keeps the community engaged on sustainability; and of course, through the need to provide innovative solutions to today’s and future environmental concerns. The City and its partners developed the Historic Park and Museums to create a living monument to the community’s past. This site hosts some of the buildings of the original settlers to create an authentic farm experience. To increase sustainability education, the City hosts a community volunteer event called Dublin Pride Week. As part of Dublin Pride Week, the City sponsors a Volunteer Day where residents engage the community in a variety of projects, including school beautification projects, clean water projects, and environmental program outreach. Lastly, the City promotes environmental sustainability through many programs and activities, including the creation of a division in the City dedicated to environmental efforts.

School of Imagination/Happy Talkers

Startling statistics on the rise in autism prompted Charlene and Mitch Sigman to start Happy Talkers to provide speech, occupational and behavioral therapy services to children in the Tri-Valley region of the Bay Area, including the City of Dublin. In 2006, the Sigmans expanded, creating the School of Imagination, an innovative and inclusive school readiness/early

intervention program that partners typically developing children with those afflicted with developmental disabilities. More than 300 children weekly participate in the programs they offer and they have served more than 3,000 children with speech delays, developmental delays and autism from throughout the region. Through a creative, regional community effort involving service groups, the City and a developer, the School of Imagination is in the process of building a permanent facility. The facility will include 10 classrooms, a library and other needed space where speech therapists and occupational therapists will work with the teachers to build skills one-on-one. The site also includes a 4,000 square-foot “all-abilities” playground, a one-of-kind facility in the Tri-Valley region. The equipment and flooring material will be wheelchair accessible and the playground will also include sand/water tables for sensory development.

Lakewood, Colorado

Planning Acronyms Spell Out the Future

Nearly 1,000 residents volunteered their time over several years to turn around the negative effects of a dying commercial corridor and address issues from a light-rail transportation line set to begin operating through the city’s most historic and eclectic neighborhoods by 2013.

Residents came to the city for help in finding ways to change the direction of the commercial corridor, and their efforts grew into a multiyear, multipronged effort. The results created station area plans for light rail and a new zone district called Transit Mixed Use. A Colfax Mixed Use zone district also was created. The plans for the station and the zoning facilitate the best development in the right locations by encouraging transit-oriented development centered on the light-rail stations. It allows urban-style residences, shops and offices around stations, and it increases the options for land uses close to the stations and includes pedestrian and bike links. The Colfax district is designed to help revitalize the avenue from a retail-only corridor focused solely on cars. It allows a mix of uses and densities for residences, commercial buildings and offices along Colfax or a mix of those uses – something that was not allowed under the previous zoning.

The Greening Lakewood Business Partnership

The Learning Source in Lakewood, Colorado operates one of the largest adult literacy programs in the country. When it learned its utility costs for its one-story brick building were higher than that of a 50-unit, multifamily complex, the organization sought energy-efficiency expertise from the community. This sparked the formation of the Greening Lakewood Business Partnership. Its mission is to bring energy efficiency to older, existing office and commercial buildings in Lakewood while providing job training, particularly for military veterans returning from the current overseas conflicts. The partnership helped the Learning Source reduce its monthly heating bills from \$3,500 to \$200. The partnership includes the city of Lakewood, which has worked with the utility company, banks and the state to help fund energy efficient retrofits; Red Rocks Community College, which created a program for students to train in energy auditing and provide free audits to businesses under the supervision of experts in the field; the Alameda Gateway Community Association, which continues the discussion with Lakewood businesses; Veterans Green Jobs, which mobilizes the military veterans to enter the Red Rocks program; the Jefferson County Workforce Center, which coordinates funding for the students’ paid internships; and the Better Business Bureau, which markets the partnership.

Boys and Girls Club

An entire community rallied around the goal of creating a special and safe place for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged youth in its midst. The mission was to create the first Jefferson County Boys & Girls Club at O'Connell Middle School in Lakewood, Colo. The difficulty was to meet the terms of a \$500,000 challenge grant and raise \$350,000 by May 1, 2010. The final hurdle required civic, business, and community leaders to persuade a hard-pressed school board to keep O'Connell open despite a committee recommendation to close it because of low enrollment numbers. Ultimately, three years of tireless work by many people to establish a Boys & Girls Club in Lakewood paid off in extraordinary ways. More than 200 socially and economically challenged kids became members, and the crime rate for juvenile incidents in the area dropped 53 percent in the first 74 days of the club's operation.

