

2004 All-America City Award Application

We encourage applications from neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties and regions.

Community Information

Community name and state:

City of Springfield, Ohio

Your community is applying as a:

☐ Neighborhood ☐ Town ☒ City ☐ County ☐ Region

If applying as a region, name participating communities:

If applying as a neighborhood, name city:

Contact Information

All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout entire competition and for follow-up):

Name: Shannon Meadows

Title: Executive Assistant to the City Manager

Organization: City of Springfield

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List the 3 individuals who most actively participated in filling out this All-America City Award application (add additional lines if needed):

[Provide name and title; organization; phone; e-mail address]

Shannon Meadows, Executive Assistant to the City Manager; City of Springfield; (937) 324-7305;
smeadows@ci.springfield.oh.us

J.C. Wallace, President; Springfield-Clark County Chamber of Commerce; 333 North Limestone Street,
Springfield, Ohio 45503; (937) 325-7621; j.wallace@springfieldnet.com

Katina M. Koumoutsos, Executive Director; Neighborhood Housing Partnership; 20 S. Limestone Street,
Springfield, OH 45502; (937) 322-4623; tkoumoutsos@springfieldnhp.org

The community applying will receive one complimentary membership (or a membership renewal if an AAC application was submitted last year) to the National Civic League for one year. To whom should this membership be directed?

Name: J.C. Wallace, Springfield-Clark County Chamber of Commerce

Address: 333 N. Limestone #201

City, State, Zip Code: Springfield, OH 45503

Phone Number: (937) 325-7621 **Fax:** (937) 325-8765

Email: j.wallace@springfieldnet.com

If we are designated an All-America City, we agree to follow NCL's rules (available on the website) regarding use of the All-America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name: _____ **Title:** _____

Community Statistics

Note: Use the most up-to-date statistics possible for your neighborhood, town, city, county, or region (*source suggestions:* U.S. Census Bureau, State Department of Economic Security, State Department of Finance, Department of Public Health, and local school statistics)

POPULATION (*in year 2000 or most recent*): 65,358

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 1990-2000 (indicate + or -): -7.28 %

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990 and Census 2000

RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN (*percentage*):

White alone	78.0 %
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1.2 %
Black or African American alone	18.2 %
Asian alone	0.7 %

American Indian and

Alaska Native (AIAN) alone 0.3 %

Native Hawaiian and Other

Pacific Islander (NHOP) alone 0.0 %

Some other race alone 0.5 %

Two or more races 2.1 %

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: \$ 32,193

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL: 13.5 %

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: 6.0 %

Source/Date: Ohio Office of Workforce Development Bureau of Labor Market Information, December 2003

POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP *(percentages, if available):*

19 years old and under 29.1 %

20-24 8.0 %

25-44 27.0 %

45-64 20.7 %

65 and over 15.2 %

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP: 57.2 %

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION -- Name the three largest employment sectors in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:

Management, professional, and other related occupations 24%

Service occupations 18%

Sales and office occupations 25%

Construction, extractions, and maintenance occupations 8%

Production, transportation, and material moving occupations 24%

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Part I: Community Background and Community Challenge Section

Add lines as needed for your responses

1 (A). Community Background: Set the background for your community. Tell its story. Summarize your community's history, successes and struggles. Describe how your community got to where it is today and your community's current state of affairs. (700 word maximum):

Springfield is itself the very definition of a true American heartland community. It is a city in constant change. Much like the numerous springs that characterize the area and gave the city its name, Springfield has sprung forth out of the difficult times to become a thriving and life-filled community. It is abounding with energy—a fountain of hope in the heart of America.

The city is situated in the Miami Valley, a hilly agriculturally rich region in western Ohio. Looking over the city, steeples and clock towers are scattered across the quaint skyline. Evidences of a marked history becomes obvious from touring the historic districts of large beautiful homes and churches.

Located on the Old Historic National Road and chartered in 1850, Springfield experienced early rapid growth with the expansion of area railroads. Agriculture flourished, and the Industrial Revolution then led the way into the prosperity of local industry. At the beginning of the Civil War, Springfield was one of the world's leaders in the manufacturing of agricultural equipment. International Harvester Company (now International Truck and Engine Corporation) became the area's top industry after a local native invented the combined self-raking reaper and mower in 1856. When automobiles were introduced in the early 1900s, ten different auto manufacturers were located in Springfield.

