



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES**  
**Institute for Youth, Education, and Families**

*Pathways and Springboards: City Strategies to Strengthen Families*  
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*Moderator:* **Clifford Johnson**, Executive Director  
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families  
National League of Cities (NLC)

*Speakers:*

**Margaret Barrett-Simon**, Councilwoman, Jackson, Mississippi  
**Mayor Lou Ogden**, Mayor of Tualatin, Oregon  
**Jane Henegar**, Deputy Mayor, Indianapolis, Indiana

*JOHNSON:* Thank you all for joining us today for the twenty-eighth in our series of monthly audioconferences sponsored by the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families. I'm Cliff Johnson, the Executive Director of the Institute here at the NLC, which is a special entity within the National League of Cities whose mission is to strengthen the capacity of municipal leaders to address the needs of children, youth and families in their own communities. The Institute has been working with mayors and city council people and other city officials all across the country now for the past four years in five core program areas: education, early childhood development, youth development, the safety of children and youth and family economic success. We have been delighted to have an opportunity to be helpful to many cities, and we are increasingly building peer networks on key issues and undertaking other efforts to reach out to communities across the country. This monthly audioconference series is one reflection of those ongoing efforts.

The context for today's audioconference arises both out of some long-term work here at the Institute, and also some more recent discussions within the National League of Cities' Council on Youth, Education and Families, which is a unique leadership group composed of mayors, city council people, and other elected officials, as well as national non-profit leaders and young people.

The long-term work by the Institute is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, located in Baltimore, which is the funder responsible for providing the support for this audioconference call. The National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families has been working for several years now with the Foundation to try and develop ideas and agendas for ways in which city leaders can support and strengthen families in their own communities. We have been very grateful to the Foundation for its support and partnership in these efforts.

Over the course of 2004, the National League of Cities' Council on Youth, Education and Families, under the leadership of Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, has placed heavy emphasis on the topic of family strengthening and has spent a lot of time this year developing a collective statement on strengthening families, which is entitled

“Strengthening America’s Families: What Municipal Leaders Must Do.” The statement was presented to the National League of Cities’ Board of Directors last week in Indianapolis in the middle of the NLC Congress of Cities, the annual meeting for the National League of Cities. It was endorsed by the National League of Cities’ Board of Directors, and then was also distributed to conference participants at the opening plenary session at the beginning of the conference last Thursday. We were delighted to be able to do this in the context of the Congress of Cities.

We also have been able to post the statement prepared by the Council on Youth, Education and Families, and endorsed by the NLC Board on the NLC website. Hopefully all of you have received a link to that, as well as a copy of the file of the statement. If you we have not seen it, you can go to [www.nlc.org/iyef](http://www.nlc.org/iyef), and you will see a link to this statement on family strengthening that you can look at while the audioconference is under way.

We are delighted today to have with us two long-time and prominent members of our Council on Youth, Education and Families -- Councilwoman Margaret Barrett-Simon from Jackson, Mississippi. Good morning, Margaret.

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Good morning, Cliff.

*JOHNSON:* We also have Lou Ogden, the mayor of Tualatin, Oregon. Good morning, Lou.

*OGDEN:* Good morning.

*JOHNSON:* The third participant on our audioconference this morning is Deputy Mayor Jane Henegar from the City of Indianapolis. Good morning, Jane.

*HENEGAR:* Hello, Cliff.

*JOHNSON:* Jane has been working with us very closely on this work and has been the key person working with Mayor Bart Peterson as Chair of the Council, to support the work that the Council has done this year on the Statement to Strengthen Families.

Let me start first with you, Margaret. Are there things you see in your community in Jackson and across the country, from the conversations we have had through the Council, that are convincing more local elected officials to focus on this question of strengthening families and convincing them that family strengthening needs to be part of the city agenda?

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Well, Cliff, certainly we all know that strong cities are built on a foundation of strong families. Whatever steps we take to strengthen our families are among the most important investments we make in the health of our communities. Sometimes these things are less visible, but so very, very important.

Our goal is to promote greater awareness of the importance of city efforts to strengthen families and to build strong bonds and strong support for investments in families, so that our cities and towns will thrive. I think the cost of not taking these steps

are enormous for us. When our children fail, our next generation of citizens also fail. We see the toll of family failure in higher rates of child poverty, child abuse, school failure and a host of other problems.