Belleville, Illinois

Renaissance of Downtown Belleville

The renaissance of downtown Belleville began with the award-winning Art on the Square and continues today with the completion of the \$7,000,000 Downtown Streetscape Project. An area in which a majority of its storefronts & buildings were recently vacant now has businesses competing for the remaining available spaces. A number of new businesses have located in downtown Belleville in the last five years, and many existing downtown businesses have remodeled or expanded their stores to compliment the new streetscape and to accommodate the increase in business. In addition, a movement of downtown living has begun in Belleville. Numerous loft spaces have been occupied with many more in the construction and planning stages. Art on the Square was the catalyst to bringing more people to downtown Belleville and the streetscape project has helped make downtown Belleville a destination all year round.

Buy Belleville First

The Buy Belleville First Campaign is a two-fold effort designed as a way to educate the citizens of Belleville about the importance of buying goods within their own community and to increase patronage and revenues for local businesses. The two components are an educational campaign and the "Belleville First" discount program. Community volunteers hand delivered letters to the 17,000 households within the corporate limits of Belleville that described how the City's budget works in terms of sales tax revenues and that the more you buy in Belleville, the more sales tax comes to the City for projects such as police & fire protection, roadway repairs & construction, City services, etc. Since its inception, the Buy Belleville First Campaign has gained momentum and has become more successful than originally anticipated. The City of Belleville has been featured on CNN and other local and regional news outlets to describe the impact of the program on the community.

The BASIC Initiative

The BASIC Initiative which, developed out of the Community of Character Initiative, is a hands-on program dedicated to encouraging citizens to build character in youth through community service. BASIC stands for Belleville Achieves Strength In Character and is promoted through local schools with planting the seed of having good character and making good choices beginning at an early age. BASIC provides character education programs to elementary and middle schools and raises money for various charities, including raising \$30,000 for St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

South Bend, Indiana

Northeast Neighborhood Revitalization

Neighborhood residents, the City of South Bend and institutions like the University of Notre Dame redeveloped the area near campus. Key partners formed the Northeast Neighborhood Revitalization Organization, led equally by institutions and neighborhood residents. Components include: a \$215-million mixed-use development, new housing, a partnership between Indiana University and Notre Dame to develop a site for a medical school and cancer research center, a state-certified technology park, and the redevelopment of a former hospital site. While the physical and economic landscape of the Northeast Neighborhood has changed, the more significant result has been the transformed relationships among neighbors, the university, and private and public sectors.

Divided Waters: Healing a Community's Past

In South Bend, Indiana, residents and key institutions have completed a project to heal the community's past by preserving a place where the waters of a pool were the fount of division. Opened in 1922 and established with tax dollars, the Engman Public Natatorium was used exclusively by whites, despite being located in the heart of a racially mixed neighborhood. In 1937, African-Americans gained admission to the pool one day per week. After they swam in the pool on Mondays with no whites present, it was drained and refilled before whites used it again. It wasn't until the 1950 that all people gained unfettered access, thanks to the NAACP's efforts. The pool closed in 1978, and hope for a true center of community life has lain fallow for a generation. On May 23, 2010, the former Engman Natatorium was dedicated as the Indiana University South Bend Civil Rights Heritage Center, transforming a community symbol of segregation into a national cultural center focusing on the civil-rights movement in the northern United States. For nearly five years, a coalition of residents, IU South Bend and its students, the City of South Bend and its Redevelopment Commission, and South Bend Heritage Foundation (a community development corporation) worked to establish this repository for stories of local heroes fighting for inclusion.

212° STARS

In South Bend, Indiana, a coalition of parachurch agencies, student volunteers and others are working in the four primary public high schools and an alternative high school to address the community's dropout rate through a peer-to-peer movement. The 212° STAR group represents the opposite of a top-down community initiative to solve the high-school dropout rate. Instead, this highly customized and segmented approach begins with the youth themselves, who are at-risk of dropping out or have already dropped out and are starting over at South Bend's Alternative High School. Through a relational approach, teens are influencing their peers to stay in school and strive for excellence as they encourage one another. In an environment where many come from broken or dysfunctional families, they view the 212° STAR group as an alternative family. Brutally aware of their schools' dropout rate and the odds against them, the youth instead choose a life supported by the affirmations they receive from their 212° STAR coaches and peers, reaching for personal excellence.

