

Portland Featured in New Report on Innovative City Leadership for Children and Families

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The report provides a snapshot of the progress cities have made as the nation's largest network of public policy "laboratories" and the potential for future action as municipal leaders identify and share promising approaches in these areas.

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - A new report by the National League of Cities (NLC), *The State of City Leadership for Children and Families in 2009*, recognizes Portland, Ore., for its cutting-edge youth civic engagement initiatives, including the Bill of Rights for Children and Youth of Portland and Multnomah County.

The report is being released during the 2009 National Summit on Your City's Families. For more information on the summit, visit nlc.org/iyef.

Even as cities grapple with the worst budget outlook in decades, mayors and other municipal leaders have maintained a strong commitment to children, youth and their families. The report describes local innovations and trends in education, early childhood success, afterschool, youth in transition, youth violence prevention, community wellness, youth civic engagement, family economic success, and local "infrastructure" – such as cross-agency planning entities, data sharing efforts and creative financing mechanisms – to support children and families.

"In recent years, cities have tested creative approaches to some of the nation's greatest challenges and achieved impressive results," said Clifford M. Johnson, executive director of NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), which published the report. "NLC applauds municipal leaders in Portland for breaking new ground and inspiring other cities across the country to take their efforts to the next level."

The State of City Leadership report highlights the Portland Children and Youth Bill of Rights as one of the nation's three most innovative city models for promoting youth civic engagement. As the first city in the nation to adopt a Children and Youth Bill of Rights, Portland engaged more than 5,000 young people in a year-long exercise in civic engagement and used the document to inform local policy and planning.



Portland, Oregon nightscape
Courtesy: flickr.com

Other Portland initiatives featured in the report include

- * The city's 55 SUN Community Schools
- * Connected by 25
- * Leaders' Roundtable
- * Economic Opportunity Initiative
- * Portland Children's Investment Fund

"Education is as fundamental to our economy as it is to our pursuit of social equity," said Portland Mayor Sam Adams. "Through a collaborative effort, Portland is working to increase by 50 percent the high school graduation rate, and get youth connected to career and college learning opportunities. The success of our city is only as good as the success and prosperity of our youth. We are working hard to support youth in our community as leaders, thinkers and innovators."

"Youth don't see the boundaries between the City and County," said Multnomah County Chair Ted Wheeler. "More importantly, the need to support young people isn't just the responsibility of government but our entire community. The Youth Bill of Rights provides a shared plan, created by young people, for how every member of our community can support the success of our youth. This is especially important to me since engaged and productive youth are more able to succeed in school, go on to college and get jobs. Youth engagement is a great investment in the future health, livability, and vibrancy of our community."

The report provides a snapshot of the progress cities have made as the nation's largest network of public policy "laboratories" and the potential for future action as municipal leaders identify and share promising approaches in these areas. The innovations and trends included in the report were selected based on the YEF Institute's intensive work with thousands of municipal officials in hundreds of cities over the past 10 years, as well as an open call for nominations and targeted outreach to other national organizations in the field.

The National League of Cities is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

Source: National League of Cities