In 1950, nine of Springfield's top ten employers were manufacturers. However, like much of the rest of the nation, the city's economy has transitioned to more service-based. In stark difference from fifty years ago, the top ten employers now include two manufacturers, five service providers, and three government agencies. Diversity of employment opportunities has characterized the city in recent years.

Springfield is certainly a city that has seen its share of both prosperous and tumultuous times. The 1980s and early 1990s were especially hard. The city faced economic hardships that eventually led to declining population growth. Expansion between 1950 and 1990 was slow, well below the average for Ohio cities.

However, through the cooperation and perseverance of local businesses, committed citizens and the local government leaders, Springfield has risen to new levels. In the last few years, Springfield has seen great development in regional businesses once again making the city key in the manufacturing and distribution industries around the nation. From 1994 to 1997, Ohio was the leader in national investment in manufacturing. Ohio reclaimed this honor once again in 2003. The Springfield area has played a major role in this achievement with over forty major business expansions including a new Lexus-Nexus data center and new, federally funded, Super Computer facility announced in 2003. Aggressive expansion efforts to cooperatively annex commercial, industrial, and new residential properties, and improving the financial stability of Springfield and the surrounding area, have characterized the last decade. Such steps have paved the way for the Springfield community to embrace its manufacturing past while transitioning to a diversified market which includes technology research and development.

Springfield has its problems, just like every other American community. However, the people of Springfield are not easily downtrodden by obstacles and challenges. Rather, citizens are invigorated by such hard times, and become all the more determined to come out for the better.

In 1983, Newsweek Magazine selected Springfield to be the focus of its 50th Anniversary issue, calling it the “typical” American city, a place where one will find “that stubborn American grit in adversity, that refuses to give up on the dream of a better life.” Springfield certainly continues to define what American cities are all about—hard work, community pride, and unity of spirit. Springfield truly is a spring of life.

1 (B). Community Celebration: Why should your community be selected as an All-America City? Describe what makes your community a great place to live, work, and play. *(300 word maximum)*

Springfield is alive! Nestled in the Miami Valley between Dayton and Columbus, Springfield has been able to maintain the American small-town atmosphere that it was founded upon. Beautiful parks throughout the city create serene getaways from the busy-ness of everyday life and summertime Friday night festivals at city hall bring a sense of citizen closeness that is not always common in a city of this size. At the same time, the city has also been moving forward as a new-millennium community, striving to be one of the most appealing cities in the nation.

Springfield has history! Historic districts dominate much of the city, emphasizing Springfield’s incredibly rich and colorful heritage. The cathedrals and stone churches that line the downtown streets ring out with chimes of strong tradition as well as a hope for days to come.

Springfield has culture! The Springfield Museum of Art offers a permanent collection of American and French art along with exhibitions from local and international artists. The Springfield Symphony Orchestra and the Springfield Civic Theater are regulars at the Clark State Performing Arts Center. The Summer Arts Festival runs throughout the summer and features rounds of art exhibits and musical performances.

Springfield is full of opportunities! Wittenberg University and Clark State Community College offer vast amounts of educational options. Large industrial parks, two hospitals, government agencies and a growing diversified service-centered business sector makes Springfield an excellent place to find work that fits with anyone’s career niche.

1 (C). Community Challenges: Based upon your community’s current status, describe your community’s two most pressing challenges.

Challenge #1: *(200 words maximum)*

Harsh economic conditions effect communities in many ways. During the second half of the 20th century, significant job losses in Springfield resulted in many challenges—one of which is substandard housing. Hard economic times led to residential disinvestment. Today, citizens work alongside community leaders to foster reinvestment. As our community works to rebuild, we reinvigorate our pride!

Disinvestment and neglect characterize the Rocking Horse Area. The area is named for the shape created by nine contiguous census tracts. Statistically, the area has experienced tremendous socio-economic hardships. Most evident are the bottomed out housing values averaging just \$51,200 according to the 2000 Census.

Houses in the Rocking Horse area are old and tired; on average 80% of the homes located in this area were built before 1959. Most have seen several owners occupy their rooms and have been relegated into the hands of property owners renting them out to tenants (57.3%) that have little interest in the homes' historic charm. Others, 16.4%, are vacant and suffering from a lack of attention. A recent housing study indicated that 82% of the city's substandard or boarded houses are within this one concentrated area.

