



Make plans to attend Legislative Conference March 5-6 in Nashville

Make plans now to attend the Tennessee Municipal League's Annual Legislative Conference, slated for March 5-6 at the DoubleTree Hotel Downtown Nashville.

The two-day conference provides an excellent forum for city officials to interact with their legislators and to be updated on the many legislative issues currently being addressed by the 107th Tennessee General Assembly.

City officials are also encouraged to use their time in Nashville to attend Monday evening floor sessions and to schedule time to

visit with their legislators.

The voice of Tennessee's municipal governments must be heard in the legislative process, and the Legislative Conference is a key opportunity to communicate that message.

To register on line, go to TML's website at www.TML1.org. Contact the TML offices at 615-255-6416 for more information.

To reserve a hotel room, contact the DoubleTree at 615-244-8200. To receive the special group rate, reservations must be made by Feb. 8.

MTAS recognized by TNCPE

The University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) is one of four UT agencies within the Institute of Public Service (IPS) that has earned Interest Level Recognition in the annual Excellence in Tennessee recognition program administered by the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE).

TNCPE is the only statewide quality program and is patterned on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, the national standard for recognizing organizational excellence.

MTAS, along with the Center for Industrial Services, Law Enforcement Innovation Center, and the Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership will accept the award at the 19th annual Excellence in Tennessee Awards Banquet on Feb. 22, 2012. The County Technical Assistance Service also submitted an application and is waiting for a site visit from TNCPE examiners.

"We are very proud of this next step and our ongoing efforts for continuous improvement at MTAS," commented Executive Director Steve Thompson.

The inaugural class of the IPS Leadership Academy took on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program application process as a group project and submitted Level I applications in August. The agencies that were already announced as Interest Award winners had site visits from examiners in the fall.

"We began the Baldrige application as a way to document the work our agencies do, because it's useful for the long term strategic direction of our agencies," said Dr. Mary H. Jinks, vice president of public service. "This process also allows for us to get outside feedback on our agencies from the examiners, and we value that."

Through an annual evaluation and assessment process, TNCPE recognizes high-performance organizations that exhibit continuous improvement and best practice processes. This year, TNCPE has named 28 organizations as 2011 award winners. They represent outstanding achievement in the follow-

ing industry sectors: health care, manufacturing, service, education, government and nonprofit.

"Tennessee is competing not just nationally but internationally for new jobs, and each award recipient contributes to the state's success at the regional, national and international levels," Gov. Bill Haslam said. "Tennessee is a better place to live and work because of the commitment to excellence and continuous improvement embraced by these organizations. Strong organizations, such as these, bring in investment and resources, playing a critical role in making Tennessee the No. 1 location in the Southeast for high quality jobs."

Organizations like MTAS apply to the TNCPE program at one of four levels. As the levels increase, so do the depth and complexity of the applications. Since the program was founded in 1993, only 21 organizations have attained the excellence designation. While there will not be an Excellence Award presented this year, six organizations will be honored with the Achievement Award; 17 will be awarded a Commitment Award, and five, including MTAS, will receive Interest Recognition, which is the beginning level for organizations interested in adopting and applying performance improvement principles. A full list of winners can be found on the TNCPE website.

"This program takes a true commitment from leadership and dedication by the entire organization to refine their processes, delight the customers, engage their workforce and get real results," said TNCPE President Katie Rawls. "We are honored to work with organizations like the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service, as they pursue their journey toward continuous improvement and excellence."

TNCPE is a nonprofit, public-private partnership and is available to all businesses, educational institutions, health care organization, government agencies and other nonprofit entities.

To learn more, visit www.tncpe.org.

South Fulton documentary to hit PBS airwaves in February

BY VICTORIA SOUTH
TML Communications Coordinator

In some cities, the heart takes over when the funds run dry. That's what's happening in South Fulton, Tenn. and bordering state Fulton, Ky., as citizens fight to reclaim their community against a cruel economy and the ravages of time. Armed with donations, funding, labor, paint and supplies, the Twin Cities, empowered by a grassroots initiative sweeping the nation, are winning the battle through "Let's Paint The Town!"

The campaign was born in 2006 in Princeton, Ky. as Sam Koltinsky, owner of Marvo Entertainment Group, rallied his neighbors together, ultimately revitalizing 50 buildings within Princeton's downtown district at no cost to the business owners, except for the paint.

Today, working with such entities as PBS, the History Channel, and the Documentary Channel, Koltinsky, a veteran filmmaker, is bringing South Fulton and Fulton, Kentucky's story to life as the first of a series of 30-minute documentaries chronicling the *Let's Paint The Town!* movement across small town America. The documentary, *Let's Paint the Town, Twin Cities!* is set to air several times beginning February 26, on PBS affiliate station KET in Kentucky, and will be part of a series on PBS airing nationwide later this year.

A one-time picture of vibrancy, the heyday of the Twin Cities included a thriving downtown and bustling railroad. Ninety percent of the bananas from South America moved through the area to be distributed and sold. The subsequent International Banana Festival drew visitors from all over the world. Long-time community residents remember those days wistfully.

