



Civic Action

A monthly update from the National Civic League

June 2016

The Legacy of All-America Cities

By Doug Linkhart, President of NCL

[All-America Cities](#) have two things in common: 1) they are great at community engagement, and 2) they like to show off their new status. I've been travelling the country lately, and often see banners or signs recognizing a community for being an All-America City.



We have seen city governments use the designation on their letterheads and websites, put up signs around the city, and even put a banner on City Hall. We even heard of one city that is naming a street in their community "All-America Way."

The All-America City awards will be determined this weekend at our annual event in Denver. Each year ten cities win this designation, and [20 cities are vying for this honor](#) on June 18 and 19. The designation began in 1949, and there have been 550 designations since that time, with some cities winning more than once.

The All-America City awards were created well before the first Super Bowl, when a news reporter said to then-

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League President George Gallup: "it's football season. How about naming an All-American team of the best-governed cities - a team that could be selected every year?" What was then called the National Municipal League then created a program recognizing cities where, as Gallup said, "citizens themselves had initiated and completed some action of major benefit to the entire community."

Keep an eye on our web site starting June 20, when history will be made again with the 67th annual announcement of the 10 more All-America City winners.

Community engagement and apathy

Last Wednesday, the Lee's Summit Economic Development Corporation invited NCL president Doug Linkhart to serve as the kickoff speaker for their year-long focus on community engagement. NCL's history with Lee's Summit goes back more than 10 years, to our work in helping facilitate the development of their community-wide strategic plan. The last 10 years have seen incredible growth and progress in Lee's Summit. But the community and its business leaders are not content to rest on their laurels.



Linkhart was asked by members of the EDC how to help spark a culture of engagement and overcome apathy within the community. Linkhart responded, "*Apathy is when other people don't care about something we think they should. In other words, it can be easy to see our neighbors as apathetic if they don't rally to a cause we think is important.*" The key takeaway: meaningful and effective community engagement starts with understanding what people value, and what issues are important in their lives.

It's exciting to see communities like Lee's Summit which have made such remarkable progress continue to hold themselves accountable for finding ways to more fully and meaningfully engage residents.

Addressing Health to Promote Reading

(A National Civic Review Case Study)

We tend to think of reading as a simple process of learning language, letters, and sounds, yet success in school is affected by the development of the whole child, including the closely intertwined aspects of a child's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health. Addressing the health concerns that affect children's learning can go a long way in enabling communities to

move forward on boosting reading skills. [Find out more about the link between health and reading](#) in this *National Civic Review* article by Becky Miles-Polka, a senior consultant with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

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This weekend, more than 500 people from the 20 All-America City finalist communities will gather in Denver. The All-America City event is one of the most inspiring, and powerful events in American civic life. For many it will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. This year we encourage you to follow the excitement on social media using the hashtag #AAC2016.



To give you a sense of the energy and excitement - [check out these photos from last year's event](#).

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