



2015 All-America City Award Application *Spotlight on Engaging and Supporting Vulnerable Boys and Young Men*

Deadlines:

September 2014-February 2015: Monthly conference calls

November 25, 2014: Submit Letter of Intent to Apply (Save \$100 on your application fee when you submit a Letter of Intent to Apply by November 25, 2014!)

March 10, 2015: Submit Application

April 2015: Finalists Announced. Finalist community delegations will be invited to Denver to present.

June 11-14, 2015: Peer-Learning Workshops & Awards Presentation/Competition in Denver, Colorado.

Application Guidelines:

The All-America City Award (spotlight on Engaging and Supporting Vulnerable Boys and Young Men)

The National Civic League invites you to apply for America's oldest and most recognized community award, now in its 66th year.

The All-America City Award recognizes ten communities annually for outstanding civic impact and action planning. Winning applicants demonstrate innovation, inclusiveness, civic engagement, and cross sector collaboration by describing successful efforts to address pressing local challenges. For this year, 2015, NCL is pleased to announce a spotlight on vulnerable boys and young men. Applicants are asked to feature in their application a program in which they are engaging and supporting vulnerable boys and men with the goal of success in school and in life. Key issues you may consider are early childhood education, healthy communities, access to housing and jobs, racial healing, male achievement, empowerment, income inequality, among others. NCL takes a broad and inclusive view of vulnerable boys and young men as those that have been historically underserved and at-risk including African American, Latino, Native American, Asian Pacific Islander, economically challenged, disabled, LGBTQI, religious and other underserved identities. We hope to also hear about how you are engaging and support vulnerable girls and young women and projects that support all genders. NCL values gender equality and views this spotlight as an important way to highlight the targeted successful approaches for vulnerable boys and men. NCL recognizes these initiatives are an essential part of the work it takes to create healthy and prosperous communities for all residents. This spotlight builds on NCL's more than 20 years of work on diversity, inclusiveness, racial equity, and youth leadership in communities across the country.

A youth member of one finalist community is also recognized with the AAC Youth Award. Nominations for this award will be requested after finalists are announced.

Community Information

Community name and state: City of Petersburg Virginia

Your community is applying as a:

Neighborhood Village Town Tribe City County Region

If applying as a region, name participating communities: N/A

If applying as a neighborhood, name city: N/A

Has your community applied before? Yes No If Yes, which years: 2014

Has your community been a Finalist before? Yes No If Yes, which years: _____

Has your community been an All-America City before? Yes No If Yes, which years: _____

Contact Information

All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout competition & follow-up):

Name: William E. Johnson, III Title (if any): City Manager

Organization/Government/Other: City of Petersburg

Address: 135 North Union Street City, State, Zip Petersburg, Virginia 23803

Phone (business/day): 804-733-2301 Mobile Phone 804-720-9974

E-mail Address(es): wjohnson@petersburg-va.org

The applying community will receive a complimentary membership (or membership renewal if an AAC application was submitted last year) to the National Civic League for one year. To whom should this membership be directed?

Name William E. Johnson, III

Address 135 North Union Street

City, State & Zip Code Petersburg, Virginia 23803

Phone Number 804-733-2301 Fax 804-732-9212

Email wjohnson@petersburg-va.org

We agree to follow NCL's rules regarding use of the All America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League. We allow NCL and the All-America City Award to share this application and the information enclosed in it with the NCL and AAC networks to promote the work of our community. If we are named an All-America City, we agree to conduct a post-AAC conference call or regional forum for the AAC network that features our projects. In a pay-it-forward spirit, if named a finalist or All-America City, we agree to support AAC through an NCL membership for a minimum of the next three years. See membership details [here](#).

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Community Statistics and Map

Note: Use the most up-to-date statistics possible for your neighborhood, town, city, county, or region (source suggestions: U.S. Census Bureau, State Department of Economic Security, State Department of Finance, Department of Public Health, and local school statistics).

