



# Cities Volunteer Their Time, Showcase Their Services During Florida City Government Week

COMPILED BY SHARON G. BERRIAN  
FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES

**C**ities across Florida celebrated Florida City Government Week, sponsored by the Florida League of Cities, from October 21 to October 27, 2012. They used the week to highlight city accomplishments, volunteer time and educate residents on the services they provide. Florida City Government Week is held each year in October, utilizing the theme coined by the League's executive director emeritus, the late Raymond C. Sittig: "My City: I'm Part of It, I'm Proud of It!"

Programs and activities varied from city to city. However, each city strove to educate its residents about the public services and programs provided to them in their hometown. The following is a compilation of reports received from many of the cities that recognized this special week of municipal accomplishment and public service.

### **City of Arcadia**

Arcadia adopted a proclamation recognizing Florida City Government Week and held an open house. The city also placed an editorial in the local newspaper describing how local government works for residents and invited the public to the open house to meet council members, city volunteers, and board and committee members. Each

of the volunteers, board and committee members were recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation for their dedication to the city.

### **City of Bartow**

The Bartow Mayor's Youth Council conducted a mock city commission meeting with members acting as commissioners, newspaper reporters and city residents. In addition to adopting a proclamation, which was accepted by Commissioner Leo Longworth, the students also considered a proposal regarding the feasibility of a skate park.



### City of Belle Glade

Glade View Elementary School student government members toured Belle Glade City Hall and were greeted by the mayor, commissioners, the city manager and department heads. The students also participated in a poster contest, with posters displayed in the City Hall lobby. In November, city commissioners received presentations from winners of the “My City: I’m Part of It, I’m Proud of It!” essay contest, submitted by students of Glades Central Community High School, Lake Shore Middle School and Crossroads Academy. Awards were presented to the first-, second- and third-place winners from each school. A picture capturing one of these special moments was posted on the home page of the city’s website.

### Broward League of Cities

Broward League of Cities President and Fort Lauderdale City Commissioner Bobby DuBose reported that Broward County’s cities are more than halfway to their goal of logging 1 million volunteer service hours by May 31, 2013 – and volunteer efforts made by municipalities during Florida City Government Week helped significantly. The City of Fort Lauderdale is onboard with the Broward League’s campaign and has affirmed its commitment by issuing a “Together We Serve Week” resolution. In addition to the City of Fort Lauderdale, the Broward County School Board, the business community, other cities and the Broward County government have taken steps to help achieve this goal.

### Town of Callahan

Callahan hosted ROTC students from West Nassau High School at a mock town-council meeting. The real Town Council sat in the audience while the students sat in their places. ROTC members were given an agenda that contained local issues for them to discuss and share their views. The town also distributed “My City” buttons and bumper stickers and adopted a resolution recognizing the week.

### City of Callaway

Callaway hosted a Civic Trade Show for the public to attend and learn helpful tips and interesting facts about their city. Residents learned everything from lessons on how to read their water meter to key city facts and trivia.



*City of Cape Canaveral*

### City of Cape Canaveral

In keeping with tradition, Cape Canaveral celebrates Florida City Government Week each year with local Cape View Elementary School students and teachers. This year’s events were a great success, with lots of positive feedback from all of those involved.

Activities included an educational event and mock elections at the Cape Canaveral library; Leisure Services Bingo; a tour of the post office; and tours and educational activities at the recreation complex, the Brevard County Sheriff’s Office Canaveral Precinct and the Viera Courthouse.

### City of Davenport

Davenport held its activities in conjunction with the city’s newly renovated firehouse. Buttons and bumper stickers were distributed to residents, and the city adopted a proclamation recognizing the week.

### City of Deerfield Beach

Deerfield Beach issued a proclamation recognizing Florida City Government Week and held Student





*City of Deerfield Beach*

Government Days on two separate days, inviting fourth- through 12th-graders from local elementary, middle and high schools. Students were greeted at City Hall by Mayor Peggy Noland before boarding two tour buses for a guided tour of the city. The students enjoyed a visit to the International Fishing Pier, where they observed presentations about current pier renovations and ocean rescue operations. They also were taken to the city’s Westside Park, where they observed a live K-9 demonstration and learned what it takes to be a police officer and firefighter/EMT. Students were then able to enjoy lunch while learning about the city’s “All In” recycling program. Finally, they visited the water plant and learned about the water filtration process and how raw water is transformed into clean drinking water.