Scott City, Kansas

Building the Bridge Across Cultures... All Cultures

Scott City is diverse...by far more than skin tone or nationality. Energy and hospitality filled the air at a simple, potluck dinner where individuals took the first tentative steps across that silent divide to share their respective cultures, traditions, and offer friendship. Out of that evening, a strategy was born to assist with immigration concerns, ward off misconceptions and prejudice, and promote the positive attributes of various cultures and lifestyles. Potluck Dinners and Fiestas in the Park are conduits for food, fellowship and fun. These events also offer a teaching/learning atmosphere where Scott Citians can develop appreciation and understanding of the differences they share. Embracing diversity serves as a greater “Welcome” for those who choose to live in or visit Scott City. Learning about the talents and traditions of those who were once strangers greatly enhances a community that already has an abundance of opportunity and potential.

Area 96

Local law enforcement officials, government officials, and community members participating in the 2008 Scott County Summit identified the need to provide a community center for outreach and youth programs. Initially, First Baptist Church (FBC) was going to provide the facilities for these community programs within the current church building but ultimately purchased a building, believing it would be a great center for FBC and community youth. The vacant store front and warehouse had fallen into a state of disrepair; FBC members worked alongside other community members who volunteered time and resources to transform the building into the viable facility it is today. Area 96 has become so much more than anyone could have predicted in 2008. It provides not only a friendly, safe location for youth to meet, but has allowed Celebrate Recovery, the Area Mental Health Center, other groups and individuals to thrive. Area 96 has become a distribution center for food, material goods, and even pets! It has become a temporary physical shelter for those in need. It is truly a beacon of hope and outreach to area residents and to some who are only passing through.

Scott County Library...It's Mind-Building

The renovation and expansion of Scott County Library was completed in the spring of 2009. The structure has doubled in size and more than tripled its available technology from the former 45-year-old structure. The transformation of Scott County Library is not only aesthetically pleasing, but has additional space that has allowed this facility to become a community hub of information that enriches all segments of the population. Youth services have increased dramatically in the renovated facility. Youth-driven programs intentionally strike a balance between learning and fun. From the modern, comfortable teen section to the reading nook and loft, Scott County Library sports a youth friendly atmosphere. Area youth have voiced their approval through increased numbers and circulation. The improved youth programming has also drawn in children whose families are English language learners (ELL). Since parents usually become involved in activities their children enjoy, an unexpected side-benefit has been ELL patrons have begun making better use of Scott County Library. The library has responded by providing English-literacy activities, materials, and an interpreter. Scott County Library is no longer a simple book repository; it has become a community information center.

Tupelo, Mississippi

Fairpark: Tupelo's Front Porch

As gateway to the heart of downtown Tupelo, Fairpark is Tupelo's Front Porch. Ten years ago, this area was an unattractive, underutilized eyesore for the city – right at the point on Main Street where many visitors gained their first impression of Tupelo. Community leaders, through an open process with multiple opportunities for citizen engagement, turned a liability into an advantage. The Fairpark development has completely remade the face of downtown Tupelo. A former fairgrounds that once hosted a homecoming concert of native son Elvis Presley, the area adjacent to the established downtown was in decline when the city, in 1999, issued \$22.6 million in bonds to purchase 50 acres for a mixed-use development, the most ambitious downtown development project the city had ever undertaken. Today Fairpark boasts a modern City Hall, a state of the art automobile museum, and the Renasant Center for IDEAs, the Tupelo/Lee County regional business incubator. There is a 110-room Hilton Garden Inn with an adjacent 22,000-square-foot conference center adjoining BancorpSouth Arena, along with many other retail and residential complexes. The area features widened boulevards with sidewalks, landscaping, decorative lighting, and a large green space that is the site of multiple community events.

The Green Houses at Traceway

In the spring of 2003, Methodist Senior Services was the first in the nation to build The Green House® Homes on its campus in Tupelo. Its board of directors searched for five years to find the most innovative way to end the institutionalization of elders in need of skilled nursing care. The answer—small homes for ten persons, with private rooms and baths, a great room and open kitchen where the meals are cooked from scratch. The positive effect upon the elders was almost immediate. Besides its innovative layout and concept, the Green House Homes use a radically different staffing model designed to move the care and decisions as close to the elder as possible. Certified nursing assistants prepare the meals, lead the activities and provide housekeeping—essentially “running the house.” They work beside the nurses and the medical staff as part of a life-giving team. The Tupelo-based Methodist Senior Services has sparked a national revolution in long-term care. Visitors from over 40 states and four foreign countries have come to Tupelo to learn about the model of care. It is now being implemented by eighteen organizations in thirteen states with many more organizations in some phase of implementation.