Challenge #2: *(200 words maximum)*

As is the case with so many Midwest communities, Springfield has experienced a recent surge of immigrants, many originating from Central and South America and Eastern Europe. Often they arrive in the area with extremely limited knowledge of English and little understanding of basic local culture. In addition, educational attainment for Springfield area residents is significantly lower than the state and national averages, despite the readily accessible universities and community colleges in a rather small radius.

It is estimated that over 20,000 adults in Springfield and Clark County have trouble reading text as simple as a road sign or a food label. This staggering statistic results in higher dependency on welfare, which hurts the community economically through loss of professional labor capital. Another major problem resulting from adult illiteracy is the affect that it has on children. Children whose parents cannot read are much more likely to lack the desire to achieve higher levels of education. This could have disastrous effects on the future economy and progress of Springfield.

Part II: Community-Driven Projects

Add lines as needed for your responses

Part II requires descriptions of three collaborative community projects that have significantly affected the community.

The first two projects should be drawn directly from the two community challenges stated above.

The third project should be reflective of what your community is doing for children and youth.

PROJECT ONE (Challenge #1)

1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)

Neighborhood Housing Partnership of Greater Springfield (NHP) is a nonprofit organization with the primary purpose of creating and preserving affordable, quality housing and strong neighborhoods through partnerships of residents, business and government.

NHP was established in partnership with the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation's NeighborWorks® network to assist in increasing home ownership for low and moderate income residents, promote rehabilitation of housing, and provide home improvements via a revolving loan fund for affordable home loans. In addition, NHP provides referrals to participating lending institutions and pre-purchase and post-purchase home ownership counseling. It also supports new construction of single family homes, partners with developers to create multi-family and single family homes and has established a purchase / rehab / resale program. As part of its foundation and commitment to resident-led community improvements, NHP has created a program to identify and train community leaders and assist them with their efforts to improve their neighborhoods.

2. Describe the relationship between this project and your first challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)

Approximately two years old, NHP was created to strengthen neighborhoods primarily by increasing homeownership opportunities and sustaining those investments by providing affordable home repair programs. NHP understands that homeowners may need help with repairs and improvements and that well maintained homes are vital for healthy neighborhoods. As such, NHP offers low-interest loan and incentive programs to assist homeowners with improvements. A special product developed for the target area is a matching dollar for dollar incentive for exterior improvements. Over 100 properties have been improved in two years.

NHP also offers comprehensive homebuyer education and credit counseling to help prospective homebuyers learn about the home buying process and avoid many of the common pitfalls. NHP currently has a ratio of approximately one homebuyer for every three receiving counseling services.

Finally, one of the greatest obstacles to buying a home can be the out of pocket cash required for downpayment and closing costs. Many families find that they can afford the monthly mortgage payment

but don't have the savings to cover closing costs. NHP offers downpayment and closing cost assistance to qualified households.

NHP has a broad-based level of support for its community development efforts. These programs are sustained through win-win partnerships with government, private foundations, lenders, Board of Realtors, and corporate support. Lenders benefit from a growing market of homebuyers, and invest with confidence that NHP borrowers will pay back their loans—on time and in full. Realtors and insurance companies are provided with a new source of clients. Home repair and improvement businesses have a reliable source for ongoing business. Government Agencies save time and resources, as NHP administers community development programs and services.

3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)

NHP is built on collaboration and community participation. NHP is founded on the principle of empowering Springfield residents to make their dreams come true. In an effort to help citizens realize their dreams, NHP has received support and organizational assistance from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and its NeighborWorks® Network. This network of organizations focuses on revitalizing and stabilizing communities across the United States through the implementation of its *Full Cycle Lending System*, a proven approach to helping prospective and current homeowners who are unable or don't know how to obtain conventional loans. NHP has adapted this approach for the Springfield community partnering with lenders, insurers, businesses, and government agencies to deliver a range of programs and services, NHP coordinates homebuyer education and down payment assistance classes as well as post-purchase counseling and emergency home improvement loans.

NHP is proud of the partnerships established to serve citizens of Springfield. The various partners include:

- NeighborWorks ® Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation
- The Turner Foundation
- The City of Springfield
- The Springfield Foundation
- Springfield Community Lending Agencies
 - Fifth Third Bank
 - Security Bank
 - Cornerstone Bank
 - Home City Federal Savings Bank
 - KeyBank
 - National City Bank
 - Liberty Savings Bank
 - New Carlisle Federal
- Ohio Department of Development
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Teaming with others enables NHP to simplify and speed up the loan process for individuals and families unable to obtain conventional loans; and provide a variety of homeowner support services. In other words, NHP and its partners are *paving the way, helping borrowers find their way home.*

NHP is committed to meeting the unique needs of Springfield lender partners by providing user-friendly assistance for homeownership and home improvement services to the community; thus, creating a win-win situation for everyone involved.