**City of Delray Beach**

Delray Beach hosted a number of activities to enable the community to learn about their city and the importance of public involvement. City staff visited with more than 240 third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students from Plumosa School of the Arts and presented information on the responsibilities of a city manager and how to pursue a career in local government. The students were also engaged with various polling questions and a Q&A session. In addition, the city’s fire-rescue department visited with more than 100 students at Carver Middle School and discussed services that the department provides.

Students also assisted in assembling “Vials for Life,” resident health and medication information packets to be kept on file to assist with emergency medical care. Later, the Delray Beach Youth Council attended the October 16 City Commission meeting to present the commission and the community with information on their activities. The students gained valuable leadership skills and public presentation experience and had the opportunity to observe/learn about local government protocol.

**City of Destin**

On October 24, the city held an open house at the Destin Community Center that showcased Destin’s major accomplishments for the year. As part of the open house,

the city hosted 10 partner organizations that highlighted their services within the city. Staff cooked and served lunch for the public. An estimated 275 people attended the event.

The City of Destin, in coordination with the Okaloosa County League of Cities, also managed the first-ever Municipal Job Shadow Week. Mayors, city

council members and staff in Okaloosa County had an opportunity to job-shadow someone from a fellow city in a similar job, with the goal of learning how to improve governmental processes. The program was a success, with 22 people from 12 municipalities participating. A proclamation was also made by the City of Destin to recognize Municipal Job Shadow Week. The city coordinated with local media, which covered both the open house and Municipal Job Shadow Week.



*City of Fort Lauderdale*

**City of Fort Lauderdale**

This year during Florida City Government Week, students from the three Fort Lauderdale high schools experienced firsthand what it’s like to be a participating member of the city.



*City of Destin*

Over the past two years, Fort Lauderdale has undertaken the task of forming its vision for the next century. The City Commission wants to ensure that every resident's voice is heard during the process. To that end, during Florida City Government Week, city representatives, along with Commissioner Bobby B. DuBose, visited Stranahan and Dillard high schools; meanwhile, Fort Lauderdale High School staged a field trip to City Hall to work on the city's vision. The entire visioning process and the importance of their opinions were explained to the students. Involving students in the city's process proved to be an educational one for teachers and city representatives as well. Ideas about sustainability, traffic, transportation, teen volunteerism, crime and safety, teen clubs (something similar to a Boys and Girls Club) and homelessness were all topics that were discussed, with proposed solutions ultimately given.

The City of Fort Lauderdale has set up a visioning website where all ideas can be logged and residents can view and comment. The website allows for a more global conversation between neighbors from all communities in the city, including the student community. Approximately 200 ideas were logged from students alone.

### City of Frostproof

Frostproof held a "Great American Teach-In" for its Florida City Government Week activity. The city hosted seven second-grade classes from Frostproof Elementary School, providing a tour of City Council chambers and the sheriff's office, both located in City Hall. During the tour of the council chambers, City Manager Tenny R. Croley gave a brief history of cities, including the City of Frostproof and how it got its name. She also explained



the governance process and who "runs" City Hall, as well as the services provided by various departments in the council-manager form of government. In addition, Croley also read each class a book. She also visited Ben Hill Griffin Jr. Elementary School and provided the same information to fourth-graders, as well as reading a book.

### City of Greenacres

Greenacres adopted a proclamation recognizing Florida City Government Week and held a combined Florida City Government Week/100 Best Communities for Young People event on October 29. The building department executed an interactive puppet show to educate children on fire safety and building permits/codes, and the fire marshal put out a fire with Silly String. The Afterschool Program performed a skit, with The Shining Acres (composed of superheroes, sidekicks and villains) performing some of what they learned on city department tours.

Jordan LaPier, senior director for 100 Best Communities – America's Promise Alliance, presented Mayor Samuel J. Ferreri with the city's fifth 100 Best Communities award. City Council Members Jonathan Pearce, Paula Bousquet and John Tharp, Deputy Mayor Peter Noble, state Reps. Mark Pafford and Lori Berman, and parents of the students were present. The *Palm Beach Post* and the *Greenacres Observer* published articles about Florida City Government Week activities and events.