POPULATION (in year 2010 or most recent): 32,420

Source/Date: United States Census 2010

POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 2000-2010 (indicate + or -): -3.91 %

Source/Date: United States Census 2010

RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN:

White	<u>16.1 %</u>
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	<u>3.8 %</u>
Black or African American	<u>79.1 %</u>
Asian	<u>0.8 %</u>
American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN)	<u>0.3 %</u>
Mixed Race	<u>1.8 %</u>
Other	<u>0.1 %</u>

Source/Date: United States Census 2010

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: \$ 35,874

Source/Date: United States Census 2010

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL: 18.4 %

Source/Date: United States Census 2010

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: 8.8 %

Source/Date: Virginia Employment Commission February 2015

POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP (percentages, if available):

19 years old and under	<u>20.7 %</u>
20-24	<u>11.6 %</u>
25-44	<u>28.5 %</u>
45-64	<u>28.2 %</u>
65 and over	<u>15 %</u>

Source/Date: United States Census 2010

PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP: 46.7 %

Source/Date: United States Census 2010

WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION -- Name the three largest employment sectors (include military services and/or installations, if any) in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:

<u>Health Care and Social Assistance</u>	<u>31 %</u>
<u>Government</u>	<u>17 %</u>
<u>Retail</u>	<u>11 %</u>

Source/Date: Virginia Employment Commission February 2015

MAP -- Please attach a state map (8.5" x 11") with your community clearly marked.

ALL-AMERICA CITY AWARDS CRITERIA

1.

2. **Civic Engagement and Collaboration:** comprehensive citizen/resident engagement in decision-making and action planning, cross-sector collaboration (business, local government, nonprofits, military, etc.) and regional collaboration.
3. **Inclusiveness and Diversity:** recognition and involvement of diverse segments and perspectives (ethnic, racial, socio-economic, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, people with disabilities, and others) in community decision-making.
4. **Innovation:** creative use and leveraging of community resources.
5. **Impact: *demonstrable*** significant and measurable achievements in the past 5 years (for example: dollars raised, jobs created or lives impacted), particularly in projects that address the community's greatest challenges.

Resources Available to You

As you fill out this application, it may be helpful to consult the following material:

1. For questions to help evaluate your civic infrastructure--***NCL's Civic Index***. Ask for a free copy!
AAC@ncl.org
2. National Civic League's [Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook](#)
3. To help identify associations and their impact in your community--***New Community Tools for Improving Child Health: A Pediatrician's Guide to Local Associations***. (Provided by permission of co-author John McKnight) <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/docs/Pediatricians.pdf>
4. For an asset-based framework--***Discovering Community Power: A Guide to Mobilizing Local Assets and Your Organization's Capacity***. (Provided by permission of co-author John McKnight) <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/images/kelloggabcd.pdf>
5. Previous All-America City presentations and summaries of past projects presented in the application
 - a. 2014 Presentation links: [Fort Lauderdale, Florida](#); [Cedar Rapids, Iowa](#); [Eau Claire, Wisconsin](#)
 - b. [2014 Project Summaries](#)
6. To learn more about boys and men of color issues, programs, action plans, and resources—
 - a. [A Time for Action, Executive Summary](#) - Executives' Alliance to Expand Opportunity for Boys and Men of Color
 - b. [Black Male Achievement Funders](#)
 - c. [My Brother's Keeper](#)
 - d. [Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit](#) – The Center for Racial Justice Innovation
 - e. [Better Together in the South: Building Movements across Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation](#) – The Center for Racial Justice Innovation

PART I: TELL YOUR COMMUNITY'S STORY

Section A: Tell us your community's story. Focus on the last ten years of your community's progress and development. Utilizing the awards criteria (above) describe how your community addresses its pressing challenges and plans for its future. How are citizens/residents involved in planning and implementation? Provide

examples of cross sector collaboration among the neighborhoods, government, businesses, and nonprofit organizations engaged in these efforts. How is the community illustrating diversity and inclusiveness? What is your community's vision? Include real examples of how your community has demonstrated its strengths, innovations, and faced its challenges. Don't forget to tell us about the people in your community. (2,000 word maximum)

The City of Petersburg's Community Story

Petersburg, Virginia, a "city rich in history that is dedicated to providing superior services while cultivating pride".

Originally known as Peter's Point, it received its charter in 1748 and became a City in 1850. Petersburg settled at its inland most navigable point, at the fall of the Appomattox River. Because of its location, it has a rich cultural, economic and social history. When settlers arrived in the early 1600s, Native Americans mounted fierce resistance before signing treaties that led to flourishing trade. The growth of the tobacco market in the early 1700s brought about the near simultaneous founding of Richmond and Petersburg. For the next hundred years, Petersburg appeared to dominate as the logistical center of Virginia. During several decades following the Revolution, Petersburg's free black population grew quickly and Petersburg had one of the oldest free black settlements in the nation at Pocahontas Island.