Mayor's Citizen Task Forces – Education, Youth, Health

The Mayor's Youth, Education and Health Task Forces were formed to promote citywide initiatives that will make a difference, initiatives designed to improve the quality of life in Tupelo. Painting over graffiti and planting daffodils; learning stations for four and five year olds, collecting school supplies for needy children and making sure all newborns receive a copy of Goodnight Moon; residents trimming down and toning up, school children starting their day with exercise and “Health on a Shelf” in convenience stores are all signs through these task forces' work that the culture in Tupelo continues to evolve. Tupelo's history of citizen engagement in initiatives to bring about a better quality of life finds present-day expression in these task forces. They are citizen-driven, and their activities attempt to touch the widest array of Tupeloans possible. They begin with the traditional Tupelo conviction that involved people can make a difference, and that the community's future can be brighter than its present.

Eden, North Carolina

Rockingham County Education Foundation: Bridging the Gap

The Rockingham County Education Foundation was created to encourage Eden and Rockingham County, N.C. students to seek higher education opportunities. This was necessary due to the relatively low percentage of citizens who have earned degrees beyond high school, only 10.8%. The Foundation's goal is to reverse a culture that had not valued education because of traditional job opportunities that did not require education beyond high school. The Education Foundation placed college advisors in the four county high schools to promote the value of a college education. Each year, College Application Week is held to encourage students to apply to colleges. Prior to the establishment of the Education Foundation, there was little interest in this opportunity among students. In 2006, no local students participated during that weeklong push. The following year, 22 students filed applications. In 2008, after the college access advisors were hired, 327 students filed applications. In 2009, that number increased to 583. In 2010, seniors from the four high schools earned more than \$17 million in scholarships, a 44% increase over the previous year.

Rivers Run Through Us

In 2002, a small grassroots group of river aficionados developed the Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) to safeguard Eden's rivers and promote them for recreation and commercial growth. They reached beyond Eden's borders creating a bi-state network sharing a river heritage. They identified a 3,300 square-mile river basin area surrounding the Dan and Smith rivers as well as the Mayo River that runs through the western part of the county. DRBA collaborated in a two-state area comprised of 16 counties. Their goals included conservation, recreation and education, and the overriding purpose that healthy rivers play a large role in attracting people and businesses to the area. DRBA's membership across these 16 counties now exceeds 500. DRBA encouraged the city to build a 1.5 mile greenway, to create an award-winning annual river festival, and removed over 42 tons of refuse along riverbanks. Moreover, DRBA planted 400 trees to preserve the ecology of the rivers.

Rockingham Student Health Centers: Caring for the Health of our Young People

In a community beset by a deteriorating economy, rising poverty, and an increasing number of uninsured citizens, the healthcare needs of teens are often neglected. Two Eden physicians addressed this problem by promoting the idea of student health centers in area high schools to help combat a high rate of teenage pregnancy, obesity and other high-risk behaviors, including drug and alcohol abuse. A unique collaboration including two county hospitals, the school system, county health and mental health agencies, and Social Services, progressed from the idea of establishing one center in Eden to opening centers inside the four county high schools. Rockingham County Student Health Centers, headquartered in Eden, are the largest rural, school-based Centers in the state of North Carolina. The Centers offer chronic disease monitoring, laboratory testing, acute care services, dental screening, gynecological services, pregnancy prevention education, nutrition education, social work, counseling, immunizations, sports physicals, anger management, smoking cessation, health education and referrals. New threats to student health have resulted in the Centers offering programs addressing cyber bullying, social media and texting while driving. Although the Centers file claims with private insurance providers and accept Medicaid, no one is turned away.

Fayetteville, North Carolina

History, Heroes, and Hometown Feeling

Fayetteville had for decades endured a derisive nickname ('FayetteNam') and a muddled sense of identity even among local, long-time residents. Rather than shun its identity as a military community, Fayetteville began to fully embrace its military heritage when residents chose the motto, "History, Heroes and a Hometown Feeling" as an accurate indicator of the community's identity. The timing was fortuitous, because in 2005 the Base Realignment and Closure process mandated the transfer of two major Army commands to Fort Bragg, thereby adding thousands of military members and civil service employees, and their families, to the community population. Fayetteville's efforts to re-brand itself have paid off handsomely. Tourism is up significantly over the past decade, jobs have come to town along with the Army commands, and the local housing market is ranked NO.1 by *Zillow* for year-over-year appreciation.