### **City of Hawthorne**

Hawthorne participated in Florida City Government Week by hosting a “Kids Commission.” Fourth- and fifth-graders from Chester Shell Elementary School went to City Hall, where they were welcomed by Mayor Matthew Surrency and City Manager Ellen Vause. The mayor briefed the class on how a city is operated and how elected officials make decisions affecting the city.

To introduce the students to how city government works, a Kids Commission election was held to elect commissioners from the class. After the student commissioners were elected and seated, the first order of business was to elect a mayor and vice mayor. The new commission sat on the dais and used the gavel to open the meeting. Next, they hired a city manager, city attorney and city clerk, along with support staff in public works. This engaged most of the student body with a job title.

After organizing the commission and staff, the Kids Commission passed a resolution on school uniforms to notify the school that the commission did not support the wearing of such uniforms. The support for this resolution was demonstrated by student voters, who responded to a question on the ballot: “Do you agree with the requirement to wear a school uniform?” Ninety percent of the kids voted against the requirement.

Mayor Surrency has received many letters of appreciation from the students, and the school is planning to start a student government club with the students.

### **Town of Juno Beach**

Juno Beach recognized Florida City Government Week by holding a collection of items in honor of Veterans Day and U.S. troops currently serving in Afghanistan. The town distributed informative flyers that included a list of items most needed by both military veterans and troops. Also, website postings and mass emails were submitted to local residents and local businesses. Two nearby churches also helped in this cause. Thanks to all of these efforts, the town received generous donations that were then delivered to the appropriate organizations.

### **Town of Jupiter**

Jupiter presented a proclamation to Boy Scout Troop 774, which attended the Town Council meeting for citizenship badges. “My City: I’m Part of It, I’m Proud of It!” buttons and bumper stickers were also at the meeting and in the Town Hall lobby for the Boy Scouts and other residents to pick up.

### **City of Lake Alfred**

Lake Alfred recognized Florida City Government Week with a proclamation. Again this year, the city participated in the Great American Teach-In. Elected officials and staff members from various municipal departments volunteered their time to educate local students in civics education, local politics, fire prevention, and recycling and sanitation. The ultimate goal was to teach the students that they can become active participants within the community and make a difference in the city’s quality of life.

### **Town of Lake Park**

Lake Park adopted a proclamation recognizing Florida City Government Week. In addition, two local schools participated in tours of Lake Park Town Hall and Lake Park Library. They also viewed a PowerPoint presentation, “How Your City Government Works,” as well as a reenactment of the hurricane of 1928 that destroyed the original Kelsey City.

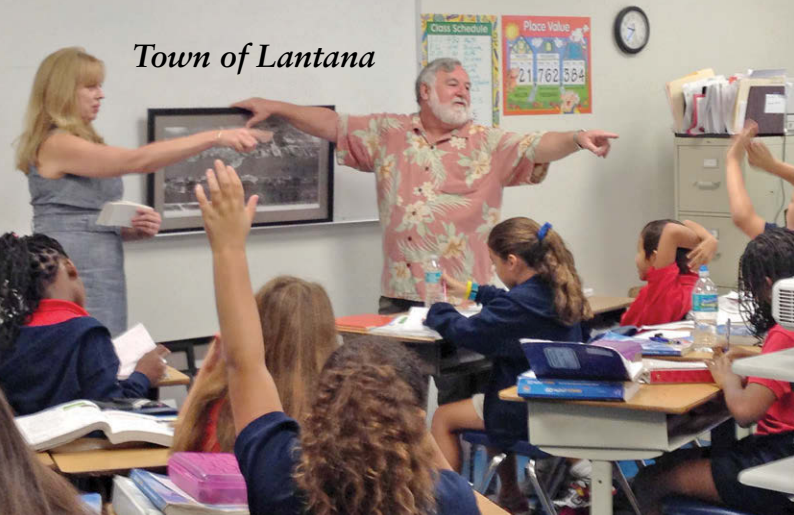
The tour of Town Hall included a visit to each department, with a designated spokesperson giving a brief presentation of the department’s role and responsibilities. Students also participated in demonstrations of public works’ vehicles and were educated on the value of recycling.

All students were provided with pins, bumper stickers and refreshments. They were challenged to consider if and where they might want to work in their local government in the future. Florida City Government Week was advertised on the town’s website, as well as the local-government channel.