In the 30 years leading up to the Civil War, Petersburg built its first railroads, the manufacture of agricultural and industrial implements and tools flourished. In the spring of 1864, General Ulysses S. Grant surrounded Petersburg, affecting the longest siege of an American city. After General Robert E. Lee and his Confederate forces abandoned Petersburg in April 1865, Lee surrendered, ending the Civil War. By the early part of the 20th century, the logistical and shipping center of Virginia had shifted to Richmond, leaving Petersburg the retail hub of Southside Virginia, relying on tobacco, peanut processing, iron foundries and its luggage industry. As Petersburg's economy weakened in the 20th century, its population declined. As upper and middle classes fled to the suburbs, the city was left with a high percentage of low income residents. The increase in demand for public services seriously strained limited financial resources.

Petersburg continues as a transportation hub with immediate access to Interstates 85, 95, and 295, and U.S. highways 1, 301, and 460, Petersburg is an attractive tourism and business location. Petersburg has several public and private industrial parks, several located within Enterprise Zones.

The City collaborates with State and regional economic development organizations to offer businesses assistance with site selection, permitting and workplace training.

History, geography and phenomenally intact historic districts make Petersburg a community that people and businesses from all over the globe are embracing. Visible reminders of Petersburg's prominent role in the emergence of the country into a worldwide power are evident in the extensive architecture and streetscapes that remain. The City rises from the banks of the beautiful, unspoiled Appomattox River where the City will create a Heritage Trail along its southern shore for the public to discover this rare asset. The majesty of the Appomattox continues to drive support and assistance from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers for the re-establishment of the City's harbor as a navigable connection to the James River, the Inter-coastal Waterway, the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Petersburg is experiencing a true Renaissance.

On August 6, 1993, a destructive tornado touched down on the southwest side of Petersburg, and rapidly intensified as it struck the historic downtown area of the city. Several well-built, multi-story brick buildings leveled. Pocahontas Island experienced major losses in the storm; 47 homes and a church. Although it has taken the City a while to bounce back from the devastation, we remained resilient.

Today, the City is alive with revitalization projects as premiere examples of architecture ranging from the 18th - early 20th centuries. Many of the damaged homes restored and occupied as private residences; the church on the Island is the place of worship to many families who have rebuilt their homes and remained island residents. Currently, the City and Virginia Commonwealth University, Douglas Wilder School of Public Policy is working with the Pocahontas Island community on a neighborhood revitalization plan. In addition, there is a commercial property that is on the island with premiere access to the Appomattox River, the plan will include a re-adaptive use section to help the City identify the best use for the property and find resources for implementation.

In addition, the city has experienced a resurgence of development with many of the old warehouses converted into lofts and mixed-use developments. The City has a vast array of entertainment options including a thriving arts community and numerous historical sites, museums and attractions coupled with a unique architectural landscape that has been preserved and enhanced over time resulting in a thriving tourism industry. There are numerous restaurants and shopping options located in Old Town and South Crater Road, and a state of the art health care facility. The City has a well organize transportation system including walking and cycling trails.

The City of Petersburg is dedicated and committed to ensuring that males, youth and young adults in our community are presented with opportunities for growth and success. The City supports, through the leadership of City Council and funding from State and federal partners, Youth Employment; Mentoring; Summer Camps; After-School; Year-Round Feeding; Reading Literacy; Horticulture and Ichthyology; Financial Literacy; Veteran Support and Young Adult Reentry Programs. The City has also recognized and initiated the involvement of diverse perspectives of the Hispanic population segment, by creating the Hispanic Liaison Office. This effort helped to increase Hispanic participation in many City organized activities.

With the help of many private, public and faith-based partnerships, the City believes it will continue to demonstrate significant achievements and provide the needed assistance to many residents. The combined forms of comprehensive citizen engagement that the City does with its programs, not only promotes the spiritual and emotional health of all persons living within the City of Petersburg; but is worthy of an All-America City Award.

PART II: DESCRIBE THREE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROJECTS

Describe your three best projects that have resulted in significant local impact and action planning within the past five years. Past All-America City Award applicants have highlighted projects to increase third gradereading success for at-risk children, to increase health care for underserved populations, to create new businesses and jobs, to revitalize downtown, to engage youth in identifying and planning services and facilities, to promote cross sector collaborative centers, to increase fiscal sustainability, to develop emergency disaster plans, to recover from a natural disaster, and more. For 2015, NCL invites all applicants to include at least one project in their application that spotlights innovative approaches to engaging and supporting vulnerable boys and young men (examples include education readiness and success, health, jobs, housing, leadership, empowerment, income

equality). Be sure to tell us how each of these projects promote civic engagement, collaboration, inclusiveness, innovation, and impact. See criteria above and consult NCL's Civic Index – available at no cost to applicants. Request it at aac@ncl.org.