Many of the highest costs of family failures land squarely on the doorsteps of our city halls. Spending for public safety, education and human services rise and the strength of the local workforce and economy is undermined. I believe as city leaders, inaction is not an option for us. We must stress the importance.

*JOHNSON:* How does this play with your colleagues in Jackson? Do you find that they share your concerns -- other members of the City Council, the Mayor? Is this a subject that gets talked about on occasion in Jackson?

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Jackson, Mississippi understands better than many cities, how important leadership in this area is. As you know, Mississippi has been at the bottom of every list as far as children's issues for some time. We are beginning to make some progress. But in our city, which is the only metropolitan area in the State of Mississippi, we are uniquely able to see that as our children and families thrive, so does our city. We have made tremendous efforts in early childhood education, healthcare issues, all of those things. I think that there is a coming-to-terms with the fact that we are all in this together, and it is critically important that we work together as a community to see that the needs of our children and families are met.

People get there in different ways. You know, some believe that it's not necessarily a city leader's problem. I think if you look around us and see the consequences of us not addressing this problem, that the effects are enormous for us.

*HENEGAR:* In Indianapolis, too, we have been talking about family strengthening. We have been giving concrete examples. No one is against family strengthening. It's one of those things people say, "Of course, I'm for stronger families." There have been people in the public sector and in the private sector that have been incredible champions for our efforts, but one of the struggles is getting ownership of that. There are so many things that people are doing that all contribute ultimately to making a city, a town a great place to live. Getting the mindset for everyone to see and understand how those efforts, whether it be picking up trash or creating jobs, or keeping the streets safe -- how all of those efforts go to the ultimate goal of family strengthening so everyone sees that we all have ownership in the ultimate fostering the strength of families. That has been a challenge.

*OGDEN:* If I might add to that, you might think that the situation is different in a small community. We are 25,000, in a higher socioeconomic stratum. We are an above-middle income suburb in a regional area, a suburb of Portland. But frankly, the needs are very similar. We have issues on the low-income side of our citizenry. We also have issues on the higher income side-- issues with drug abuse and other risks that kids with more money in their pocket become more susceptible to. I will talk a bit more about that in a moment.

But to the question of how do colleagues respond to that or how does the

public respond to recognizing that need, one of the biggest concerns or issues that we have found, and I think other people have echoed this, is this question of whose job is it? Not so much that it's not my job and I should not be doing it. We have social programs that are instituted by the county, or the state has a role in providing resources for needy families. Of course, we have federal money that is devolved down through our county and through our state agencies. It's really so many people asking a question, "Isn't someone already doing that?" or "Are we going to duplicate efforts?" or "Why can't we get that job done more effectively by the agency involved?" That does not result in finger-pointing as much as it results in confusion and it results in a question of, okay, how do we partner and work together to be effective, rather than just saying, "Well, someone else I think is taking care of that." Obviously, they are not or the problems would not be existing. Not an indictment that they are not doing a good job, just recognition of the gaps.

*BARRETT-SIMON:* I think one of the most important things that we can do is identify very clearly who our partners are. I think in every community, that has been a challenge.

*JOHNSON:* Yes, I think that is absolutely right. And it sounds like it's rare that someone comes after the family strengthening focus directly. It's almost like attacking Motherhood and Apple Pie, right? But the problems come, sometimes in terms of getting people to more enthusiastically be on board. Secondly, once you get into the business of deciding how that translates in your particular community, then you may have folks who say, "Whoa, wait a second! Why are we in this? Isn't that the school board's job?" or "Isn't that the county's job?" or "Isn't that the state's job? Why is this our job at the city level?" Have you had occasion to push back on those questions of city leadership versus school board, county or state leadership, any of you? Has that been sort of front and center at some point in your work locally?

*HENEGAR:* Yes, I think it has come up in a number of ways. The first is when we first began to talk about this, the question of what is family and who are we defining within and without that definition. One of the first things we did was to say a family decides what their definition of family is. We are just going to charge forward and look at the policies that we can help implement and support.

Every community has its own history on the respective powers and responsibilities of the public sector, the private sector, the school systems, the private not-for-profit providers. Again, another early challenge we had was with respect to service providers, who have been doing great work. Are you saying that we are not going to do a good job? Or are you going to try to do our job and attract the funding along with it? Letting people know that elevating the emphasis on family strengthening is actually designed to help them in their efforts, not to replace them is important. In terms of supporting the school system, there are so many things that we can in the public sector do that help the school systems do their work.

