



**CITY SHOWCASE**

# Florida City Government Week

Civic education takes center stage

by Sharon G. Berrian  
Florida League of Cities

Florida City Government Week was held October 19-25, 2014. This is an annual event to raise public awareness about how city government works and showcase the services that cities provide.

Cities throughout the state celebrated the week, which was proclaimed by Gov. Rick Scott. A summary of Florida City Government Weeks activities follows.



**CITY OF BELLE GLADE**

Florida League of Cities President **Lori Moseley** attended the October 20 **Belle Glade** City Commission meeting to hear essays read by students from the city’s Youth Empowerment Center (YEC). The students – YEC President **Kevin Ingle**, First Vice President **John Charles**, Second Vice President **Mardocho Juene** and Ambassador **Jenoute Mytil** – read their essays, titled “My City: I’m Part of It, I’m Proud of It.”

Moseley also presented the students with a special award for achieving third place in the League’s **Municipal Youth Council Video Competition**. Their award-winning video was shown to attendees and was received with overwhelming applause. Moseley congratulated the students for their outstanding video presentation and for their accomplishments in the community.



**CITY OF BUNNELL**

The **City of Bunnell** held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of its new Municipal Complex. The three-building complex will house all departments, including the Police Department and a separate facility for conducting city meetings. A municipal park is also planned for the site. Artwork by local artists, along with historical documents and artifacts depicting the early days of the city, was displayed. Also, staff members gave attendees tours of the new facility. The tours concluded in the City Commission Chambers, where guests were treated to a luncheon and music. The mayor and commissioners were joined by local county commissioners, school board members, representatives of the Sheriff’s Department and hundreds of residents.

**CITY OF CAPE CANAVERAL**

The **City of Cape Canaveral** continued its partnership with Cape View Elementary School. Each grade, from kindergarten through sixth, traveled to a variety of locations throughout the city to learn about how municipal government works and how it directly impacts their lives.



**CITY OF DESTIN**

The **City of Destin** hosted an open house and luncheon. The event was a huge success with more than 400 attendees. A shred truck was available to residents and businesses for free. City employees and city partners staffed booths with displays highlighting their work in and around the city. Volunteers were recognized and honored by the City Council for their commitment to the city. **Mayor Mel Ponder** spoke on the importance of volunteerism and family, and how the city is progressing in a positive direction.

**CITY OF FRUITLAND PARK**

**Fruitland Park** Elementary School Principal **Melissa De Jarlais** and staff members **Ellen Miller** and **Jeanne Villegas** were honored at the October 9 Fruitland Park City Commission meeting. Highlights of the meeting included recognizing the educators for their extensive backgrounds, years of professional experiences and accomplishments. They were commended for their continued dedication to the students, their involvement with city staff and their varied, innovative programs.



**CITY OF GREENACRES**

The city’s Leisure Services Department Youth Programs Division coordinated civic education activities using “The ABCs of City Government,” “My City: I’m Part of It, I’m Proud of It,” “Facts on Florida Cities” and “City Government in Florida.” City tours and guest speakers taught students about the services provided by the city, duties of municipal officials and various forms of government. The week ended with an open house hosted by students describing their civic education projects, and a tour of their newly renovated afterschool building.

**CITY OF HAWTHORNE**

The **City of Hawthorne** hosted its 4th annual City Government Week Kid's Commission. Elementary students visited City Hall, and the mayor and city manager reviewed the "ABCs of City Government" and answered a variety of questions. Students then were selected to serve as the commission, mayor and vice mayor. Once in office and sitting at the dais, the Kid's Commission hired a city manager, who then hired staff for the following offices: city clerk, city attorney, police chief, fire chief, public works director and all supporting staff. Each student became involved with their city government.



**TOWN OF HILLIARD**

An essay contest that began with "If I was the Mayor of the **Town of Hilliard**, I would . . ." was held for Hilliard Elementary School fourth-grade students. First place winner **Delaney Vennard** received \$25, second place winner **Drew Bunkley** received \$15 and third place winner **Lauren Thompson** received \$10.