PROJECT ONE

Provide the project name and a description of its qualitative and quantitative impacts in the past five years. (2,000 word maximum) Tell us the challenge being addressed, actions taken, and the impact/outcomes of this project on your community's resident.

Concerned Black Men of Petersburg, INC.

Living below the poverty level is an indication of the well-being of a population and a sign of the many needs among residents living in such conditions. Poverty in Petersburg is apparent statistically and visually. Combined with the highest poverty rates in its region, many citizens in Petersburg are struggling to make ends meet, feed their families and an adult in the household with the time to mentor and shape a young child's future. The US Census estimates that 30% of children below the age of 18 in Petersburg are living in poverty. This puts the responsibility of Caring for Our Youth® on one of Petersburg longest serving civic organizations, the **Concerned Black Men of Petersburg, INC.**

The Challenge being addressed by the Concerned Black Men of Petersburg, Inc.(CBM-P) is the impact of Education, Personal Values, Family, Conflict Resolution and Community Service on Black Males in the City of Petersburg, Virginia. In the United States only 45% of Black men graduate from high school and 22% of Black males, who began at a four-year college graduated within six years. CBM-P has actively helped to reduce those national percentages for the City of Petersburg since 1993.

The organizations reports that 32% of all suspended students in the City of Petersburg and surrounding areas are Black. Black students (mostly Black males) are twice as likely as Whites to be suspended or expelled. The CBM-P seeks to provide a mentoring relationship to facilitate the development of young men who work well, play well, love well, and expect things to be well in their lives. Because of the over 67% of Black children born out of wedlock, the Family and Community Values project held by the CBM-P has males conduct and participate in activities each year that are total family oriented. There have been over twenty-two activities held that include Mother's and Father's Day Breakfast, Family Day at a Park, Family and Fun Day a Bowling Center and Quarterly Church fellowships.

The organization feels that there are some lessons and bits of wisdom that only a man can impart to another young boy. Boys and girls are different. "We view and interact with the world differently. So it makes sense for men to seek out boys for guidance on how to navigate life", says President Wade Watkins. The organization sets to address a generation of young men that went without mentors growing up. Striving to provide each young male with knowledgeable and encouraging information, the major objectives of the Organization are:

- To serve as mentors to young men/youth in our community

- To expose young men to positive experiences, and to demonstrate exemplary behavior to them at an earlier age and grade level.
- To reinforce the positive experiences gained each year from elementary school through high school

The mentors of the organization began this program because of the number of residents in the City with absent fathers and the effect that they were seeing it was having on the young boys and even on the community. Organizers have now also began to mentor males even if a young male has a father he can look up to; they believe it takes a village of man mentors to raise a child.

There is also the organization's Personal Growth and Development activities, which include: Two Seminars/focus forums held twice a year in September and February, Annual Lock-In and Team leadership opportunities. Other activities that promote positive self-worth and are set to help young boys with self-esteem held monthly by the organization are one and one group sessions. The Speaking Positive and Conflict Resolution program were also developed to equip young men with tools to help them avoid finding themselves isolated and having the feeling that they have no community ties and relationships they can lean on. The CBM-P have helped over two previous generations learn the art of manliness, through the above programs.

The Academic Achievement program provides an opportunity for mentors to direct young boys to the right services with an academia setting to allow for success in middle and high school. This program also provides tutoring and recognizes academic accomplishments through several award programs presented to top seniors. Over 40 awards have been given out over the 20 years of this program existence. Without good examples of men to emulate, young men often get a bit lost. Studies have shown that the lack of a male figure in a boy's life increases the likelihood that the lad will perform poorly in school or get involved in crime. And beyond the obvious consequences like crime and education, this void can affect a man in a myriad of subtle ways.

In addition to providing some guidance in navigating through life as a young man, the CBM-P mentors help to expand the young males of Petersburg views of what it means to be a man. The program of the years have help to shape and prepare young males to know that every man will have different life experiences and become exposed to different philosophies and family views, but by working together we can see a City of strong men. The Impact of this program over the last twenty –two years is that Concerned Black Men of Petersburg helps every young man can see things a different way, inspire them to dare greatly, comfort them when they grieve, and help them become a better man.