A great example we have in Indianapolis is affordable housing. Schools, especially the inner city school system, have an incredible mobility rate in certain places.

It's hard for them to do their job of day-to-day teaching when they get two or three, sometimes four students in a single desk for the course of a school year. That is something that we can do that does not intrude upon their educational mission, but certainly helps them achieve better results.

Gaining that trust that because we are weighing in as the public sector on this sometimes amorphous concept of family strengthening does not mean that we need to dictate. It means that we can play a partnership role and be supportive.

*JOHNSON:* Margaret, I know you saw these issues up front when you had such an important leadership role for the National League of Cities in working with Past President John DeStefano from New Haven on the attempt to promote early childhood success. I am sure you had to deal with the questions, particularly around young families and parents and why is this something that city leaders should care about in terms of promoting early childhood success and strong families. Did you come away with reactions on that front through your work on early childhood?

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Yes, definitely, Cliff. In fact, I think that year of work was one of the most fulfilling I have had in my years with the National League of Cities. What we saw in our year of study is that children just simply do not start on the same level playing field. Some children are playing catch-up from the time of their birth, and the consequences are dire when that happens. We began to look at all the problems affecting our cities and towns -- the poverty, the crime, everything that we were dealing with and are challenged by every day. It is directly impacted by the problems of early childhood, the fact that there is no level playing field, and the family instability that causes this or is the result of this. You can look at it as which comes first, the chicken or the egg? It was a very revealing year of study for us. While many of us have families and thought we had a lot of the answers, the statistical data was just powerful. I think for the first time, I saw people that I never believed would think this was the role of a municipal leader, change their point of view. That was very reassuring to me.

*OGDEN:* I would like to echo that, Cliff. We are so programmed to concern ourselves with potholes and sewers--

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Yes.

*OGDEN:* -- and subdivisions and things of that nature, and you question how you make the mental shift, and why you make the mental shift. I think early on we struggled with how can we as elected officials affect an outcome. What can we do? How do we partner?

What Margaret just said about really, truly recognizing that need, I think a lot of us elected officials still have not transcended that. Yes, it's obvious if you want to talk about the final conclusion of someone who ended up in a penal institution or something like that, it does not take a rocket scientist or a policy wonk to understand that you can save a lot of money on the front end with children rather than incarcerating someone for life. That is obvious. Yet, on a day-to-day basis, to really, really understand

how difficult it is for children who do start way behind and then are subjected to an environment when they leave school, whether they are degraded or whether they are threatened or whether they are at some other risks for alcohol or drugs, etc., we do not really understand that. We need to spend some time either being involved in that situation or studying it, as the Advisory Council did that year -- and for us it was a big "Aha!" Many local elected officials across this country sort of understand it intellectually. But they do not really truly internalize how severe that need is. I think that recognition is still a big part of our effort that we need to focus on.

*JOHNSON:* One of the things that was most striking to me about the process that the Council on Youth, Education and Families has been through is how quickly the Council came to the conclusion that partnerships were central to this work--that there needed to be on the one hand clear and strong city leadership and a strong voice from city leaders about this. At the same time that city leaders could not do this alone and that from that perspective, it was essential to see how it would be possible to build these partnerships and these strong coalitions. Jane, I know in Indianapolis, that has been a central part of the approach that you folks have taken with the Family Strengthening Coalition there. Can you talk about why you have gone there and what that has meant locally?

*HENEGAR:* Let me first say, it is a lesson we have to learn over and over again. It is so easy to get frustrated either with the rate of progress or with the tangible quantity of progress and say we are just going to do it. It is easier and quicker if we talk to people who we know who they are and we know their phone numbers and we can get to them right away. Quite frankly, they understand our perspective and we understand their perspective. They are easier to deal with.

It has been a real challenge, and a lesson that we have to learn over and over again, that the outcomes and the final product, the ultimate progress to goals, like increasing family incomes, we are just not going to make it if we do not go and look for partners throughout the community. In Indianapolis, we have always had an easy and strong relationship with private philanthropy. We have a healthy philanthropy system here. We do not do any direct social services through local government. A lot of what we can bring as city government, what the Mayor can bring, is his bully pulpit, his ability to draw attention to an issue.

