

NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
of CITIES



2000-2010

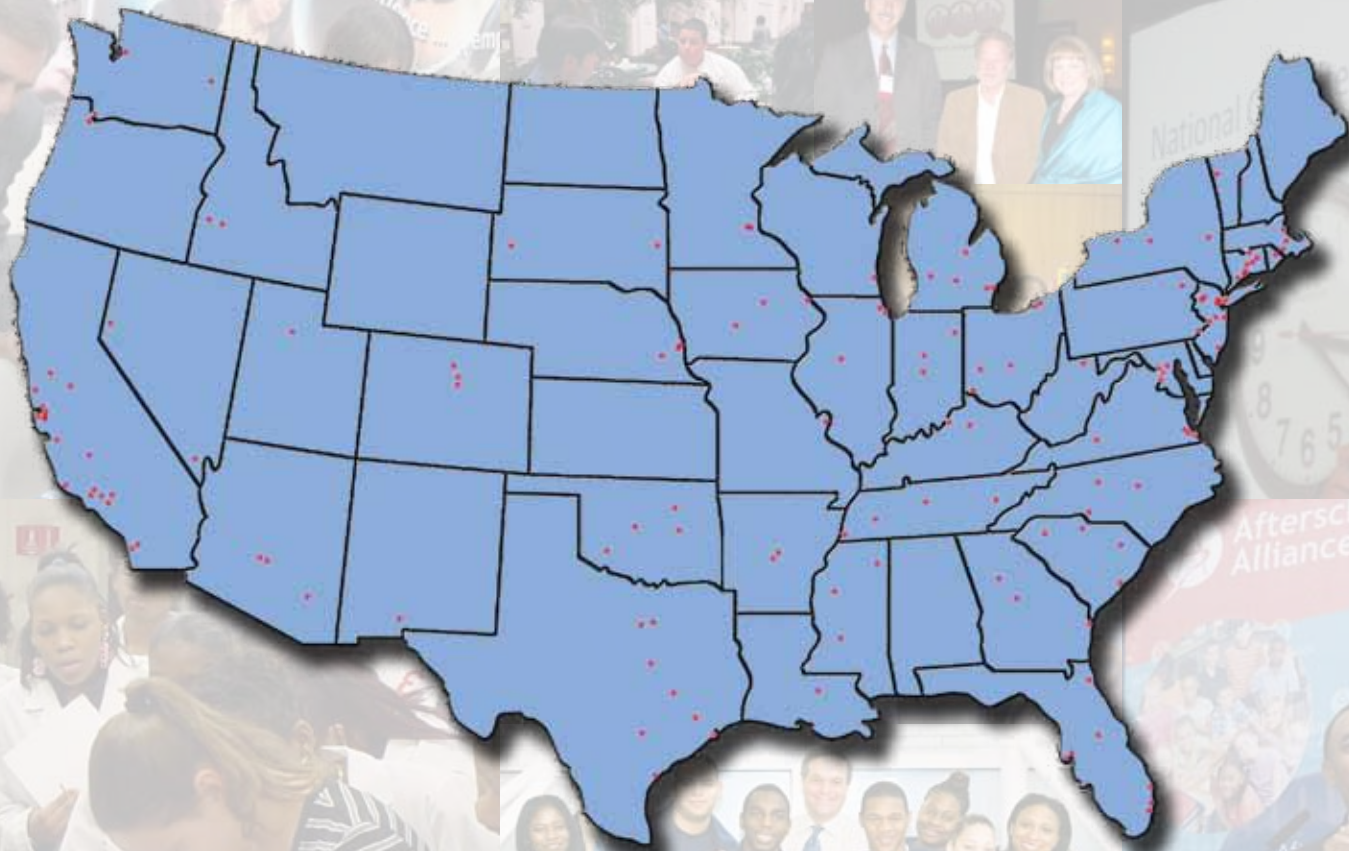
# INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH, EDUCATION, & FAMILIES



*A DECADE OF MAKING  
A DIFFERENCE  
FOR CITIES*

“Like hundreds of communities nationwide, the City of Charlotte has benefited immensely from the expertise, technical assistance and cross-city connections provided by the Institute for Youth, Education and Families. The YEF Institute helped Charlotte expand the scope of its public safety agenda by exploring new opportunities to improve the lives of some of our most vulnerable youth, and has continued to work with our city on afterschool programming and other key issues. For municipal leaders who want to make a difference in the lives of children and families, this important resource within the National League of Cities should be the first place to call.”