4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)

NHP has had a tremendous impact on neighborhoods, residents and local economic development by providing innovative programs. For example, target area residents are eligible for matching grant funds up to \$4,000 for exterior improvements. In its first year and a half, the program will have improved 70 homes.

NHP helped sixty eight families achieve the *American Dream* of homeownership, generating \$4,973,031 in first mortgages. Homebuyer education and counseling was provided to 254 families and NHP facilitated downpayment assistance for 38 households. The average homebuyer, many of whom are female heads of household, has an annual income under \$30,000. The equity and appreciation of homeownership represent a vitally significant financial asset for these families. The majority of our homebuyers tell us they would not have been able to navigate the complex and intimidating process of homebuying without our encouragement and support.

Through home repair and construction management, NHP assisted 66 households with emergency-and comprehensive home repairs generating \$337,000 in construction contracts for small businesses.

NHP implemented the *Cultivating Neighborhoods* program, a beautification project that enlisted the help of over 200 volunteers. These volunteers came from all walks of life and professionally landscaped 22 homes in an inner city neighborhood. One of the residents informed staff that her home appraisal increased by over \$25,000. NHP and the neighborhood association president were invited to Washington D.C. to receive the prestigious Dorothy Richardson Award from Neighborhood Reinvestment for this neighborhood collaboration.

NHP is the youngest NeighborWorks organization to be accepted in the Campaign for Homeownership. This national initiative will generate tens of thousands of first time and minority homebuyers.

NHP conducted a quantitative analysis to determine that economic benefits to individuals and local economy equal \$6,326,635 and include; home equity, lender revenue, real estate revenues, taxes, fees, retail, and jobs supported by construction activity.

Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)

Katina M. Koumoutsos, Executive Director; Neighborhood Housing Partnership; 20 S. Limestone Street,
Springfield, OH 45502; (937) 322-4623; tkoumoutsos@springfieldnhp.org

PROJECT TWO (Challenge #2)

1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)

Founded in 1988 as a non-profit coalition designed to aid adults in developing literacy skills, the Clark County Literacy Coalition (CCLC) has been growing in leaps and bounds over the past several years. The Coalition, based in Springfield, consists of twelve organizations, each supporting literacy issues and working toward improving literacy in the Springfield area.

Several of the coalition members are service-providers. Services offered by these organizations include one-on-one tutoring, after school tutoring, GED preparation, and lower-level literacy services as well as recently added programs such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, family programs, and life skills opportunities.

Other coalition members offer financial and facility assistance. All services are offered free of charge and are funded by donations from local citizens and businesses as well as governmental grants.

2. Describe the relationship between this project and your second challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)

Illiteracy is an obvious problem with potentially dangerous ramifications if left unaddressed. Approximately 20% of the area's adults need help improving their literacy skills. The Clark County Literacy Coalition was initially established to provide adult literacy education through one-on-one tutoring. Their vision is for every adult in Clark County to be functionally literate and the Coalition was founded on this principle.

For several years after it was founded, the Coalition continued to simply provide volunteer tutoring services for desirous adults. However, in recent years, the Clark County Literacy Coalition has had an even greater impact than previously in the Springfield area. New programs have been developed to address new needs of the community. One such need, added in 2001, was ESOL classes which help promote literacy in the growing minority and immigrant population in Springfield. ESOL provides opportunities for those new to the U.S., or those who are not fluent in English to gain understanding of the language and culture of our country. They are involved in conversation classes where they learn basic life skills and learn about living in the American culture.

The Family Teaching and Learning Center (Family TLC) has also only been operating for a few years. This service is available at the Warder Literacy Center for parents with children enrolled in a CCLC program. One night a week, parents spend time working on life and parenting skills, as well as literacy, while their children get help with their homework, reading or other enjoyable educational activities.

Other programs include PICK-A-Pack (Parents Increasing Children's Knowledge), GED preparation and Adult Basic Literacy Education. Computer training is another recent addition to the Coalition. Each aspect of the Coalition is evaluated regularly to ensure that every program is addressing current community needs.