Those partnerships have been long standing, but we have had to go much beyond that. Every year we have a Family Strengthening Summit, where we invite not only those "usual suspect" partners -- the not-for-profits, the philanthropies and other public sectors, but families themselves. We find ways -- because, as you know, we always have to keep it new and fresh -- to engage those families, the youth and their parents and older people in a discussion of what do families need and how do they need it? They challenge our assumptions and can make sure that we can continue to keep a focus not on what we perceive to be the problems and what we perceive to be the answers, but what the whole community not only can agree, but also that they can take ownership for themselves and participate in.

*BARRETT-SIMON:* I think it is so important, too, to let these entities know

what their avenue to involvement is. The business community here is a tremendous ally to us. I am sure they do not think of this in terms of family strengthening, but we encourage them to employ our youth in the summer -- job development, training programs -- all of those things. We also have a good faith-based effort here in housing and job security, that sort of thing. We are a big university and college town, and we have a medical educational district, which means they tax themselves. They are a business improvement district, or BID. They also offer incentives to their employees to buy housing around the hospitals and facilities here. We have a first-time housing program for teachers, where if they are teaching in the public schools and they qualify for this program, they can buy housing in an area where they teach, which I think is a great way of building community.

*HENEGAR:* Yes, that is great.

*JOHNSON:* Let me pause for our listeners and just remind you, we have three panelists on the line with us for the audioconference. We have Councilwoman Margaret Barrett-Simon from Jackson, Mississippi, who just spoke; Mayor Lou Ogden from Tualatin, Oregon; and Deputy Mayor Jane Henegar from Indianapolis, Indiana. And Lou, apparently a few folks are having a bit of trouble hearing you, so we will just ask you to speak up a little bit more as we talk.

Let me come back to you, Lou. You have had a lot of experience and shown a lot of leadership there in Tualatin around questions of youth voice and youth engagement, how you get young people to be part of these conversations and to partner effectively with young people on questions related to family strengthening. Can you talk about why you have spent the time and energy you have in Tualatin focused on that and how it connects to this topic?

*OGDEN:* Well, I think I was the beneficiary of being in the right place at the right time, frankly. We have an engaged youth component in our community. We have always had an active park and recreation effort. Since we are somewhat of a newer community, in the last fifteen years really, we have engaged youth as part of our advisory councils on park designs and things like that for years.

I think what I was particularly struck with was the notion that youth do not really have a voice per se at city government. That youth involvement typically is within the confines of the school -- whether it is an elementary school or high school -- where these folks spend their entire day. They are sort of released at night or in the afternoon and that is in a way, their separate world. How do we bring those citizens into various forms of government? Understanding that even though they do not vote, they do not pay taxes, and they do not typically own property, they are absolutely enfranchised citizens, and as elected officials, we represent them just as much as we represent adults. That may be somewhat of a foreign concept for elected officials. But it seemed important to me.

We embarked to establish a Youth Council, I want to say seven or eight years ago. The thought of that youth council, though, was not to be solely a shadow government or a pseudo-council to advise our City Council, but rather to be a dozen people to be a conduit between the adult community and the youth community. Not just

at city government, not just in the school, but through the Chamber of Commerce, through some of the not-for-profits, through some of the other community service efforts that youth are already doing as part of requirement to graduate from high school. How could you corral all that effort into one conduit? If you were an employer looking for youth that had skills in website design or were someone who was from a church who wanted a youth night for more than just the youth already part of that congregation, where could you go for a central clearinghouse and be able to reach not fifteen youth, but 1,500 youth at the high school, or 5,000 youth through the whole education program?

It is a little bit of a grandiose effort for one youth council. But we have really developed it. It is common knowledge in Tualatin, if you want youth participation in something, you want youth opinion, or you are looking for a youth resource, contact the Youth Council. They have got their own network. It has been more than just coming to City Council meetings and giving a youth voice.

*JOHNSON:* There is this broader framework around resident engagement and how you get parents and families and other residents engaged. As a subset of that, this challenge of how you get a youth voice into that.

Margaret, I know you folks have worked with and struggled with these questions of resident engagement and civic engagement, how you have genuine voices from the community as you try and lead in city government and work through these issues. Do you have reflections on either what has worked for you in Jackson or what has been challenging for you in Jackson?

