

2007 Florida Cities of Excellence Awards Program ▶ Nomination Form

Category (Please check one) See Award Criteria for more information. Please print or type. One nomination per page.

FLORIDA CITY OF EXCELLENCE AWARD
Name of Municipality Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY SPIRIT AWARD
Name of Municipality Nominated _____
Nominated Project _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

MAYOR OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

COUNCIL MEMBER OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Title _____ Department _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY MANAGER OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY CLERK OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY ATTORNEY OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY FINANCE OFFICIAL (DIRECTOR OR OFFICER) OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated MARGARET "MARGIE" SIMMONS
Nominated by CITY OF CLEARWATER, FLORIDA
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY CITIZEN OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

Contact Person

The following person will be the main contact if your city's nominee is selected as a finalist.

Please print or type.

Name DOUG MATTHEWS
Title DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS
Government CITY OF CLEARWATER, FLORIDA
Address P.O. BOX 4748, CLEARWATER, FL 33758
Telephone Number 727.562.4661 Fax 727.562.4696
E-mail Address DOUGLAS.MATTHEWS@MYCLEARWATER.COM

Nomination Certification

This nomination has been voted on and approved by a majority of the city council/commission.

Signed Cynthia E. Newsee
City Clerk

The judges will use the narrative and supportive information to select the award winners. Nominators/nominees are asked not to contact the judges directly.

Narrative

In the narrative, please be clear and concise, using the Award Criteria to support the selection of your nominee. Please type (or print in black ink), up to 1,200 words, double-spaced on white 8-1/2" x 11" paper.

Please include a word count: 1,199
Number of words

Supportive Information

Up to 10 pages of supportive information (newspaper clippings, photographs, letters from constituents, etc.), on 8-1/2" x 11" paper (single-sided) may be provided. Please do not include videotapes, DVDs, CDs or Power-Point presentations.

Submit nominations by **August 10, 2007**:

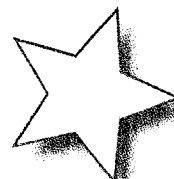
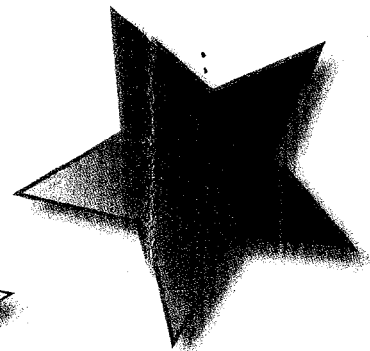
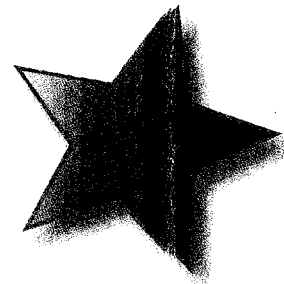
Florida League of Cities, Inc.

Attn: Florida Cities of Excellence

301 S. Bronough Street, Suite 300 (32301)

P.O. Box 1757

Tallahassee, FL 32302-1757



**Florida League of Cities
Florida Cities of Excellence Award
Nomination for City Finance Official of the Year**

**Margie Simmons, CPA
Finance Director**

Margaret "Margie" Simmons is a 25-year veteran of the City of Clearwater. During her tenure, she has expanded her talents and skills to hold many responsible positions within our financial areas. In 1984, she became a Certified Public Accountant, enabling her promotion to Director of Internal Audit. She served in this position until she became the Assistant Director of Finance and in 1996, she was promoted to Finance Director, the position she currently holds. Simmons consistently maintains a high level of accountability in promoting the city's use of sound accounting principles in the functions of Purchasing, Payroll, Treasury, Debt, Accounting, and Risk Management. Each area consistently performs above and beyond established expectations.

During this year, Simmons has been instrumental in implementing several key initiatives in the City of Clearwater:

Initiative 1: As a result of new legislation, Simmons was actively involved in the effort to make major changes to the way the city's services are provided to the public. The result was budget savings to the city overall and the timely meeting of the state required tax reductions. At evening meetings held weekly for three months, Simmons worked closely with the Budget Office and the Budget Task Force. This group of Council-appointed residents evaluated the city's budget and developed a list of possible service reductions. The Budget Task Force acknowledged the tireless efforts and professionalism demonstrated by Simmons. She was also instrumental in other budget savings ideas, further reducing the budget.