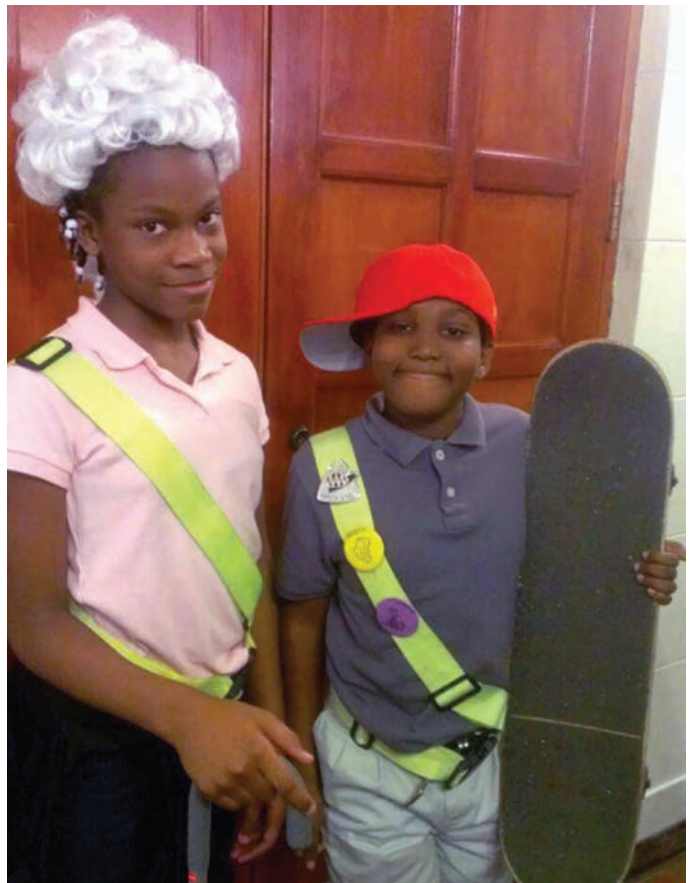
**CITY OF KISSIMMEE**

The **City of Kissimmee** celebrated with a School of Government class at Kissimmee Fire Department, Station 11. More than 25 city residents participated in hands-on activities and learned about the different aspects of the Fire Department.



**TOWN OF LANTANA**

The mayor and town manager shared the town's history with students at Lantana Elementary School and Lantana Middle School.



**TOWN OF LAKE PARK**

In the **Town of Lake Park**, each department presented an entertaining and educational skit. Skits involved fifth-grade student actors, complete with costumes and props. Through the interaction and presentations, the functions of each department were clearly received and understood. The Public Works Department presented a fun and educational demonstration of its "big" trucks. Students enjoyed participating in a mock commission meeting and voted overwhelmingly for a community swimming pool.



**CITY OF NEWBERRY**

**Commissioner Tim Marden, City Manager Mike New and City Clerk Judy Rice** visited with the fourth graders at Newberry Elementary School and gave a presentation on how local government works.

**TOWN OF OCEAN BREEZE**

The **Town of Ocean Breeze** handed out “My Town: I’m Part of It, I’m Proud of It” stickers and pins to residents during the October 2014 Town Council meeting. **Council President Ann Kagdis** arranged the celebration and provided the town with all pertinent information to pass along to the residents and others. Coincidentally, the town had a special visitor that day, **Congressman Patrick Murphy**.



**CITY OF ORANGE CITY**

**Orange City** invited the Student Government Association from Orange City Elementary School to the Council Chambers. Students were presented with a brief history of Orange City and a description of each department. They met with the city manager, mayor and other council members for a question-and-answer session, followed by lunch. Then, the students had a lesson on how local ordinances are created. During a mock council meeting, students played the roles of council members and concerned citizens. The program ended with a tour of historic Town Hall and the Fire Department Station 67.



**CITY OF PALATKA**

Students from Palatka High School learned about local government during the week. They culminated their studies with a visit to City Hall and a **Palatka City Commission** meeting. Prior to their visit, the students elected a mayor and commissioners, who learned how to legislate and conduct business, and they learned about careers in municipal government. The students culminated their visit by opening the Palatka City Commission meeting with a “mock” meeting during which they issued proclamations and made, debated and voted on motions. **Mayor Vernon Myers** presented “Good Government” certificates to participating students.

**CITY OF PALM BEACH GARDENS**

The **City of Palm Beach Gardens** highlighted what makes the city a special place to live. In addition to hosting community events throughout the week, the city launched a social media campaign aimed at educating the public on the many roles filled by the city. To accomplish this, Palm Beach Gardens chose to shine the spotlight on city employees in a campaign titled “Gardens is . . . Beautiful, Brave, Bold & Blooming.” The concept was to fit city departments and divisions into one of these four categories.