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Definitely. When I was elected in 1985, there was barely one, maybe two neighborhood associations in our city. I became politically involved in the neighborhood where I reside. Now there is hardly an area of the city that is not organized. In 1985, I ran on the women's issue, and that was neighborhood stability, which transcends many times to family stability. I am proud to say that the last three mayors ran on those issues.

I feel like we have empowered our people in the areas where they live so that they feel that they have a voice. We have an area that Habitat came in and built over 300 houses a few blocks away from me, and I am proud to say I represent that area. We now have third generations of that family moving back into the area. They would never have come back there before. Grandmothers are seeing their great-grandchildren grow up.

It is just a matter of getting people involved again, who saw themselves abandoned by the system. There was no response to them for many years. We try every day to reconnect them to local government and restore their hope. I think we are doing that. The neighborhood associations are strong. I think they are the lifeblood of our communities. I think when you bring the people who represent these areas to the table, they feel vested. They feel a sense of ownership. I think that has the beginning to tackling our problems.

*JOHNSON:* It really does have to happen at the neighborhood level.

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Absolutely -- it has to be a grassroots beginning. Any time a neighborhood feels disenfranchised and not a part of the process, you have made some terrible mistakes from the beginning up.

*JOHNSON:* Margaret, I want to pick up on your theme about the importance of people feeling ownership and come back to Jane in Indianapolis. One of my first experiences in thinking about family strengthening and how it plays out in city government was my opportunity, a couple of years ago, Jane, to be with you in the Mayor's office. We had all of the department heads for the city around the table talking about what they do that connects to the family strengthening agenda of the Mayor's. It was very powerful to have that -- to hear it not just from the people who you think of as being responsible for children, youth and family issues, but to hear it from the public works folks and from the fire chief and from folks you would not think would necessarily see this as part of their agenda. Can you talk a bit about why the Mayor has seen that as important and how it has played out as kind of a lens through which to view everything that the city does?

*HENEGAR:* Sure. You have mentioned a lot of the people in our city that work on things that people usually associate with as the responsible of city government, of mayors -- the trash, the potholes, keeping the streets safe, encouraging economic development. We all do those for a reason. We do it because we think that those are things that will contribute to a city, a community that people want to live in, people want to raise their kids in, and people want to work in, that they want to play in. There is that ultimate goal. All of those things helps support strong families and are done for the purpose of strengthening families.

That is the reason the Mayor has made it a priority. When he thought about all the challenges that faced him as a mayor, faced cities, and then the solutions, the strategies kept came coming back again and again to the strength of families, the strength of the individual neighborhoods where people live, and how you make all of that fit together. It is a complicated process with daily fires that are easy to pull you in many, many directions.

One of the reasons I think that we have found support throughout our city leadership and all the way down are the people. It is great to work for a city, especially when you feel that it's for a great cause. Filling a pothole for just a pothole's sake is different than filling a pothole because you understand that is an important part of how you keep that neighborhood together. Same with picking up trash and what that does to a community's feeling about itself. Public transportation allows people to connect to jobs for which they have worked very hard to build up their skill set, and public transportation allows them to make those connections. Family strengthening has allowed us to show that all of this fits together and give, I think, greater meaning to people's individual responsibilities and tasks.

That all said, it is also work to keep people's focus on the bigger picture of how do your individual areas of responsibility fit into this greater goal of making sure that families are strong and the neighborhood's they live in are strong. It requires constant reminders, vigilance and quite frankly, it requires reminding all of us what are the tangible steps that we can take and how do those pieces all fit in together. Some of

them are not so easy to wrap your arms around. It's been an effort -- a good effort, a productive effort. However, it is not without constant care that we keep everybody's focus there.

*JOHNSON:* That is a great segue, Jane, to talk somewhat in more detail about specific roles that city leaders can play. We have a question via e-mail from San Antonio that I want to pose to all of you to kick this off. The question from San Antonio is, "What role do elected officials have in brokering family strengthening programs in their communities?" Which I interpret to mean, we all have, both through our government agencies and through non-profit agencies and community groups, a mix of things already going on to try and strengthen families in any community. What's the role of the elected officials in brokering those, sort of piecing them together, helping to figure out how to fill gaps or promote coordination between those programs? Margaret, Lou, do you have a reaction to that question?