Initiative 2: With a group of dedicated management staff, Simmons was actively involved with the proposed Downtown Boat Slips referendum. She was instrumental in compiling financial projections and in determining how the project would affect taxpayers, the city, and rates for boat owners. She prepared a spreadsheet detailing expected operating results for the proposed project, which included accurate, easy-to-understand figures. As a second step to her involvement, Simmons was one of four primary presenters at 29 public meetings with Clearwater homeowner associations and civic groups. As part of the outreach team, she often attended evening and weekend meetings to communicate the financial aspects of the plan and answer resident's questions and concerns. Because of the dedicated outreach efforts of Simmons and others, Clearwater voters approved the boat slips referendum. An additional effort toward the boat slips was her involvement in securing a \$1.2 million dollar grant toward the boat slip project, ensuring it's financial success.

Initiative 3: Another facet to that same referendum included changes to the city's pension plan. In implementing an asset allocation study for new investment options to improve pension plan returns, she devised strategies for keeping the pension well funded. At outreach meetings, Simmons spoke about proposed pension changes. The proposal went to referendum, and voters overwhelmingly approved these changes.

Initiative 4: Under her guidance, the implementation of a new financial computer software package was completed last year with new enhancements and updates installed this year to improve the program. She and her staff reworked processes and coordinated these changes with the technology vendor to make use of new capabilities, including credit card and

electronic payment capabilities. These efforts have been instrumental in reducing fraud opportunities and will result in a conservative estimate of more than \$100,000 a year in increased revenue from bank rebates and investment earnings.

Initiative 5: Under her guidance, enterprise funds have periodic rate studies performed to ensure that the rates charged are appropriate for the services provided and that the revenue is sufficient to meet operational needs and bond covenants. In the current year, the Solid Waste and Recycling rates were analyzed with various proposals presented to management. Due to infrastructure needs, capital financing is often proposed in order to spread the cost of upgrades to those users who will benefit. Simmons monitors all financing options to ensure that the city enjoys the lowest cost of capital possible.

She supports **other initiatives** as well, such as ways for dealing with increasing pension costs, the costs of health and property insurance, and redevelopment efforts. She also continues her valuable participation on several city committees including Resource Management, Strategy, Pension Investment, Policy, Emergency Operations, Projects, and Benefits committees.

Anyone that knows Simmons recognizes her professionalism and technical abilities. Under her direction, the City of Clearwater continues to receive recognition in the Finance realm. In fact, the City has received the GFOA Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 25 years in a row, and the city's annual financial audit has contained no management comments for internal control improvements, for the last two years. Simmons is proactive in refinancing city bond issues,

resulting in substantial cost savings to our taxpayers. She readily works with staff, Council members and residents to explain the complexities of governmental financial issues in understandable, “layman” terms. Simmons never misses a Council meeting and always is available when assistance or guidance is sought. She is a team player that encourages open communication. Simmons has an open-door policy and always welcomes questions or suggestions, and she is best described as patient, considerate, reliable, and ethical. Her management style is characterized by her openness, understanding, and professional cooperation.

During her career, Simmons has been active in professional groups such as the Florida Government Finance Officers Association (FGFOA). She was president from 1998-1999 and has served on several committees. She currently serves on the Florida League of Cities Investment Advisory Committee, which is comprised of financial directors for some of Florida’s largest cities. The Advisory Committee meets regularly to assist and consult on issues regarding the investments of the Investment Trust and the Pension Fund. Simmons was accepted into the Advanced Government Finance Institute in Madison, Wisconsin, July 29 to August 3, 2007. Only 50 qualified candidates are selected nationwide, based on their professional experience.

She enjoys mentoring and teaching others about government finance and has been active in Clearwater’s Citizen Academy, an annual series of classes to inform citizens on Clearwater’s government. Simmons teaches the government finance portion of the academy in the format of a game show she devised called “Myth or Reality.” This format makes government finance fun and interesting. She also has taught this class to employee groups as well as another municipality.

Assistant City Manager Garry Brumback said:

"Margie Simmons is the consummate Finance Director. She has been charged with the daunting responsibility of keeping all City finances solvent, balanced and

disbursed in a timely and ethical manner and has done so flawlessly. She is the sole source for strategic financial planning and is constantly seeking new and creative ways to support the City Manager as he tries to meet the goals for the City Council. Simmons has developed a strong team of professionals whom she has trained to perform all the daily functions of the Finance Department and constantly reinforces her very high standards. The results have been an award-winning department recognized as outstanding. Simmons is an exceptional team player and a valued asset to the City Management Team."

Married and a mother of three young adults, Simmons continues to be a professional and personal asset to our organization and the residents of Clearwater. The City of Clearwater is proud to nominate Margaret Simmons for the Florida League of Cities "Finance Official of the Year" award.