**VILLAGE OF PALM SPRINGS**

The mayor, Village Council and village department heads participated in the Literacy Foundation reading day, which occurred during Florida City Government Week. The city officials visited five schools to read to students and disseminated “My Village: I’m Part of It, I’m Proud of It” buttons and bumper stickers to 500 children and their teachers.





**CITY OF PARKER**

The city continued its partnership with Parker Elementary School by hosting three fifth-grade students who won an essay contest that explained how the students would spend \$100,000 to help Parker. The students and guests toured city departments, saw police dog Marlin sniff out contraband, and ate a “fireman’s” lunch in the fire house. The event concluded with the reading of proclamations. Essay winners were **Jaice Jensen** as mayor, **Janay Harrel** as police chief and **Taylor Jordan** as fire chief.

**CITY OF SANFORD**

**Mayor Jeff Triplett** met with two of **Sanford’s** high school principals and the Seminole County School Board chair to talk about developing an ongoing City of Sanford Mayor’s Youth Council, targeted to begin in the 2015-2016 school year. With guidance from the League’s “A Guide for Creating a City Youth Council,” the city is in its planning stages. The School Board has also begun drafting a memorandum of understanding. The city plans to align the youth council’s mission with the Mission and Vision of the City of Sanford, helping to materialize the city’s newly adopted Strategic Plan. It will help guide the students through their own decision making while on the youth council. The goals of the youth council are to spark the students’ interest to take action on real-life issues and make a difference in their city, and for the students to experience how local government works to develop public policies that will affect their generation and generations to come.



**CITY OF SEMINOLE**

**City of Seminole Mayor Leslie Waters**, along with **Fire Chief Heather Burford** and **Recreation Director Becky Gunter**, hosted 53 fourth-grade students from Indian Rocks Christian School for a mock council meeting. Students were on the dais serving as student councilors, city attorney and city manager. A student also “staffed” the clerk’s desk. Students came up to the lectern and asked city-related questions that the mayor and councilors discussed and answered. Several students completed “Request to Speak” cards. Topics discussed included building the new Seminole City Centre mall, their wish for more bike paths, and their excitement over a future kayak/canoe launch at Waterfront Park.



**CITY OF ST. CLOUD**

The **City of St. Cloud** sponsored a Student Government Day at City Hall. St. Cloud officials and staff hosted 19 St. Cloud High School seniors, who experienced firsthand the vital role played by city government in citizens’ lives. City council members and staff briefed the students, who participated in a mock city-council meeting.




**CITY OF STUART**

Commissioners from the **City of Stuart** met with 12 civics classes at Stuart Middle School to discuss the role of city government and educate students on what their city does. The city clerk judged a pumpkin carving contest at Pine Elementary School. Information on the city and its role was disseminated.



**TOWN OF WINDERMERE**

Third-grade students from Windermere Elementary School took a walk to the Windermere Town Hall to learn about the town's government, including the Police and Fire departments. They were greeted by **Mayor Gary Bruhn**, who provided them with a history of the town and discussed how the town functions and the services that are provided. They also heard from **Windermere Police Chief David Ogden** and **Ocoee Deputy Fire Chief Tom Smothers**, followed by a presentation from **Windermere Town Manager Robert Smith**. One by one, they explained the job that they do and how their department operates, and then answered the students' many questions. They learned about public safety equipment and were able to hold a police officer's protective vest, sit in the front of a police vehicle, look at the Fire Department's lifesaving tools and learn what a day in the life of a firefighter is like. And after a full morning of learning, the students visited Allen's Creamery for a snack before heading back to school. Also, all four classes of third graders were able to recite the Preamble to the Constitution from memory.

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

**Florida City Government Week Proclamations were adopted by:**

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| City of Auburndale         | Town of Lantana   |
| City of Coral Springs      | City of Okeechobee  |
| Village of El Portal       | Town of Orange Park   |
| City of Fernandina Beach   | Village of Palm Springs   |
| City of Green Cove Springs | City of St. Cloud <i>(also proclaimed October 21 as Student Government Day)</i> |
| City of Greenacres         | City of Stuart  |
| City of Hawthorne          |   |
| Town of Jupiter            |   |
| City of Lake Wales         |   |

Visit [www.floridaleagueofcities.com/Publications.aspx?CNID=9632](http://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/Publications.aspx?CNID=9632) to access League-developed civic education material, such as "The ABCs of City Government" and "My City: I'm Part of It, I'm Proud of It."