### **Town of Lantana**

Lantana adopted a proclamation recognizing Florida City Government Week. Lantana Mayor David Stewart and Town Manager Debbie Manzo gave a city history lesson to fourth-grade students at Palm Beach Maritime Academy and Lantana Middle School. The Lantana Library also made more than 400 historical photos available online. (View and search by category at [www.lantanalibrary.org](http://www.lantanalibrary.org).) The mayor and Marjorie Watts Nelson, honorary curator of the Linehan Collection of Books, pushed the button to begin the show at the Friends of the Library’s Grand Opening of the Mary Linehan Slide Collection of Historic Lantana on the Web.

## Town of Lantana



### City of Margate

Margate celebrated the week by hosting its annual Student Government Day for Margate Middle School students. Student Government Day began in the City Hall commission chambers with a mock city-commission meeting, followed by tours of city departments including the police department, the Calypso Cove aquatics facility, a fire station and the city's water treatment facility. Students closed out the day at the public works facility.

It was Margate's seventh year hosting Student Government Day with the middle school.

### City of Newberry

Newberry adopted a resolution recognizing Florida City Government Week on October 22 and posted information showcasing the week on the city's website and Facebook page, as well as the local government information channel. Pins and bumper stickers were also provided to elected officials, staff and the general public in recognition of Florida City Government Week. In addition, the city partnered with the local elementary school and hosted open-house tours for students to heighten their awareness of city government and its departments.

### City of North Lauderdale

North Lauderdale brought Youth Government Day activities and the student city commission meeting back to City Hall this year.

Fifteen ninth-graders from Somerset Preparatory Academy Charter School toured City Hall, a fire station and a Bro-

ward County district sheriff's office in preparation for their student-led commission meeting.

After a long day of touring and rehearsals, the students returned to City Hall to conduct their mock commission meeting. With the help of a sparse script, the student mayor proceeded through the meeting and two youth-related item presentations – an anti-bullying policy and the establishment of an after-school education program for grades 9-12. Student city commission members kept the meeting interesting with insightful questions and dissenting opinions.

### City of North Port

Understanding that residents' engagement in local government is paramount, the City of North Port traditionally celebrates Florida City Government Week throughout the entire month of October. This year, North Port kicked off the celebration with a resolution approved by the City Commission on September 24. Many activities took place throughout the month. Informational tables featured city literature at signature events, including "Arts Night at City Hall" and the North Port Area Chamber of Commerce's annual "Hob Nob."

The city's activities also included the annual "Government on Wheels" program. Created five years ago, the program allows for city commissioners and employees

to be featured as guest speakers in local classrooms. In total, the program reached an estimated 1,500 students from five elementary schools, two middle schools and two high schools. Five city commissioners and 16 city employees participated in the program.

### Town of Oakland

Oakland owns and operates the Oakland Avenue Charter School, a K-5 facility with about 525 students. Each year, the town hosts a shadowing day, during which the students have opportunities to shadow the town manager and town engineer. Town staff also participate in judging the fifth-grade students' science projects.



City of North Lauderdale



*City of North Port*

### **City of Okeechobee**

Okeechobee adopted a resolution recognizing the week. The city also participated in the annual Career Day sponsored by Communities in Schools. All ninth- and 11th-graders enrolled at Okeechobee High School, as well as home-schooled students, participated. Each student had to pick at least three careers of interest to them, visit the booths highlighting those careers, and ask specific questions relating to salaries, job titles and duties, and retirement. The city's booth had 178 students stop by and obtain information about a career in local government. All areas were represented, from elected officials and administrators to firefighters, police officers and detectives, and public-works maintenance operators, along with an outdoor display of equipment.

### **City of Orange City**

Orange City recognized Florida City Government Week by inviting the student government association from Orange City Elementary School to council chambers. The students met with council members and the city manager to learn how the city is governed. They listened, asked questions and ate lunch together. These future leaders also participated in a poster contest with the theme "Why I Love Orange City." Three winners were chosen and received gift cards to Walmart. The winning posters were posted on the city's Facebook page. In addition, the students were taken on a tour of City Hall and the fire department to showcase some of the other services Orange City offers to residents.

### **City of Palatka**

Palatka partnered with members of Palatka High School's Student Government Council classes to provide students with real-time government experiences. On October 27, students visited City Hall to learn about local government, as well as to meet with and speak to city officials and department heads about municipal careers, elected offices and volunteer opportunities in municipal government. They also participated in the public portion of that evening's Palatka City Commission meeting.