— 2011 NLC President James E. Mitchell, Jr., Councilmember, Charlotte, N.C.



140 Cities Have Participated in YEF Institute Technical Assistance Projects Between 2000 and 2010

**PRACTICAL HELP** for hundreds of cities across America

More ways for municipal leaders to **SHARE INFORMATION** and learn from one another

Increased **NATIONAL VISIBILITY FOR CITIES** as laboratories that generate creative solutions to meet the needs of children, youth, and families

**NEW TOOLS AND RESOURCES** to support progress and spur innovation

Heightened awareness of the **LEADERSHIP ROLES** that mayors and other city officials can play

The **Institute for Youth, Education, and Families** (YEF Institute), a special entity within the National League of Cities, was launched a decade ago at the 2000 Congress of Cities in Boston. In just 10 years, it has become an indispensable resource for mayors, city councilmembers, and other municipal officials who are working to strengthen families and improve outcomes for children and youth in their communities.

The reach and impact of the YEF Institute have been remarkable. With a cumulative investment of more than \$25 million from philanthropic, corporate, and government sources,

the Institute has stimulated and guided local initiatives in 140 cities through more than two dozen technical assistance projects. Nearly 60 action kits, strategy guides, and other reports and publications – along with an extensive set of Web resources – now provide trusted roadmaps for municipal leaders. Peer networks help city officials share lessons learned, while the biennial Summit on Your City's Families as well as leadership academies, audioconferences, and other convenings have given local leaders countless opportunities to take their efforts to a new level.

# FAMILY ECONOMIC SUCCESS



- Outreach campaigns to ensure that low-income residents receive the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other means-tested benefits.
- Financial access programs that build pathways to safe, affordable, and mainstream financial services and asset-building strategies to promote savings.
- Transitional jobs initiatives to expand work opportunities for hard-to-employ individuals.
- Strategies to reduce poverty and raise public awareness of the struggles that poor families face, such as poverty simulations and citywide poverty reduction and social inclusion plans.

## Savannah, Georgia (Population: 135,700)

The City of Savannah has helped more than 1,200 residents gain access to mainstream bank accounts in 11 partnering financial institutions – and more than twice that number participate in financial education – since launching its Bank On Savannah program in 2009. With national studies suggesting that a low-income resident saves approximately \$800 annually by shifting from fringe financial service providers to low-cost bank accounts, the YEF Institute has provided technical assistance to Savannah and at least 25 other cities interested in setting up Bank On campaigns. Since 2004, the city's EITC and benefit outreach efforts have also focused on free tax preparation; in 2010 alone, the local volunteer income tax assistance coalition helped more than 5,200 individuals and families file taxes, resulting in EITC refunds totaling more than \$3 million. The EITC campaign has also offered low-cost refund anticipation loans and an individual matched savings (IDA) program for low-income residents. The community's commitment to these efforts has been bolstered by an innovative poverty simulation initiative, which since 2003 has helped several thousand residents and community leaders better understand the unique challenges faced by families in poverty.

Institute for Youth, Education, and Families is formally launched at the 2000 Congress of Cities in Boston.

2000

The first of 10 YEF Institute action kits for municipal leaders is published.

Technical assistance projects and convenings on education, afterschool, transitional jobs, and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) outreach campaigns get underway.

2001

The YEF Institute's monthly audioconference series is launched, and the Thomas M. Menino Fellowship is established to support youth leadership and civic engagement.



