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City of Renton Wins National Diversity Award

Diversity Program Wins 1st Place in the 2014 City Cultural Diversity Award by National League of Cities

RENTON: The City of Renton has been recognized by the National League of Cities and the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO) at the 2014 City Cultural Diversity Awards for “Embracing Our Diversity” program. The city won first place in the 25,000-100,000 population category. In total, eight cities were honored on March 1, 2014, for implementing programs that enhance and promote cultural diversity in communities. The City Cultural Diversity Awards recognize municipal programs that encourage citizen involvement and show an appreciation of cultural diversity through a collaborative process with city officials, community leaders and residents.

“It is an honor to be recognized on the national stage for our efforts to expand and enhance diversity and inclusion in our city and wider community,” said Mayor Denis Law. “In Renton we value diversity as the core of what and who we are and commit to be an all-inclusive city that provides opportunities, access and services to all of our citizens. This award is a testament to our accomplishments and the difference we are making.”

The city launched its diversity program in 2008, and made it a priority to embrace the diversity of its community, create opportunities for all its citizens with a special emphasis to reach out to ALL communities including non-English speaking residents and ethnic groups. The city created a network of community leaders representing various ethnic, cultural and diverse groups, and has integrated the importance of diversity into all its programs and services.

Some of the city’s accomplishments include:

- **Created a network of community liaisons** representing various community groups. These liaisons serve to represent their communities and be the link between the city and the community groups by connecting their members with programs and services and other information and resources.
- **Initiated conversations on race by facilitating** workshops on race and offering free access to the exhibit *Race: Are we so different?* to all city employees.

- **Prioritized emergency preparedness** for its diverse community: provided training, distributed kits, and translated and distributed over 1,000 DVDs on emergency preparedness to various non-English speaking members.
- **Promoted health** through firefighters coordinating with the community liaisons to attend their meetings and gatherings and provide free blood sugar and blood pressure screenings to members of their diverse communities.
- **Addressed homelessness in the community** by partnering with the Center of Hope and providing a day shelter for women and children.
- **Offered free summer lunch to children from minority groups**, non-English speaking communities and low-income families.
- **Appointed members** from the community liaison groups to serve on key citizen task forces.
- **Targeted ethnic media**—newspapers, radio stations, the local Hispanic TV station—and provided news releases and regular information.
- **Celebrated and showcased the city’s diversity** by encouraging culturally diverse celebrations in festivals and parades.
- **Assisted Small and minority businesses assistance by working** with the Renton Chamber of Commerce and Renton Technical College to create Renton’s Small Business Development Center, which assisted nearly 115 businesses—45% minority owned.
- **Hosted community forums** throughout the year with members of diverse communities that are open to all members of the public.

“We thank the City of Renton for its important efforts to be inclusive of the diverse ethnic and cultural groups in the city,” said National League of Cities Executive Director Clarence Anthony. “Strong, vibrant communities are built by providing services and opportunities that reach everyone in a city, including those who do not speak English as a first language.”

The City of Renton was recognized at the Celebrate Diversity Breakfast in Washington D.C. Council President Don Persson accepted the award this morning on behalf of the city.

The City Cultural Diversity Awards Program was established in 1995 by the National Black Caucus of Local Elected officials (NBC-LEO) to promote cultural diversity in community governance through citizen and community participation.

For information on the City of Renton please visit rentonwa.gov. For more information on the City Cultural Diversity Awards, visit NBC-LEO’s website at www.nlc.org/nbcleo.

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