Prior to the meeting, students held an election and learned about different forms of government. They met with city officials and department heads to learn about how local government affects their lives and the various career opportunities in local government, and spoke with both elected and appointed officials about their respective roles. Students learned how local laws are created, and aided in crafting a proclamation for issuance during a mock meeting.

The experience concluded during that evening's City Commission meeting, during which Mayor Vernon Myers issued a proclamation declaring November 2 as Palatka High School Student Government Day, and then presented Good Citizenship Awards to the



*City of Orange City*

student government members who participated in the program. Before and during the meeting, “My City: I’m Part of It, I’m Proud of It!” buttons and bumper stickers were distributed to students and residents.

**City of Parkland**

Parkland recognized Florida City Government Week by partnering with local third-graders and hosting an open house at City Hall that showcased the City Commission, the city manager, the fire and police departments, and the city library. The students learned about each department and the services they provide. In addition, students were sworn in by Mayor Michael Udine and/or one of the commissioners and were able to experience how a City Commission meeting is held.

At the end of the open house, the city provided goodie bags for each child to take home that included additional information about each city department and the roles they play in making the city “Environmentally Proud.”

**City of Pensacola**

Mayor Ashton Hayward and the City of Pensacola invited the sixth-grade civics class from Episcopal Day School to City Hall to celebrate Florida City Government Week. Hayward and the students had an hour-long discussion about city government, Pensacola’s new mayor-council form of government, voting, and what it means to be an elected official. The city provided each student with a bumper sticker and a “five flags” lapel pin denoting the five governments that have flown flags over Pensacola during its history.



**City of Safety Harbor**

Safety Harbor adopted a proclamation recognizing Florida City Government Week. In addition, Mayor Andy Steingold visited the local elementary school and appeared on its morning show, where he explained the significance of city government and read the proclamation. Also, Commissioner Nancy Besore visited the Mattie Williams Neighborhood Family Center to speak to children about the importance of city government.



**City of Sanford**

Mayor Jeff Triplett, Commissioner Mark McCarty, Commissioner Velma Williams and City Manager Norton Bonaparte visited four public schools – Seminole High School, Sanford Middle School, Crooms Academy of Information Technology and Millennium Middle School – to talk with students about Sanford and all of the municipal services provided by the city.

Questions asked by the students included ones about Hurricane Sandy, clean water and skateboard parks. One of the visits included a breakfast with U.S. Rep. John





*City of Sanford*

Sopchoppy to how students could be involved in their city government.

Emphasizing ways that students and their parents can get involved with their local governments, Sopchoppy Mayor Colleen Skipper-Mitchell and City Administrator-Clerk Jackie Lawhon challenged the students to help the council

Mica, a guest speaker from the Orlando Magic, and a wide array of questions from the students. The students of Millennium Middle School sent several letters of appreciation to the city as thanks for their visit and the educational lessons they received.

As a result of the positive outcomes generated during Florida City Government week, the mayor has proposed the creation of a City of Sanford Youth Council in 2013.

**City of Seminole**

The “Introduction to Urban Politics and Government” course at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg recognized Florida City Government Week on October 24 by organizing a celebration acknowledging the importance of the more than 400 cities in Florida. Professor Leslie Waters, the vice mayor of Seminole, and the students pinned their “My City” buttons on, held up “My City: I’m Part of It, I’m Proud of It!” bumper stickers, and displayed the names of cities in the Tampa Bay area that they are researching, earning internship hours at, or visiting as part of the fall-term class.

**City of Sopchoppy**

Sopchoppy participated in Florida City Government Week by visiting Medart Elementary School and speaking to the fourth-grade classes about municipal governments. Using information gained from the Florida League of Cities website and from local sources, a booklet was created for the students that included everything from the history of



*City of Sopchoppy*

design a new downtown park with some property that the city had recently acquired. The teachers and students were enthusiastic about this project, and they have been invited to bring ideas to a future council meeting.

**City of Stuart**

In celebration of Florida City Government Week, Stuart adopted a proclamation. The city also partnered with the House of Hope of Martin County, a not-for-profit community service agency, and founded a food drive at City Hall and the Public Safety Complex. With the message printed on customers’ utility bills and on the city’s website,



*City of Stuart*

the city collected non-perishable foods just in time for the holidays for those in need.