# EARLY CHILDHOOD SUCCESS

## Bryan, Texas (Population: 74,600)

Through their participation in YEF Institute trainings, local leaders in Bryan learned about – and decided to replicate – the Mayor’s Book Club model developed in Jacksonville, Fla., to promote early literacy and ensure that young children have access to age-appropriate books. During the 2010-11 school year, the city is conducting a pilot project, providing books and early literacy opportunities to 100 four-year-old pre-kindergarten and Head Start students. The pilot’s success paves the way for the creation of a citywide Mayor’s Book Club that will reach all of the approximately 1,100 four-year-olds in Bryan. Through an Institute technical assistance project in 2006, the city also engaged 60 business, government and community leaders in its first-ever Family-Friendly Workplace Practices Conference to promote workplace policies and practices that help employees balance family and work. As a result, a local employer developed an onsite child care center and the chamber of commerce now makes family-friendly policies a part of its annual award criteria.

- Development of comprehensive local plans for early childhood success.
- Early literacy initiatives such as Mayor’s Book Clubs to improve school readiness.
- Policies and programs that support parents as well as family, friends, and neighbors caring for young children.
- Efforts to improve alignment and transitions between preschool programs and early elementary (K-3) education.

NLC’s fifth biennial Your City’s Families conference, the first hosted by the YEF Institute, is held in Minneapolis.

2002

The YEF Institute’s first leadership academy begins an ongoing focus on training and leadership development for municipal officials committed to children, youth, and families.

NLC President and New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, Jr., announces the *City Challenge for Early Childhood Success*; more than 100 cities pledge to create local plans.

2003

The Education Policy Advisors Network is created as the first of seven peer networks to help city officials share ideas and lessons learned.

# EDUCATION

- Effective city-school partnerships and strong municipal leadership in education.
- Parent and community engagement strategies to build public support for education.
- High school reform, multiple pathways to graduation, and dropout prevention efforts.
- Initiatives to improve college access, boost persistence and completion rates in community colleges, and promote postsecondary success.

## Nashville, Tennessee (Population: 635,700)

Over the past decade, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County has taken bold strides to improve education – including the establishment of a mayor’s office of children and youth, coordinated afterschool zones, a new attendance center, and a comprehensive youth master plan – under the steadfast leadership of current Mayor Karl Dean, former Mayor Bill Purcell, and Metro Councilmember Ronnie Steine, each of whom has worked closely with the YEF Institute. Along with Indianapolis and Newark, Nashville participated in a three-year effort to stem local dropout rates by increasing access to alternative high schools. In collaboration with the YEF Institute and its partners in the Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) network, Metro Nashville developed a portfolio of three new student-centered secondary schools – Big Picture Learning, Diploma Plus, and YouthBuild – for students who struggle in traditional high school settings. As a result of this effort, nearly 300 students who were at risk of abandoning their education are now staying in school, receiving needed supports, and on track to graduate ready for college or work.

A total of 40 NLC member cities receive intensive support through diverse technical assistance projects, reflecting the YEF Institute’s growing depth and capacity.

2004

New work begins on city responses to the needs of disconnected youth, and the YEF Institute’s first report highlighting “lessons learned” from its site-level work is published.

NLC Board of Directors endorses *A City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth*, developed by the YEF Council.

2005

City-school planning initiative focuses on creation of youth master plans that guide and support collaborative efforts in local communities.

# AFTERSCHOOL

## Grand Rapids, Michigan (Population: 193,700)

Since 2001, the YEF Institute has supported the City of Grand Rapids' efforts to create a citywide afterschool system and more effectively engage and support the city's young residents. With technical assistance from the Institute, the city developed an Expanded Learning Opportunities Network through which the community's afterschool program providers have jointly created quality standards and assessment tools, helped reform costly state licensing regulations, and developed an online program locator. In 2009, the city also achieved a goal championed by Mayor George Heartwell: to place a high-quality afterschool program in each of Grand Rapids' 47 public schools. A recent report by academic researchers suggests that these efforts may be contributing to public safety gains. Juvenile offenses are down by 25 percent over the past four years, and youth who participate in afterschool programs are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. According to city officials, the YEF Institute has helped Grand Rapids leverage several million dollars in federal and local resources for afterschool programming and other youth services.