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Sure. Jane mentioned the bully pulpit earlier. That is exactly what we have talked about this year and the role that we as elected officials can use that. We bring our business leaders in. We use them in many different ways to promote job development training programs, summer youth employment. We rely on our faith-based and civic clubs and note that they are many times better able to respond to family needs and neighborhood needs than we as elected leaders are. We need to partner with them. Our school boards and our teachers -- they are truly the unsung heroes in most of our cities. It is important for us to raise the importance of schools and what they mean to the future of our cities.

I believe bringing all the people to the table that should be there, and then as you say, Cliff, coordinate that effort. I think that is the most important thing that we as city leaders do. We look at who we have at the table, what is brought to the table. Then we have to know where to fill the gaps. I think if we do this, we can see a very positive impact.

*OGDEN:* Jane mentioned the Mayor using his bully pulpit. That term in some regards connotes someone out there who is stirring the bushes and drawing attention. I think that quite honestly when the Mayor calls a meeting of non-government entities -- or I should say, non-municipal government entities -- all the players that Margaret just enumerated, people will come to the meeting. People particularly come when it is done with a level of enthusiasm, and with a level of asking people to come and participate and give their thoughts and ideas as to how we can better coordinate. Just someone to convene, someone to call everybody together and make it a priority for people to attend I think is an important role for a city council or a mayor can play.

In Tualatin, we were fortunate to be able to take that a little bit further in recognizing again the somewhat siloing effect of these different entities, these different agencies and the non-profits and the faith-based, private industry and so on. We actually created what we referred to as the Tualatin Resource Center.

*BARRETT-SIMON:* What did you call it?

*OGDEN:* Well, our town is the City of Tualatin, so it is the Tualatin Resource Center. We were able to bring, on a part-time basis, a couple of state agency employees, a couple of county employees. They rotate. They are not there eight-to-five, but they come in on predetermined hours into the Center and respond to questions and issues and problems that people can make appointments for those times. We have got a couple staff people that we were able to get some state money -- kind of amalgamated money -- to fund their position to be there. We house them in an elementary school building, and we carved out some space for that. That is central, not just a clearinghouse. It is actually a repository where people can come, have appointments, have connections and also let the different agencies talk to each other a little bit more about what they can provide.

We created a steering committee for that group, made up of members from the faith community – a couple pastors who are very active in our community – a couple officers from our chamber of commerce, a person from the school board, a person from the city council, and just some citizens at large that we were able to identify as folks who had interest in helping, as well as citizens who are more on the user end of that spectrum. That steering committee meets and talks about how this is working out, what is not working.

Of course, obviously we are always identifying significantly more need than we have resources to address. It was a first step in trying to get folks to talk to each other and recognize at least that they exist. Then when someone from social services is working with a particular family on an issue, they can connect them with the employment division and say, “Well, so-and-so is going to be here on Thursday. Why don’t you meet with them or help them with a kiosk?” or whatever. It’s at least, a cross-interaction by providers, in a very small setting, but it is a first step.

*JOHNSON:* Lou, your comments go directly to the heart of the statement put together by the Council on Youth, Education and Families and the underlying work that has been going on in many communities with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, that connections are critical. Connections to economic opportunities, connections to support services, and connections to social networks and informal networks at the neighborhood level and for families are key ingredients to end up with stronger families and communities.

*FACILITATOR:* Your first question comes from Dorothy Wilson.

*QUESTIONER:* I would like to know what specific financing options you see available for programs for strengthening families at the local government level.

*JOHNSON:* Always the hard question, right? How do you pay for all this? Jane, do you want to take a first run at that?

*HENEGAR:* Sure. Indianapolis, likes lots of cities, is having financial challenges. Preceding that, as I said, we do not provide any direct services at the city level. We do not provide local dollars obviously for those services, as we do not provide them.

We have access to CDBG dollars, HOME dollars, and other federal programs. As most of us, I am sure, know, that gives very limited restricted amounts that we can use on programming. Because we have been limited in the funding that we can provide, we have been very active in grants, both grants that we apply for from private foundations as well as specialized grants at the federal and state level. I do not think that that should be under-emphasized. We talked about the role that local government plays, and certainly setting an example by how the mayor or the city councilperson spends their time -- you know, at a meeting, talking about a topic -- sends a message to everybody else about how they should spend their time, which can similarly send a signal about resources. Whatever resources we have or we have access to, if we set a priority for family strengthening-related issues, then that sends a signal to both public and our private partners that we think that is a good way for them to spend their money.