"The Illinois Central Railroad ran right through here," recalls local business owner Garrett Hutchins. "One thousand freight cars and 30-50 passenger cars a day. More than 1,000 passengers would disembark every day to shop and eat downtown." One such passenger was the legendary gangster Al Capone, who passed through frequently on the way to one of his homes in Miami.

"The railroad was the heart, bloodline, the brains; it was everything Fulton [The Twin Cities] had to offer," agrees local historian Bill Homra. "All bananas would come to Fulton before they were sold. They would come by ship from New Orleans loaded on un-refrigerated box cars. The train would stop in Fulton to ice down each car, and from Fulton, on to Chicago to be distributed throughout the U.S."

"When the festival was going on, it seemed like our town was on fire," Homra continues. "The international festival drew in all the south American countries that grew bananas. Celebrities like Miss Tennessee and Miss Kentucky would be here along with movie stars and country music singers. Every night a Marimba band from South America would play and there would be dancing in the streets..."

But like so many little towns across America, years of manufacturing layoffs, factory closures, and the downsizing of the railroad finally brought the close knit community to its knees. The days of growth and prosperity had been replaced by stark images of faded glory, over-



Volunteers from the Twin Cities, South Fulton and Fulton Ky. revitalize 46 buildings downtown as part of the *Let's Paint The Town!* initiative sweeping small town America. Their efforts have been captured on a video *Let's Paint The Town, Twin Cities!* which will be aired by the PBS network in February.

grown lots, crumbling buildings, for sale signs and peeling paint.

"With our community in shambles, politicians deadlocked over budget cuts and grant monies dried up, much of small-town America is literally fighting for its economic survival," said Jeff Campbell, project manager for the *Let's Paint the Town!* initiative in the Twin Cities. "When I left here 28 years ago, I left what I thought in my mind, was Mayberry. When I came back 18 months ago, the Mayberry I remember no longer existed. I saw a town in distress. I couldn't bear to see it that way, so, I decided to step up and make a difference."

In 2010, Campbell and Twin Cities Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Thea Vowell, posed an unusual suggestion, rather than wait around and hope, citizens would initiate a move to take back the community by joining the *Let's Paint the Town!* initiative.

Nearly 200 residents from the Twin Cities attended the first town meeting, and more than \$4,000 was collected in a single night. As donations began pouring in, that amount increased to more than \$5,500. Citizen volunteers of all ages, from local youths to the elderly, even neighbors suffering with cancer or other health issues, turned out faithfully each weekend to get the job done. Vowell, pregnant and expecting within days, was there too. "I'm a very determined person," she said. "And when people see the progress and excitement, they want to be a part of it too." Local business owners chipped in with labor, paint and supplies.

"We have restored and renovated 46 buildings in our community without a single dollar of government money," enthused Campbell. "Our mantra has been: our town, our pride, and our responsibility." *Let's Paint The Town!* is going to bring these two communities together and make everybody proud of the community as a whole," adds Vowell.

Residents are also hoping the effort will reflect community pride and re-awaken business opportunities throughout the area. So far, six new businesses have opened their doors since the Twin Cities took on the program 18 months ago, according to Campbell.

"Our local communities should be the laboratory for our national solutions," notes nationally-known economic development expert John Talmadge in a press release. "The

Twin Cities are certainly proving this to be the case as they take on economic development through revitalization."

What does the project hold for other small communities? While he can't disclose the details, Koltinsky said he was recently approached by a government agency in Washington, D.C., interested in partnering with *Let's Paint The Town!* "Money falls on the right mission," he enthused. "It certainly would provide easier access to state and Federal grants."

Volunteer efforts supported by grant money is indeed on the rise, as cities across the nation struggling to do jobs formerly handled by someone receiving a government paycheck, according to an article by *Governing Magazine* editor Tod Newcombe.

Eligible cities are receiving financing to hire service leaders to manage large groups of volunteers tackling local government problems, Newcombe notes, lauding a \$2 million grant from the Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Rockefeller Foundation and other groups, which helped create the Cities of Service program.

Starting in September 2009 after the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act challenged cities to think of new uses for volunteers, Cities of Service's purpose is to identify local community sectors that most need volunteers, match service programs with volunteers and share best practices. The program has grown to include 111 coalition members, including 20 cities that received grants to hire chief service officers.

Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, vice president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, joined by 20 other mayors, recently composed a letter urging their peers across the nation to adopt the Cities of Service model of impact volunteering and to establish or sustain a chief service officer in their administrations.

The DVD *Let's Paint The Town, Twin Cities!* is currently available for \$15 through the Twin Cities Chamber of Commerce. Contact Thea Vowell, executive director Twin Cities Chamber of Commerce, 270-627-1400 or e-mail TwinCITIESchamber@bellsouth.net.

For more information about the *Let's Paint The Town!* campaign or The Cities of Service initiative, visit www.marvoentertainmentgroup.com or www.citiesofservice.org

TML requests E-mail addresses: The quickest way to keep city officials apprised of legislative happenings is through e-mail or fax. Please send any changes in your contact information to Mona Lawrence, by fax at 615-255-4752, by e-mail to mlawrence@TML1.org, or call 615-255-6416.

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