Provide name of the primary contact for the project. Name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. *(This person may be contacted to verify information.)*

Primary Contact: Wade T. Watkins, President

Organization: Concerned Black Men of Petersburg, Inc.

Address: P.O. Box 2764, Petersburg, Virginia 23804

Telephone: 804-862-1627 Cell 804-586-5877

PROJECT TWO

Provide the project name and a description of its qualitative and quantitative impacts in the past five years.

(2,000 word maximum) Tell us the challenge being addressed, actions taken, and the impact/outcomes of this project on your community's residents.

Park and Leisure Services Summer Program

Based on the 2010 US Census 26.7% of Petersburg residents lived below the poverty line and according to the Virginia Employment Commission Petersburg unemployment rate is 8.8%. The vast majority of Petersburg residents utilize the Petersburg Parks and Leisure Services Department programs and activities. Participating in Parks and Leisure Services programs and activities instill a sense of community pride for the participants. Users of Parks and Leisure Services at the community level is the start to achieving individual benefits. This is why we believe that it is important to make our Summer Program available to all Petersburg youth between the ages of 6 and 14. To ensure there are no financial barriers that would keep a youth from participating, the Summer Program is offered at no cost. Park and Leisure Services addresses the city's unemployment issues by providing summer employment for teens and young adults.

The City of Petersburg Parks & Leisure Services Department provides an (8) eight week comprehensive Summer Program for at risk youth between the ages of six and fourteen. Parks & Leisure Services developed a Community Centered Approach to include a multi facet delivery of recreation services & programs during the summer months to increase the availability of non -traditional sports and incorporate a fitness component to increase outdoor play, fitness and the overall well beings of summer campers. Programs/activities are held at local schools, faith based institutions and recreation sites throughout the city.

The City of Petersburg is the highest employer of youth in the Tri-Cities area during the most vulnerable time for youth - SUMMER. One hundred teens and young adults are hired in the following positions during the summer: Recreation Supervisors, Recreation Aides, Head Life Guards, and Life Guards.

The Parks & Leisure Services Summer Program delivers programs and services to the Petersburg Community in the most efficient and effective manner. The lack of funding for recreational programs/services was the driving force which ignited the department to seek partnerships and collaborative efforts that would enhance or compliment recreation programs. A community centered approach has proven to be very successful.

In particular the Petersburg Parks & Leisure Services Program offers a Summer Sports Camp designed for boys ages six through fourteen. The Sports Camp offers several programming components; sports, the art of chivalry, nutrition, gardening and job skills training (for the teenage participants). The program targets seventy five (75) males (Jr Sports Camp and Senior Sports Camp) and the camp leaders are college students who serve as role models as well. The Summer Sports Camp along with all other Parks & Leisure Camp Site participate in the following programs.

The Community Centered Approach consists of several programming elements;

Tennis

The Tennis Program is a collective team effort with Virginia State University. The Tennis Coach along with students from the Tennis Program offer tennis lessons to over 200 recreation campers per summer. The program was held on the campus of Virginia State University until the summer of 2013. The City of

Petersburg invested in a state of the art tennis facility which now houses all youth, adult and senior tennis programs. The Tennis Program provides seven (7) weeks of tennis instruction and a post season Tennis Match.

Golf

The Jr. Golf Program in partnership with the Dogwood Trace Golf Course - owned & operated by the City of Petersburg. Offers a beginners golf program to over 400 recreation campers per summer. The program is led by the onsite golf program and volunteers (senior citizens volunteer their time to give back to the community).

Fishing

The Fishing Clinics in partnership with the Kiwanis Club and the Friends of the Lower Appomattox is held each summer in both the Tidewater Area and in the City of Petersburg (Appomattox River). Recreation Campers engage in the sport of Fishing while gaining valuable knowledge of keeping the waterway clean, water safety and the need to preserve waterways.

Baseball

The Summer Baseball Camps are offered at the Petersburg Sports Complex. The Petersburg Generals a collegiate baseball team comprised of Division 1 & Division 2 College Players that showcase their talent during the summer months. Recreation Campers engage with the players for a one week baseball camp. Camps are scheduled throughout the summer - over 300 campers participate in the camp.

Summer Food Service Program

A key element for the summer program is to provide healthy meals to school age children while school is out of session. Parks & Leisure Services partners with the Virginia Food Bank to offer healthy meals of over 1,800 youth for both breakfast and lunch daily. Meals are provided to several organizations, YMCA, Day Cares and Churches.