- Development of citywide systems of afterschool and expanded learning opportunities.
- Integration of education and afterschool to support academic achievement.
- Utilization of research findings to strengthen the effectiveness of out-of-school time programs.
- Engagement of city leaders in state policy discussions through connections to statewide afterschool networks and mayoral summits on afterschool.

The first-ever National City Afterschool Summit is held in Washington, D.C., drawing more than 100 mayors and other city leaders from across the nation.

2006

The California Cities Gang Prevention Network is launched, engaging 13 cities from across the state in a new model designed to spur peer learning and policy change.

City-school teams from six communities join new effort to combat childhood obesity by creating local wellness plans that promote physical activity and healthy eating.

2007

New initiatives highlight strategies to expand high school options and alternatives, build citywide afterschool systems, and help families save and build assets.

# COMMUNITY WELLNESS & CHILDHOOD OBESITY

- City-school partnerships to develop community wellness plans.
- Changes in the built environment to promote physical activity.
- Strategies to increase access to healthy foods in low-income neighborhoods.
- Public awareness and education campaigns to encourage healthy lifestyles.

## Jackson, Tennessee (Population: 63,700)

In October 2010, Jackson Mayor Jerry Gist, together with county and school district leaders, announced the adoption of the first Jackson-Madison County Wellness Policy. The public signing ceremony marked an important milestone for Jumpstart Jackson, a multi-year initiative to reduce childhood obesity and make Jackson the “healthiest community in Tennessee.” City and school officials had been collaborating on children’s health since 2007, when a leadership academy and technical assistance initiative sponsored by the YEF Institute and American Association of School Administrators first brought them together to focus on wellness issues. Informed by the experiences of a city-school team in La Mesa, Calif. (with which the Institute paired Jackson as part of a “sister-city” peer learning relationship) and inspired by ideas from Somerville, Mass., and other cities with strong childhood obesity initiatives, Jackson’s regional wellness policy takes a comprehensive, data-driven approach. Key elements of the plan include making streets and roads more pedestrian- and bike-friendly, creating safe walking routes to schools, making parks accessible by transit, and offering healthier snacks at city and county facilities and events.

Twenty-six prominent mayors call on their peers to join the *Mayors’ Action Challenge for Children and Families*, committing to set bold, measurable goals for their cities.

2008

NLC’s Bank On Cities Campaign begins work with 10 cities to replicate San Francisco’s model of connecting low-income residents with mainstream financial services.

The groundbreaking *State of City Leadership for Children and Families* report is released at the 2009 National Summit on Your City’s Families.

2009

YEF Institute assumes role of managing intermediary for a multi-site funding initiative, overseeing grants to selected cities for efforts to increase college access and completion.

# DISCONNECTED YOUTH & VIOLENCE PREVENTION

## Oxnard, California (Population: 187,500)

In 2007, Oxnard Mayor Thomas Holden and Ventura County Supervisor Kathy Long formed the Oxnard Alliance for Community Strength. With technical assistance from the YEF Institute and peer support through the California Cities Gang Prevention Network, the Alliance created a citywide gang prevention plan that blends prevention, intervention and enforcement. A policy team and a larger “technical team” guide and carry out the plan’s implementation. A prevention and early intervention coordinator funded by the city and county leads the effort and works closely with the faith community, including 800 volunteers from 200 churches. The Oxnard City Corps and the Townkeepers program engage thousands of young people, many of whom have been in the justice system, in community improvement projects and Project Ceasefire holds “call-ins” for high-risk youth. Reflecting widespread local support for the city’s efforts, Oxnard citizens approved Measure O, a 2008 tax initiative to support police, fire, emergency services, and youth violence prevention and intervention programs. Early results are encouraging: youth violence dropped sharply from 2009 to 2010, including violent gang assaults (35%), assaults involving guns (48%), and gang related homicides (17%).