**City of St. Augustine**

Members of the St. Augustine City Commission and the city's fire chief visited area schools as part of Florida City Government Week. Participating schools hosted a local official who led

the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of the school day. Participants included Mayor Joe Boles, Vice Mayor Leanna Freeman, Commissioners Errol Jones and Nancy Sikes-Kline, and Fire Chief Mike Arnold. Together, they visited R.B. Hunt, Ketterlinus and Crookshank elementary schools, the Webster School and Cathedral Parish School during the week.

Visits by city officials to area schools during Florida City Government Week has become a tradition in recent years. The visits provide an opportunity for city leaders and students to meet, creating an opportunity to put a spotlight on the significant role local government has in residents' everyday lives.

### **City of St. Cloud**

The city hosted 16 seniors from St. Cloud High School during Florida City Government Week. The visit highlighted the many facets of city government and its services to the community, as well as ways that everyone can actively participate in their local government. It also reinforced the sense of community enjoyed in St. Cloud. The program included introductions by the City Council, city manager and department directors. There was also a City Hall tour, and students met with assigned city

council members, the city manager, the city attorney and staff in preparation for the mock city-council meeting.

### **City of Titusville**

Titusville set up displays from all departments at City Hall. It also distributed educational material on city operations and programs.

### **City of Valparaiso**

The city adopted a proclamation and focused on a job-shadowing week. Some of the department heads shadowed their peers in other cities, and another city shadowed one of Valparaiso's department heads.

### **Village of Wellington**

Wellington posted daily questions on the village website for residents to provide their feedback. Also, the village hosted an informational booth at Village Hall, where staff was able to interact with residents. Those interested also were able to take a tour of the building.

### **City of Weston**

Weston adopted a proclamation recognizing Florida City Government Week and provided the League's "My



*City of Weston*

## Town of Windermere



City: I'm Part of It, I'm Proud of It!" pins at a City Commission meeting that featured the swearing-in of the new mayor and commissioners. The city also initiated its annual "Weston University" program. Weston University is designed to provide a unique civic education for Weston high school sophomores, juniors and seniors. Each year, the program commences during Florida City Government Week.

Weston University is a program that meets for a day-long session once a month over an eight-month period. Sessions are held on-site at various locations where city services are provided, and include field visits. Through instruction, open conversations, observations, demonstrations and actual experiences, students are exposed to and educated on the details involved in running municipal departments on a day-to-day basis. They are also taught about state and local government by elected officials.

The students learn problem-solving procedures used by city government, recognizing the positions taken by city officials and the reasons behind them. For the last official session of the program, students participate in a mock city commission meeting after having gained the knowledge necessary to present and defend both sides of agenda issues. Upon successful completion of the program, they graduate from Weston University and are honored at a City Commission meeting.

### Town of Windermere

In what has become an October tradition, the third-grade students of Windermere Elementary School took a walk to Windermere Town Hall to learn about the town's government, police department and fire department. It took two mornings to accommodate all nine of the classes in half-day sessions where they learned about their community. A project that started out as an experiment in educating students about their government and civics has evolved into an annual event that provides a foundation for students' involvement in government and an opportunity to meet local leaders.

The third-graders were greeted by Windermere Mayor Gary Bruhn, who provided them with a history of the town and discussed how it functions and the services that are provided. Students then heard from Windermere Deputy Police Chief Arthur Mueller and Ocoee Fire Chief Pete McNeil. Both explained the jobs that they do and how their departments operate, and then answered the many questions that the students had.

The classes then were given presentations on the equipment that is used, and they were able to hold a police officer's protective vest, sit in the front of a police vehicle, look at all of the lifesaving tools that their fire department uses, and learn what a day in the life of a firefighter is like. After a full morning of learning, they visited an ice cream shop for a treat before heading back to school.

### Municipalities Adopting Florida City Government Week Proclamations:

- City of Arcadia
- City of Auburndale
- City of Bartow
- City of Brooksville
- Town of Callahan
- City of Coconut Creek
- City of Davenport
- Town of Davie
- City of Deerfield Beach
- City of Destin
- Town of Dundee
- City of Fort Myers
- City of Greenacres
- Town of Hastings
- Town of Jupiter
- Town of Lantana
- City of Newberry
- City of North Lauderdale
- City of Okeechobee
- City of Pinellas Park
- City of Punta Gorda
- City of Safety Harbor
- City of Stuart
- City of Tarpon Springs
- City of Valparaiso
- City of Weston

Sharon G. Berrian is an associate director of membership development for the Florida League of Cities. ■