3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)

The entire concept of the CCLC is the collaboration of various organizations to supply much needed literacy education. Organizations within the coalition include:

- Warder Literacy Center
- Clark County Public Library
- Springfield News-Sun
- Springfield-Clark County Joint Vocational School (JVS)
- Springfield City Schools
- Clark County Schools
- Opportunities Industrialization Center
- Springfield/Clark County UAW
- Salvation Army
- Clark State Community College
- Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce
- Del Pueblo

Each organization contributes in a particular way whether it be through facility use, financial contributions, or service providing. Some members provide support for literacy issues, others provide literacy education and other services to local citizens. For example, the Springfield City Schools and the Springfield-Clark County JVS work together to offer GED preparation courses.

Without the cooperation and effective communication between the twelve agencies, the Coalition's efforts would fail. Every decision that is made is a combined effort of the organizations, which has effectively stabilized the problem-solving process within the Coalition.

4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)

Individual testimonies from those involved in CCLC's many programs are certainly the best illustration of its impact on the local community:

"At one time my reading skills were so bad that I didn't want anyone to know. A friend told me about the Literacy Coalition...It has changed my life a lot because my reading has gotten a lot better. My tutor really works hard to help me." —L.T.

"I came to Literacy Center in October of 2000. I had moved here with my husband from China. I spoke very little English. I started attending English classes... [and] I am now attending the Family English class. Now I can carry on conversations...I also can now go to the store all by myself." —L.H.

The need for expansion and newly developed programs are also major evidences of the CCLC's success. Over 150 adult students were active in the 2000-2001 program year. During that time, about 50 of the students completed at least one educational level and over 40 demonstrated great progress in their level. Approximately 10 families are currently involved in the Family TLC program. About 175 volunteers gave approximately 6,000 hours of their time and efforts into helping people learn to read.

Only 17% of the entire budget of the Coalition is spent on administration. Administrative costs are kept low in order for more programs to be initiated and more needs to be met.

The Literacy Coalition helps the community in tangible ways. However, its impact goes much deeper than the surface. Learning to read has boosted the self-confidence of countless Springfield citizens. Higher levels of respect for one's self have also led to more respect for others. The chain of influence continues to grow.

Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)

Pricilla Marshall; Director; Clark County Literacy Coalition; 137 E. High Street, Springfield, OH 45502; (937) 323-8617; support@clarkcountyliteracy.org

PROJECT THREE

As a commitment to America's Promise, the National Civic League has issued the Youth Initiative Challenge. We ask that at least one project from each All-America City applicant document ways in which the lives of children and youth have been tangibly improved.

1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)

Rocking Horse Center (RHC) offers comprehensive health care services for children and young families. Its aim is to provide quality resources so that every child can be healthy—regardless of family income. Since its establishment in 1999, RHC has turned no child away, and is continually expanding to accommodate the growing clientele. Because of the comprehensive nature of services, RHC also provides developmental and psychiatric counseling, parental education, insurance and Medicaid assistance, and other family support services. Since January 2004, the center has served 5,500 children. The 2004 budget projects that the center will examine and serve more than 8,500 children by December.

The center's mission—to help raise healthy children in caring families—is a true reflection of their desire to build a healthy community. Each doctor and staff member work together to provide affordable, accessible and individualized care for every Springfield child.

2. Describe the relationship between this project and the challenge it is addressing, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)

The 2000 census indicates nearly 40% of the persons living in poverty in Springfield are children. Thirteen-percent of those children are under five years of age. Given these stark statistics, the Springfield Community has banded together to insure that *every* family in Springfield can receive state of the art health treatment—regardless of ones ability to pay.

During a rally held on the Springfield City Plaza, Mayor Warren Copeland and Dr. James Duffee, a local pediatrician, addressed concerns about childhood poverty. Dr. Duffee presented the dream of a pediatric clinic that would serve children regardless of income. In 1999, the Rocking Horse Center was developed in a collaboration of its founding physician, representatives of the city's two hospitals, city leaders, churches, and community agencies.

RHC bases its practice on anticipatory guidance. By educating parents on the importance of immunizations, regular check-ups, and nutrition, RHC takes advantage of opportunities to prevent childhood health problems.

Far from being a run of the mill medical clinic, RHC forfeits its profit potential in order to provide state-of-the-art health care to Springfield's children. The 2004 annual budget projects that the center will see a \$1.3 million expenditure over revenue deficit. Community members come together to raise funds on an annual basis in an effort to insure that the center will remain open year after year.

