

**Florida League of Cities  
Cities of Excellence  
City Manager of the Year Award**

Name: Joyce Shanahan  
Title: City Manager  
Jurisdiction: City of Fort Walton Beach

Joyce Shanahan is the type of woman every female aspires to become. She's a very successful business woman who volunteers at every opportunity to help others. As the City Manager of the Fort Walton Beach, Ms. Shanahan is busy managing the City and planning for the future. There's no task too great or challenging for Ms. Shanahan to accomplish.

Ms. Shanahan works tirelessly to improve the lives of the employees and citizens of Fort Walton Beach. The City began holding Strategic Plan meetings with City Council and senior staff members several years ago as a way to map out a plan for the upcoming year. While these meetings were open to the public, participation was limited and valuable public input was not always available. To improve transparency in local government, and more directly solicit the input from residents and business owners, the strategic planning process was revamped in 2008. The process was expanded to three phases:

- Phase I: Environmental Scan - identified the key issues, challenges and opportunities, and the City's capacity to respond.
- Phase II: Strategic Assessment - identified the various futures that could reasonably occur and how the City would respond to each of those futures.  
Example-slower population growth in region, economic slowdown, reduced

property tax revenue versus high population growth, booming economy, stable property tax revenue.

A series of focus group meetings were held where citizens, property and business owners were asked for input on services, programs and projects to help develop a plan for the future. Personal invitations were sent and advertisements were placed in newspapers to ensure high participation.

The third phase was the actual strategic planning process. In addition to the aforementioned meetings, each member of the City Council selected a member of the public to serve with them on a "super focus group". All the information gathered from these meetings, plus one additional meeting consisting of City Council and senior staff, was used to form a "Strategic Plan", outlining issues of greatest importance to the City.

In December 2007, the City successfully entered into a public/private partnership with Landmark, LLC for the construction of a parking garage to be built on both public and private land. The garage is part of a new development in downtown Fort Walton Beach. The City is purchasing 305 spaces over the next 6 years, with the developer responsible for all future maintenance and capital costs. Staff was able to accomplish this partnership in light of the Strand Decision that has, thus far, limited the bonding ability of CRAs.

Transparency of local government is essential to Ms. Shanahan. As a result, she worked tirelessly to start FWBTV, Northwest Florida's first and only government run television

channel. FWBTV is on the air 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week, broadcasting City Council meetings, policy board meetings and original programming spotlighting City departments and events. These programs bring the City closer than ever to residents, highlighting all the City does for their tax dollars. In May 2008, FWBTV received the *Innovation in Communications/Technology Award for Population 20,001-50,000* from the FCCMA. While these types of government run channels are popular in Central and South Florida, Fort Walton Beach is paving the way in the Panhandle in technology and communication efforts with residents. FWBTV was able to hit the air at a cost of only \$30,000, all of which was grant funded.

Recognizing the importance of leadership within the City of Fort Walton Beach, Ms. Shanahan introduced the Emerging Leadership Institute in 2006. The Institute was established to provide professional development opportunities to staff members allowing them to compete for higher level positions within the City when they become available. The Institute is a two phase course taught by a nationally published author and college professor focusing on leadership and effective supervision. To date, 127 employees have graduated from this program. Graduates of this program are the first to be considered for advancement within the organization.

It is not only important for Ms. Shanahan to provide training for employees, but to also recognize their outstanding contributions to the City. In 2004, she initiated the City's *Employee of the Year* program, followed by the *Manager of the Year* award in 2006. In addition, she developed the *Above and Beyond Award*, in which she recognizes

employees who go the extra mile in providing services to benefit citizens. Ms. Shanahan believes it is vitally important to reward those who rise to the call.

Last year, working with the Mayor Mike Anderson, Ms. Shanahan developed the *Business of Excellence Award* to honor local businesses that are actively involved in government and provide a positive impact in the community. Ms. Shanahan also assisted the Mayor in the creation of the Fort Walton Beach Youth Committee. The committee of high school students assists the City Council on policy decisions that impact young people.

A member of the International City County Managers Association (ICMA), the Florida City County Managers Association (FCCMA), the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), and the Florida Government Finance Officers Association (FGFOA), Ms. Shanahan is committed to professional excellence and has the highest personal and professional integrity. In 2007, she was selected to serve as the Director of District 1 for the FCCMA. In addition to these professional organizations, Ms. Shanahan is a proud supporter of the Friends of the Museum, Friends of the Library and former member of Okaloosa Arts Alliance. Ms. Shanahan's service to her community doesn't stop at the doors of City Hall. She is a tireless volunteer in the local community serving on several local boards and charities. She is a member of the United Way of Okaloosa and Walton Counties and served as Campaign Chairperson in 2006, and she is the current President of the Board. She is a member, board member and the Director of Public Relations for the Fort Walton Beach Rotary Club. In 2005, Ms. Shanahan traded the

business suit for a hammer and helped build homes for Habitat for Humanity. In addition to her work with area charities and organizations, she donates countless hours as a mentor with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Northwest Florida as a Big Sister.

Ms. Shanahan has received several awards, including:

- Okaloosa County Executive of the Year"-International Association of Administrative Professionals-2003.
- Finalist-"City Manager of the Year"-Florida League of Cities-2006
- Finalist-"Athena Award"-presented by area chambers of commerce-2007
- Finalist-"Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame"-2007
- Two Certificates of Special Congressional Recognition-Congressman Jeff Miller-2007
- "Pioneer Award"-Big Brothers/Big Sisters-2007
- "Rotarian of the Year" and "Paul Harris Fellow"-Fort Walton Beach Rotary Club-2007

Ms. Shanahan is committed to the citizens of Fort Walton Beach and providing them with the highest quality of services for their tax dollars. She looks for new, improved and innovative ways to enhance the quality of life of the citizens of her City. She is responsive to citizens, City Council and her staff. Above all, she is committed to assisting those in need, both as City Manager and a volunteer for area agencies with excellence and integrity, and is highly recommended for the *Cities of Excellence-City Manager of the Year* award.