My Plate

My Plate Nutrition Class is offered the Virginia State Cooperative Extensions Program. The national recognized program is offered to (300) three hundred recreation campers per summer. Cooperative Extensions provide the instruction.

Aerobics/Dance

Aerobics/Dance are offered at the Tabernacle Baptist Church Life Center. A state of the art facility that houses the summer program for girls ages six thru fourteen. Aerobics/Dance is held weekly and provides fitness instruction for over 200 recreation campers.

Bike Rodeo

A partnership with the local Sheriff's Office, Fire Department and the Police Department. The program focus is BIKE SAFETY. Parks & Leisure Services transports one hundred and fifty campers with their bikes to the Annual Bike Rodeo. Campers receive helmets/ Pads, participate in the Bike Safety Seminar, receive a bike safety check, and ride the bike obstacle course.

Summer Gardening

The Parks & Leisure Services Summer Gardening Program is a collaborative effort between the "Golden Girls Club - a group of retired senior citizens and Petersburg High School Vocation Department.) The vocation department constructed the raised-garden beds for the program which is held at the

Petersburg Sports Complex. The Golden Girls provide the hands on instruction and the classroom instruction. The Gardening Class is held twice a week and serves 100 recreation campers.

Law Enforcement Camp

The Sheriff's Office hosts a Law Enforcement Camp for Recreation Campers. The goal of the camp is introduce campers to the different types of careers available in the field of Law Enforcement and to create a positive relationship between recreation campers and Law Enforcement. The camp consists of workshops, fitness activity and visits to local courthouse.

Life Skills Camp

The Life Skills Basketball Camp is sponsored by a nonprofit organization (Friends Helping Friends, Incorporated). Life Skills are taught along with a huge back to school drive. Retired coaches, NBA players and High School/College Stand Out players return to reinforce the importance of Life Skills and assist with the distribution of (150) book bags full of school supplies.

The Art of Chivalry

The Art of Chivalry is offered to the Sports Camp Recreation Campers. The Art of Chivalry Program instills the moral and social code of (courage, courtesy, justice, honor) in program participants. Weekly Guest speakers from local fraternities, former sports players and students from local college engage with Sports Camper participants.

Job Skills Training

The Recreation Director conducts a job skills readiness program for the teen sports camp participants. Weekly the participants learn job skills (how to apply for a summer job, complete an application, resume writing, interview skills, and work readiness training).

Employee Training

The City of Petersburg is the highest employer of youth in the Tri-Cities Area during the most vulnerable time for youth - SUMMER. One hundred teens and young adults engage in a week of training to gain the necessary skills to provide the most effective and efficient delivery of services in a customer friendly manner. Training Consists of (American Red Cross Certification – CPR; Customer Service Training; Playground Safety; Conflict Resolution; Creativity; City Government Operations; Bus Safety; Team Work; The Spectrum of Special Needs; Food Service Training; and Recreation Programs).

The Parks & Leisure Services Department brand is well known, respected and appreciated throughout the City of Petersburg. Based on the parent and camper survey results the program is very effective and the customer service component is outstanding. Again, the daily departmental operations are executed by young adults and the teen population. We believe in empowering our youth and providing the necessary tools to deliver services in a professional manner while providing superior services.

The Community Centered Approach will continue to serve as the catalyst for great programming within the City of Petersburg. We will continue to development inclusive programming opportunities and expand opportunities to recreate our youth and improve their quality of life.

Provide name of the primary contact for the project. Name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. *(This person may be contacted to verify information.)*

Primary Contact: Tami Champ-Yerby, Director
Organization: Petersburg Parks and Leisure Services
Address: 1937 Johnson Road, Petersburg, Virginia 23805
Telephone: 804-733-2394 Fax 804-861-0875
Email: tcyerby@petersburg-va.org

PROJECT THREE

Provide the project name and a description of its qualitative and quantitative impacts in the past five years. (2,000 word maximum) Tell us the challenge being addressed, actions taken, and the impact/outcomes of this project on your community's residents.

Petersburg Freedom Support Center

Military families across the nation often experience great difficulty connecting with and navigating through vast systems of care providers to find services offered by military affiliate organizations or private sector. The search can be daunting at best and at worst frustrating. Many veterans and their families are unable to smoothly adjust to civilian life post-separation from service.