Since January 2004, the Rocking Horse Center doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, and practitioners have logged over 18,000 visits. Of these visits, 5,500 children have been served. Childhood poverty and under-insured families are tough challenges for the citizens of Springfield; however, we are not deterred. Each year the center gets stronger and serves more families. We refuse to give up on our children's health—mental, physical, and emotional. Healthier children build healthy communities—this is what Springfield, as a community believes!

3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)

From its conception, RHC has been built on strong cooperation and partnerships. Through the help of the local government, two local hospitals, and other community organizations, RHC has been involved in multilateral efforts to care for Springfield's children.

RHC has partnered with the county prosecutor's office to create the Child Advocacy Center to assist families in dealing with suspicions of child abuse. Through this program, children in abuse situations are protected against intensive and overwhelming interrogation at a police station. Instead, children are cared for as workers gain trust by careful questioning. Two hundred ninety-nine children were served in 2003. Forty nine of these children received medical exams and treatment. The partnership among advocates, doctors, and prosecutors resulted in 82 abuse indictments.

Much of the funding to keep the program alive is supplied by grants from Ohio Department of Health, Department of Jobs and Family Services, and United Way. Additional funding is provided by local business and citizen donations.

Despite their history of tough competition, Mercy Hospital and Community Hospital came together on this project to fund and help establish effective and affordable pediatric health care. Without their cooperation, RHC would never have succeeded. RHC also enjoys partnerships with local congregations and religious leaders, Wittenberg University, the Clark County Literacy Coalition, and the City of Springfield.

In addition to in-house agency collaborations, RHC works with other community organizations including the Family Service Agency, Catholic Social Services, Department of Human Services, Family Resource Center, Parent Infant Center, and Springfield City Schools to provide well-rounded and coordinated health services and advice to the community.

4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)

In three years RHC saw a 55% increase in patient visits annually. At its inception, the center was staffed with a dozen people; that number has increased to 30 professionals. RHC is expanding facilities to accommodate their growing clients. Seventy-percent of these patients are from low-income, under-insured, or un-insured families.

Forty-percent of all newborns in Clark County are patients at RHC. Parents of these infants receive invaluable advice and information on how to care for the needs of their children. *Medical Home* gives parents the ability to call the clinic and speak to nurses for medical advice and assistance. It is estimated that RHC receives approximately 26,000 such calls a year. To assist parents, five of the staff members speak Spanish fluently, enabling better care for non-English speaking families.

RHC has expanded their hours to make it more convenient for clients to visit. Additionally, they have been involved in an ongoing capital campaign to raise \$3.5 million in order to enlarge their current facilities to include more therapy and exam rooms.

In August of 2000, RHC had a staff of 12. Just 2 ½ years later, RHC staff grew to over 30 employees. The center has been able to add a mental health therapist, Medicaid outreach workers, and nurses.

RHC has had an incredible impact on the children of Springfield. The center is the first in the state to provide fluoride varnish treatment for children. Such a practice prevents a number of childhood diseases and helps children grow up healthy and strong.

The overall results of RHC are so far reaching that one could never completely calculate its benefits, much less the amazing influence it will have on the future of the community. RHC and its staff, volunteers, and supporters have most certainly become some of Springfield's most revered heroes.

Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)

Mike Kessler, Program Coordinator; Rocking Horse Center; 651 S. Limestone Street, Springfield, Ohio 45505; (937) 324-1111 ex.135; mkessler@rockinghorsecenter.org

Part III: Civic Infrastructure

Describe your community. Using the four major sections of the National Civic League's *The Civic Index, Second Edition* (see www.ncl.org for more information), examine your community's civic infrastructure and civic capacity and describe how your community *lives* each of the answers to each of the following questions. Please include real examples of how your community has demonstrated its strengths and faced its challenges. The roman numerals correspond to parts of *The Civic Index, Second Edition*. Also see the application instructions for this section.

Add lines as needed for your responses

I. What is our community vision for its future? (300 word maximum)

The City of Springfield is in a continual state of change, constantly flowing with excited anticipation for the future of the community. The city has the desire and the ability to reach its goals for future development through continued cooperative efforts and united ambitions.

Several years ago the city and county united to adopt the Crossroads Comprehensive Land Use Plan to strategize and develop a general framework for decisions concerning land and development for the future. Since its implementation, a myriad of community developments have taken place and will continue to occur in the future.