We also had great partnerships with foundations like the Annie Casey Foundation, our local United Way, a number of other local foundations and philanthropies. We have been able to say, "Family strengthening relates to your issue -- say, the Indianapolis Health Foundation's -- because these health outcomes affect the ability of children and their parents to achieve these outcomes that we all agree are important and contribute to strong families." By specializing and particularizing the family strengthening canopy to the specific interests of different funders, we have been able to cobble together various funders.

Again, I just want to wrap up by saying a big part of our purpose has not been to draw money away from preexisting programs. We have advocated with those programs that they think about how their mission and their activities relate to family strengthening. Another big role we have played is by doing letters of support, etc., for various entities across the community in relation to their family strengthening work to help boost their chances of attracting funding directly.

*OGDEN:* If I may answer that with a specific example along the lines of what Jane just spoke of -- right now our city is applying for a "Drug-Free Community Support" program. It's a five-year grant, \$100,000 a year, and it can be renewed for five more. It is a competitive grant. I like this particular grant because it requires establishing the coalitions that we have been talking about all morning and actually having those in place and being able to demonstrate that. To be able to put those coalitions together takes time, energy and effort.

Our city is not like Indianapolis -- it is not able to go out and identify a budget line item for family strengthening. We are able to commit some employees -- city employee resources -- toward doing the work of establishing these coalitions and networks and creating a frequency of this group coming together and meeting and establishing a bona fide relationship there so that we can qualify and hopefully be competitive for the grant. Then the grant, of course -- in this case, \$100,000 a year -- is not going to provide a tremendous new program, but it is going to provide some staffing to continue to bolster the Resource Center.

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Let me add to that. Here in Jackson, we do provide a number of services, and we have looked at the economic impact of that. But we set our

priorities, and our budget reflects that. We have city daycare. The parents must be employed, and it is done on a sliding scale according to income. But we serve several hundred children throughout the city. We have a seniors' Meals-on-Wheels program, which is run through our Department of Health and Human Services. We have greatly enhanced our Parks and Recreation programs because we were really lacking there. We are challenged by the lack of dollars, just like every other city and town is. But again, we have tried to look at available monies through grants, that sort of thing. Each year we set our priorities, and our dollars must reflect what those priorities are. We truly have placed our young people at the top of that list.

*JOHNSON:* Thank you, Margaret. It is something that we talked a lot about in the context of the Council's deliberations--how important it is with community partners to look at how you are spending your current resources and what your priorities are and how to make more effective use of that, as well as how to augment those resources over time. Let's see if we have another question.

*FACILITATOR:* Your next question comes from Larry Mendel.

*JOHNSON:* Hi, Larry.

*QUESTIONER:* This is Susan speaking. I wanted to ask the National League of Cities: are you collaborating or partnering with other national organizations around this type of issue as children and youth and families?

*JOHNSON:* Thanks for that question. We have through the Institute a lot of different partnerships in place with other national organizations, both with our counterparts representing public officials at the county level and the state level, but also throughout the national non-profit sector. There are a group of national organizations that have been working quite closely with the Casey Foundation on these issues. That has been one context for us interacting with the focus on family strengthening. But in almost every area that we work on the national level, we realize that we can not do this on our own any more than city leaders at the local level can do this on their own. We try to find those strategic partnerships on issues like school improvement, afterschool, early childhood success, family economic success. You can get some flavor for that by looking at the material on our website. I will also be happy to respond more specifically to other questions.

Is there another question queued up?

*FACILITATOR:* We do have a question Mary Lee Anderson.

*QUESTIONER:* I would like to ask whether or not the National League of Cities has coordinated any efforts with the America's Promise movement nationally.

*JOHNSON:* We have learned a lot about the America's Promise movement over time. There are so many communities where we have worked where it's clear that America's

Promise has had an important impact in terms of both motivating local officials and their community partners to think about these issues, and also have provided guidance and inspiration in terms of how they are doing it. We just are at the point of talking more specifically with the national folks about potential alignment and collaboration in our work through the Institute. At the national level there has not been to date a highly coordinated effort of that sort. But it has been striking to me how many communities have been touched by the America's Promise effort and how those efforts have laid an important groundwork for what's going on.

In Jackson or Tualatin or Indianapolis, have you seen signs of America's Promise work?

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Some, yes.

*JOHNSON:* A little bit in all those places. In some communities, it's been a major rallying point, an organizing point for community efforts on behalf of children and families.