Greater Fayetteville Futures

Fayetteville confronted a bleak economic outlook in 2001. Jobs were not being created; young people were leaving to build careers elsewhere. Community leaders, joined by citizens from across the community, answered the "wake up" call. Greater Fayetteville Futures served as a community brainstorming session resulting in a more clearly defined self-image and a decision to focus the local economy by leveraging the presence of the military. Leaders consolidated the community's economic development efforts, and the local business community launched Operation Strikeforce, a fund raising effort that would help recruit new businesses to the area. Opening the North Carolina Military Business Center in 2005, Fayetteville was well-positioned when later that same year, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission mandated the relocation of FORSCOM and USARC Headquarters, two major Army Commands, from Fort McPherson, Georgia to Fort Bragg. Now, a decade later, Fayetteville is transforming. It has the best performing housing market in the nation. More than 5,975 jobs have been created and more than \$585 million has been invested into the community.

Reading Rocks!

Reading Rocks! is an annual community initiative in Fayetteville promoting the value of literacy and the joy of reading while raising funds to purchase books for students throughout the public school system. Since 2004, the *Reading Rocks! Walk-A-Thon* has served as a rallying point for the entire community to participate. In 2010, more than 20,000 teachers, students and parents, as well as thousands of other individual volunteers came together to march with high school bands and mascots through the heart of Fayetteville's historic city center. From that most recent enthusiastic kick-off, more than \$200,000 was raised to buy books for the public school system, bringing the total to more than \$800,000 since the inception of *Reading Rocks!* Access to current, diverse and relevant reading materials is critically important to meet the needs of all levels of readers. Cumberland County Schools, which serve Fayetteville, include more than 52,000 students from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds. The funds raised by *Reading Rocks!* benefit the classrooms and media centers serving those students. According to North Carolina Report Card data, the number of books available per student in Cumberland County school media centers has risen dramatically since 2008 (from 17.09 to 24.42), bringing the Cumberland County Schools to a point above the state average.

Fort Worth, Texas

Directions Home

Partner agencies are working together to make homelessness rare, short-term and non-recurring in Fort Worth by 2018. The Directions Home concept appears simple, but in practice it is a complex community collaboration between the public and private sectors, with employers, landlords and homeless service organizations coordinating with public sector services. Hundreds of professionals and volunteers are focused on reducing and shortening homelessness and funded by financial contributions from public agencies, as well as individuals, foundations and corporations. Before Directions Home, the majority of public funding spent on homelessness was devoted to sheltering and not on programs that would end homelessness. Now, an additional \$30 million in private funding has been secured, as well as about \$2.4 million annually, for local political entities to ensure Fort Worth focuses on providing a compassionate way out of homelessness. Directions Home involves steering homeless persons to permanent supportive housing, job opportunities and dealing with underlying medical issues. Particular emphasis is on helping homeless children, who make up more than 25 percent of the homeless in Fort Worth.

Mental Health Connection

An innovative and unique system to enhance access to mental health services, Mental Health Connection's "no wrong door promise" is more than mere words. Twenty-nine local mental health organizations, from large public entities to specialized private providers, come together to address community needs and determine potential improvements. The initiative has strong volunteer support which brings community partners together to strategically address community needs. In the 11 years since its formation, Mental Health Connection has generated more than \$45 million in funds and in-kind services to improve mental health care. With one staff person and an army of volunteers, the Mental Health Connection continues to focus on its vision: no wrong door to the right mental health resources.

We Are Legal Graffiti Abatement

Standard-issue weapons to fight graffiti in Fort Worth produced little results, but when two high school art teachers and students from rival high schools decided to channel the talents and time of youth from doing graffiti to producing well-conceived and approved art, things changed. WAL is a student-driven, non-scholastic, voluntary effort that redirects the talents and time of stereotyped central city youth, predominately Hispanic. Each youth signs a WAL contract pledging to no longer paint illegally. With only guidance from the teachers and support from a growing number of community organizations and businesses, WAL students have transformed themselves from would-be criminals who were fined for tagging into Fort Worth's "Pop Surrealism Post Modern Urban Art Movement, Formerly Known as Graffiti" artists. They also are transforming the community by adorning walls with murals rather than graffiti. As a result, still active taggers respect the wall murals that WAL students have painted by not tagging the work. The work of WAL students is paying off. Fort Worth has seen a 33 percent decline in graffiti, particularly in the neighborhood from which most WAL participants come. WAL students are making Fort Worth a more attractive place to live.