Springfield has a vision for becoming the premier city in which to live and work by:

- Retaining and attracting business and employment opportunities to the Springfield Area
- Providing safe and secure neighborhoods in which to live and raise families
- Fostering civic pride and community involvement
- Continually beautifying and improving the appearance of our city and its neighborhoods;
- Working cooperatively with neighboring communities and townships on regional initiatives
- Working jointly with our community schools and educational institutions at increasing opportunities for the development of our youth and our citizens.

We can achieve these goals. Not through stagnant dependence on status quo policies, but rather through active involvement from every community sector to join forces and make Springfield an amazing place.

II. How are we fulfilling the new roles for community governance?

II. (a). What is the extent and nature of community member participation in community improvement efforts? (300 word maximum)

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world.
Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

–Margaret Mead

This is the premise behind the The Community Leadership Association, which brings together members of various trades and professional backgrounds to learn and lead. Hundreds of community leaders have graduated from the twelve week academy, and then have gone on to be a part of the association. Discussions and forums are developed around the concept of servant leadership and making these proactive citizens aware of what is going on around Springfield. It also provides a setting for concept development and cultivation of new ideas for future growth.

The Community Advisory Review Board, comprised of a group of citizens, was established to make recommendations about how to distribute funding received through the Community Development Block Grant. Working alongside the city government, members of the committee give a lay-person perspective and take an active role in decision making for local development.

The citizen initiated and citizen run Council of Neighborhood Organizations (CONA) is an umbrella organization for 25 individual neighborhood associations in Springfield. Monthly meetings are held regarding community activities as well as ways that community members can be involved. CONA is a very influential tool for enabling underrepresented citizens to have a voice in local decisions and projects.

II. (b). What role does government play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)

The city government has been able to fund a great variety of social service agencies and contribute financially to initiatives and programs in the area. The city contributes funds on a regular basis to help support the efforts of non-profit organizations such as the Neighborhood Housing Partnership of Greater Springfield (NHP) and the Center City Association (CCA). In addition to helping these organizations financially, city commissioners serve as liasons to both the NHP and the CCA, as well as a number of other community boards.

Local elected and appointed officials alike are very active in the decision-making processes in the community. A variety of boards and commissions have been established by the local government in order to better provide for the specific needs of constituents. Members of the boards are selected non-government officials. Some of these boards and commissions are the Tax Incentive Review Council, the Historic Landmarks Commission, and the City Planning Board. The establishment of these commissions has helped further Springfield’s vision to empower the community through effective problem-solving.

II. (c). What role does the non-profit sector play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)

Non-profit organizations are a vital part of the livelihood of Springfield. Looking at the broad spectrum of needs that are being addressed by these organizations, it is almost impossible to find a sphere where non-profits are not actively involved in the improvement and progress of the city.

- Turner Foundation, United Way, and Springfield Foundation have provided millions of dollars in grants and aid to further education, health care, cultural awareness, downtown and historical district revitalization, and a wide variety of other social service needs.
- The Center City Association addresses downtown needs such as parks renewal, repairing building façades and encouraging business development in urban districts.
- The Neighborhood Housing Partnership of Greater Springfield was established in 2002 to educate and equip citizens in the home-buying process. They work to improve Springfield's housing stock and aid residents in securing affordable loans.
- Project Woman provides area women with a safe place to live and receive practical help and advice in situations of spousal abuse.
- The Nehemiah Foundation, formed in 1993, is a citizen-initiated catalyst for identifying, prioritizing and addressing community problems.
- Elderly United aids senior citizens by meeting transportation needs, providing nutritional meals for shut-ins, and supplying counselors for insurance and medical claims.

The examples of how Springfield's non-profits have impacted the community could go on for pages. The major reason that Springfield's non-profit organizations have been so successful is their ability to network and communicate well with each other. Creating a backbone for confronting Springfield's needs, each non-profit works hard to address needs that are not currently being met by another organization. Through efficient communication and their basic desire to see Springfield flourish, these non-profits have molded and shaped the community in ways we cannot even begin to describe.

II. (d). What role does business play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)

The Springfield and Clark County business community is very active in local decision making. Community and business leaders continually work with local government and citizen decision makers to constantly plan for a better Springfield. In an effort to map business decision making and participation, the Springfield Clark County Chamber of Commerce created the Vision 20/20 Initiative "A Blueprint for the Future of Our Community".