- Cross-system collaborations to identify and reengage disconnected youth.
- Comprehensive gang/violence prevention plans that blend prevention, intervention, and enforcement.
- Reenrollment strategies for school dropouts and juvenile offenders.
- Employment, training, and service learning initiatives for young people who are not connected to school or the workforce.
- Support for youth transitioning out of foster care and young people who have run away or are homeless.

U.S. Treasury Department’s Bank On USA program and the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention led by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education reflect the YEF Institute’s growing impact on federal policy.

2010

A new Mayors’ Institute on Children and Families is successfully piloted, drawing upon lessons and approaches from the highly acclaimed Mayors’ Institute on City Design.

# YOUTH MASTER PLANS & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Development and implementation of youth master plans for local communities.
- Initiatives that encourage and support authentic youth civic engagement, including through formation of city-led youth councils.
- Opportunities for youth to engage in service activities and interact with peers.
- Youth participation in NLC conferences and membership on NLC's Council on Youth, Education, and Families.

## Rapid City, South Dakota (Population: 67,100)

The City of Rapid City's participation in a YEF Institute peer learning community created in 2007 has fueled an exciting city-led effort to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve child and family well-being. Using NLC's *City Platform for Strengthening Families* as a guiding framework, a community-wide task force led by the mayor, council members and community development staff oversees committee work in nine priority areas: early childhood, truancy and dropout prevention, mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment, offender re-entry, transportation, youth civic engagement, affordable housing, homelessness, and poverty reduction. Each committee focuses on one goal annually, bringing diverse elements of the community together to work more effectively on behalf of young people and their families. Among the city's most notable successes are the creation of a new youth commission, state policy changes to improve prekindergarten standards, a nascent Bank On Rapid City program, and the forthcoming opening of a 24/7 mental health crisis center supported by the city's Vision 2012 sales tax revenues that will divert people toward treatment and away from jail, the street, and hospital emergency rooms.

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# LOOKING AHEAD

The Institute's first decade of accomplishment has laid the groundwork for future progress, helping cities and towns sustain their efforts and take their work to the next level. The *Mayors' Action Challenge for Children and Families*, with its focus on bold goals and measurable results, and NLC's *City Platform for Strengthening Families*, with its emphasis on "essential infrastructure" to address critical needs, offer two invaluable guides for municipal leaders in communities of all sizes. In addition, the YEF Institute's *State of City Leadership for Children and Families* report is fostering and spreading innovative practices among local officials, and the newly created Mayors' Institute on Children and Families – featur-

ing intensive problem-solving sessions hosted by the YEF Institute – is already inspiring more mayors to step forward as champions for young people and their families.

With strong leadership from America's mayors, city councilmembers, and other municipal officials, great strides are possible for our communities and their next generation of residents. In the years ahead, NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families will continue to serve as an indispensable resource for municipal officials who seek to strengthen families and improve outcomes for children and youth in their communities.

## YEF Council Chairs

Since 2000, NLC's Council on Youth, Education and Families (YEF) – the only NLC council composed of local elected officials, representatives of major national organizations, and youth leaders – has provided guidance and oversight to the YEF Institute's work. The following municipal leaders have served as the Council's chairperson:

Thomas M. Menino, Mayor, Boston, Mass. (2000)  
Sharon Sayles Belton, Mayor, Minneapolis, Minn. (2001)  
Patrick O'Connor, Alderman, Chicago, Ill. (2002)  
Bill Purcell, Mayor, Nashville, Tenn. (2003)

Bart Peterson, Mayor, Indianapolis, Ind. (2004)  
Ron Gonzales, Mayor, San José, Calif. (2005)  
Daun Hester, Vice Mayor, Norfolk, Va. (2006)  
Melvin L. "Kip" Holden, Mayor-President, Baton Rouge, La. (2007)

Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Mayor, Charleston, S.C. (2008)  
Otis S. Johnson, Mayor, Savannah, Ga. (2009)  
Christopher Coleman, Mayor, St. Paul, Minn. (2010)  
Garret Nancolas, Mayor, Caldwell, Idaho (2011)



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