Background

While there are thousands of programs available to Virginia's military families and veterans, there was no single starting point to attain support or those living in the Tri-Cities area. The Petersburg Freedom Support Center (PFSC) is an innovative "ONSETOP" concept model designed to serve veterans, service members and their families. Recognizing the need, the PFSC was developed as a partnership of the City of Petersburg, Freedom Legacy Inspired Team Efforts (FLITE) Foundation and other service organizations to eliminate barriers to services throughout Southside, Greater Richmond and Tri-Cities region. On November 25, 2013, PFSC officially opened its doors in downtown Petersburg as a part of city council's veteran initiative to collaboratively build partnerships that would address and improve issues of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, health maladies and mental illness.

Program & Services

The Petersburg Freedom Support Center provides customized comprehensive services to children and spouses of military personnel, veterans and enlistees residing in the Crater Planning District, Richmond Metropolitan area and surrounding localities. Through highly collaborative public and private partnerships, the ONESTOP currently houses on-site provider organizations available to clients via walk in or appointment basis during standard hours of operation which are 8:30am-5:00pm, Monday through Friday. Each agency representative is a skilled and credentialed professional who affords clients the best available resource under one roof. Statistics prove that poverty has a ripple effect producing poor mental and physical health outcomes. Many of these men and women do not have a vehicle which is a significant barrier to accessing services. The center's location has helped reduce such barriers that often create discrepancies affecting health statuses. The impact that the program has on the veteran community of 2,692 residents based on the 2010 US Census; has yielded an outcome as of December 31, 2014, of serving 1,654 new non-duplicated individuals. PFSC within 277 operational days has provided free services that will continue to positively impact the city. By facing the issues existing for individuals and families living above poverty level who can easily plunge into a financial crisis by loss of a job and/or sudden unforeseen

circumstances; therefore offering the community accessible services through a quality system of care is paramount.

Housing

Virginia's Governor Terry McAuliffe initiated a 100-Day Challenge in an effort to end veteran homelessness by the end of December 2015. Community partners from Roanoke, Richmond and Hampton Roads teamed up to create local goals based on unique challenges that each community experiences in housing veterans faster. The initiative extended to Petersburg with collaborative efforts from McGuire VA Medical Center's Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV), Virginia Supportive Housing's Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) and Virginia Wounded Warrior Programs located who are co-located in the Freedom Center.

Re-Entry

On Friday, December 5, 2014 fourteen minimum security non-violent inmates (*referred to as prison camp*) from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBP) correctional facility located in Petersburg, Virginia received services and resources at the Petersburg Freedom Support Center (PFSC) for the first "Camp Day of Service." All campers served in the U.S. military and volunteered to participate. The campers spent a full day not only receiving literature about resources, but they individually met with onsite providers to apply for services including VA healthcare enrollment, pension eligibility, educational benefits activation, housing qualifications, obtaining identification and outpatient counseling.

Moreover PFSC provides outreach to local Virginia Department of Corrections facilities to extend services that inmates will need to successfully re-enter the community. Greensville, Nottoway and Central Virginia Women's Unit #13 have benefited from the center's extension to serve all veterans regardless of their current circumstances. Inside the jail and/or prison, PFSC's director becomes the central contact person linking inmates to the appropriate provider for a proactive approach in meeting their needs prior to release which reduces anxiety and time constraint.

Transportation

The Freedom Center has made concerted efforts to eliminate potential barriers such as transportation and identification. The center's accessible location is one of many conquered obstacles, however traveling to appointments and affording bus fare can prove strenuous. PFSC offers a Veteran Bus Pass Card that initially costs \$10.00 for 90-day ridership on the Petersburg Area Transit; upon expiration there is no renewal fee and 50% discounted bus rate for future monthly passes.

Testimonies

Mack-Thirty-Six K Field Wireman Mack Carter was discharged from the United States Army in 1979. This E2 had mental issues, specifically Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that significantly impacted all facets of his life. He felt isolated due to his difficulty adjusting to civilian life. Due to physical and mental exhaustion from working at a local warehouse in the civilian sector, a physician placed him on medical leave. Healthcare expenditures without insurance coverage contributed to financial shortfalls and Mack eventually became homeless. As a veteran he applied his natural instincts and military training to survive in the streets. "I visited countless agencies for assistance but they either could not help me because I don't qualify or the wait time was six months if not longer," Mack said. While living on the streets a Good Samaritan took an interest in helping him eventually landing him at the local Salvation Army shelter in Petersburg. During his shelter stay the director instantly referred him to the "new veteran center" known for assisting with sustainment. Before Mack could become housed, he needed income but due to his disability he was unable to work. Expedited assistance from onsite provider *The Association for Wounded Veterans*