Vision 20/20 is a broad, regional, community based effort to identify the issues that have direct effects on our local and regional economy. This effort focused on issues to determine how they can realistically be improved through building of coalitions and partnerships throughout our community and region. The study and plan involved focus groups representing 12 key areas, which included (Education, Minority Issues, Retail / Tourism, Government, Labor, Regional Boards, Infrastructure, Health Care, Manufacturing / Service Industry, Arts / Amenities, Agriculture and Human Service Agencies.) Over

200 people from the greater Springfield community held various meetings to identify the future needs of their respective areas of interest. This process took approximately one year and the results (sixteen fundamental objectives) were consolidated into a comprehensive plan during a 3-day retreat attended by community leaders.

The Plan includes four general categories which include Education/Training, Government, Community Issues, and Economic Development. The Vision 20/20 Initiative provides an opportunity for the community, as a whole, to focus on the many issues that challenge the growth and prosperity of Springfield, Ohio. The City, County, Chamber of Commerce, private businesses, educational institutions and many non-profit organizations have supported this initiative and are actively involved in attacking some of the core issues. The Vision 20/20 framework is fading now in light of the new partnerships and collaborations that have formed out of this initiative. In its place is a newfound sense of community that is focused on addressing the many issues we face.

III. How do we work together as a community?

III. (a). How does our community recognize and celebrate its diversity? (300 word maximum)

The celebration of Springfield's cultural diversity is not simply based on one day events or programs, but through the initiative of members of the community, it is an essential part of life in the city. The population of Springfield is becoming more and more diverse each year, and that makes us very excited!

- The Latino Coalition helps address the needs of the recent influx in the area's Hispanic population by providing information and services that would otherwise be inaccessible due to language barriers.
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes at the Clark County Literacy Coalition are playing an effective role in helping the over 2,000 non-English speakers in the county to become more familiar with the language as well as educate them in practical life and work skills like buying groceries and paying bills. Participants also take part in learning about the cultures of the other members of the classes as they prepare native foods and educate others about their origin.
- The annual CultureFest has brought together hundreds of people each year to explore the vast array of cultural traditions from around the world such as storytelling, dance, music, and food. The festival promotes intercultural understanding and encourages citizens, both young and old, to embrace the ethnic and racial diversity of the community.
- The Springfield Peace Center is a growing program for youth to participate in summer activities to cultivate cooperation and unity across ethnic, racial, age and gender boundaries.
- Study Circles have brought together citizens from diverse backgrounds to discuss current issues and challenges facing the city and world.

Springfield is growing into quite the cultural melting pot! As Springfield drifts from its historically homogeneous population, citizens are learning to embrace their diversity and work together with a spirit of unity.

III. (b). How does our community work with neighboring communities to address shared challenges? Is there a shared regional vision? (300 word maximum)

One of the strongest aspects of the Springfield area is the emphasis that is placed on inter-community, and inter-governmental cooperation. It is difficult to find a program in the city that has not been aided at some level of implementation—idea development, action planning, implementation or continuation—by regional partnerships.

Shared regional vision is the lifeblood of Springfield and the surrounding communities.

In the non-profit sector, it is hard to find an organization that isolates itself by meeting the needs of only those that live within the Springfield city limits. Rather partnerships like the Neighborhood Housing Partnership of Greater Springfield and the Clark County Literacy Coalition have found ways to expand their reach into the surrounding municipalities and entire county.

In business development, the Retention and Expansion Plan brought together executives from around the county to create a plan for the future of the local economy. Businesses in Springfield realize that without a regionally shared desire to expand, growth would be minimal.

IV. How does our community strengthen its ability to solve problems? (300 word maximum)

Decision making in Springfield can be summed up in one word—proactive. Each sector of the community has made it a priority to ensure that anticipated problems are dealt with before they occur, and issues that are unexpected be handled as quickly and effectively as possible.

Fortunately, Springfield is not so stuck in its ways that it is not ready and willing to try new methods, take some risks, and involve new people in decision making. It is certainly not “business as usual” around here! Springfield learns from its past mistakes, but does not sit and dwell on them. By pressing on and continuing to move forward, the learning process never ends. Citizens in Springfield continue to show, “that stubborn American grit in adversity, that refuses to give up on the dream of a better life.” By living and working together, we improve our lives everyday, and pave the way for the children of our community to maintain the strong commitments to continual community improvement, citizen participation, and increased civic infrastructure in all sectors of our community.

End of Application

See www.ncl.org/aac/ or the application instructions for detailed application instructions and sample applications from previous All-America City Winners.