We are near the end of our time here. I want to make sure to give each of our three panelists a chance to reflect a bit on the conversation we have had, and in particular to ask each of you if you had a chance to offer one piece of advice to a local official who wanted to take action to strengthen families, what would it be? What would you offer as a word of advice to people who want to take this on?

*BARRETT-SIMON:* Well, I think that we as city leaders are in a unique position to capture the attention of so many diverse constituencies and begin these family-strengthening initiatives. I think the most important part of that is identifying our partners, as we talked earlier, and in giving them a way to become involved. I think that is one of the biggest problems we have in our cities right now. There are people who want to be involved. They want to help. They do not know clearly how to do that.

Then I think to make this strengthening families issue a national priority, because we can do what we can do at the local level. Ultimately this will have to be a priority of our nation and I think our country is only as strong as its families.

*OGDEN:* Many mayors -- and Mayor Peterson is a great example -- have taken it upon themselves to make it a local issue and a local priority, and have sort of had to continue to push that only because it is easy to get sidetracked on all the more traditional municipal charges. I think to some degree today in this audioconference we are somewhat preaching to the choir, at least from the standpoint of the folks that are here today are here because they have that interest already. What we need to do as local elected officials is to continue to raise that specter and continue to ring the bell, if you will, that this is an important issue, and it is part of our responsibility as elected officials. The more folks that begin to reflect upon that and begin to understand that it is our responsibility, then I think more so will the collaborations, the cooperation and the partnering flourish. This, I believe, requires that champion to be somewhat relentless in continuing to advance the message and again engage people, as Margaret said.

*HENEGAR:* I think that is great advice, both from Margaret and Lou. Embedded in both their comments are the two traits that throughout this whole process are necessary. One is the enthusiasm so that you can be that rallying point. But also patience, because these are issues that are not going to be completed quickly. They are not a pothole. They are not necessarily going to have a tangible result after two months of hard work. It will require enthusiasm, but you cannot burn out. You have to have patience.

*JOHNSON:* I want to thank all three of you for taking the time out of your busy days to be with us today, Council Member Margaret Barrett-Simon, Mayor Lou Ogden, Deputy Mayor Jane Henegar. I'd also like to thank Mayor Bart Peterson from Indianapolis for his leadership of the Council on Youth, Education and Families this year and for bringing these family-strengthening issues to the forefront and leading the Council's work to develop the statement that all of you listening and on the audioconference have seen.

My guess is that if we have been successful in this call, we have just whetted folks' appetite for more information and more details. I want to flag for all of our listeners that the Institute for Youth, Education Families here at the National League of Cities has been working on a very detailed, policy-oriented document that we have termed a family strengthening agenda for mayors and other city leaders. It contains a wide range of proposed action steps and ideas on how specifically mayors and other city leaders can move a family strengthening agenda, what policy handles they have, what potential action steps they can consider. Most specifically, how they can strengthen connections to economic opportunity to support services and to social networks for families in their own communities. The family-strengthening agenda is in its final revision and editing stage here at the Institute. We expect to send it to the printer in January and have it out to folks some time in February. If you are interested in more detail, and if this call has left you wanting more ideas about specific agenda strategies and ideas, help is on the way, as we say. We will get that to you soon. We certainly will make sure that everyone who is registered for this audioconference today gets a copy.

As for upcoming audioconferences, you will find additional information on schedule, timing, and topics soon on the NLC website. I would encourage you in a week or so to come to the Institute page on the NLC website and to look for more details about future audioconferences. We will advertise those via e-mail to people who have participated in the past as well.

Thanks again to all three of you for your participation.

*ALL:* Thank you.

*OGDEN:* Thank you, Cliff, and thank you for the great work that the Institute is doing in these audioconferences and all the materials that you put together. The Institute is doing great work because you have got good staff, but it is also doing great work because there is a demand out there. The folks that are on this audioconference today are the ones we really need to be thanking for making this a priority and an interest of theirs, which drives the NLC agenda to keep the Institute alive. So it is all the local leaders out there that are beginning to recognize and move forward with this effort that we are really indebted to.

*BARRETT-SIMON:* As I have said before, Lou, many times to Cliff, I think the Institute is one of the most important steps the National League of Cities has ever undertaken, and it makes me very proud to have been a part of our work this year.

*JOHNSON:* Thank you both for those kind comments. Thanks again for your time today, all three of you.