Changing Lifestyles, Inc. helped Mack apply for service-connected benefits that would provide a source of income to qualify for housing. His discharge status that affected eligibility for specific programs and entitlement was upgraded. In just a few months Mack received his VA compensation, housing and eventually employment. He is currently enrolled in a bachelorette program at Argosy University where he is studying Psychology. Mack was also a pilot client for the *Boots to Suits* voucher program sponsored by one of PFSC's community partners the *Junior League of Richmond* that provided two free complete suits. "I can't imagine where I would be if this center didn't exist. I am able to use the Petersburg Area Transit with my discount rate veteran buss pass card to attend appointments and run errands. This facility is conveniently located downtown for those individuals like myself without personal vehicles. This place is right on time," Mack says.

Stevie-Retired Army Private First Class Esteban Arevalo served in the U.S. Army from 1998-2002. Arevalo said alcohol abuse caused his career and family demise. As a returning citizen from the Department of Corrections, his re-entry to society would be a challenge. He had lost everything and found himself homeless post-release. A deacon who met Aravelo during his jail ministry knew he needed support. The deacon, a veteran himself, heard about a new support center for military personnel and felt *nothing beats a failure but a try*. Esteban became connected to the Virginia Employment Commission to re-enter the workforce. "I got myself back together and I kind of feel like a soldier again," Arevalo said. Aravelo presently owns a security, landscaping, and home renovation business.

Shelly-In 2009 Michelle Harris was a Cook in the United States Army Reserves medically discharged with depression. Michelle was unable to return to the service unless she acquired a medical waiver. With Michelle's sudden lay-off she moved into a cheap apartment that had mold and many other health and safety concerns. She researched places that may be able to assist with her financial strain and move into more suitable housing accommodations. Dealing with the loss of one of her twins, this single-mother was determined to complete school and make a way for her child. She heard about a facility in Petersburg that assists with military transition and thought to call for assistance. Michelle was instantly linked to services that would improve her current circumstances. Virginia Supportive Housing rapidly rehoused Michelle and her child. The agency also provided rental assistance with financial counseling and case management support. Although she has not activated her educational benefits, she completed massage therapy school and became a full-time instructor. Michelle's professional goal is to enroll in culinary arts and own her own restaurant. "It is a relief to have something in Petersburg readily available for veterans to receive assistance. It seemed all of the resources were located in Richmond which isn't far but without transportation it can be difficult," Michelle said. The center did not stop at core sources, there were legal issues that became a hindrance. With the knowledge and expertise of providers, the collaborative effort to connect Michelle to the appropriate personnel, this too was resolved. "I tell all veterans I know you need to go to the center, they are here for us and work fast," she states.

Target Population Impact

As a result of tangible services readily available and accessible to those living in Petersburg City and surrounding localities, individuals and families were able to secure the following:

- Full-time or Part-time employment (civilian and military sector)
- Acquire free casual/dress attire for job interviews
- Receive monetary compensation for service connected medical and mental health disability claims
- Register for postsecondary education programs by activating GI Bill benefits
- Rebuild self-esteem and sense of being through individual mental health support
- Secure housing with financial assistance to cultivate sustainment

- Retrieve vital records including military separation, birth certificate and social security card
- Enroll in Veterans Affairs medical/healthcare

Community Impact

As the active duty military population in our nation decreases due to downsizing of our armed forces, more and more servicemen and women will be returning to civilian life- *many of them unprepared*. Geographical areas surrounding military bases will be impacted especially those living in that particular area. The transformational impact on these communities, one of which surrounds Fort Lee, will be affected economically and demographically. The Petersburg Freedom Support Center is an “embrace” the community needs to proactively meet the needs of these families to aid in their new roles as civilian members of our Commonwealth. With this viable hub those who served their country for the protection of others’ freedom and love of their country will have consistent access best available services and resources for sustainment.

Provide the name of the primary contact for the project. Name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. *(This person may be contacted to verify information.)*

Primary Contact: Tara Anderson

Address: 32 W. Washington Street Petersburg, Virginia 23803

Telephone: (804) 451-0205

Email Address: tanderson@petersburg-va.org

End of Application. Thank you for submitting your All-America City Award Application!

Submit the application:

**1) by email (aac@ncl.org) or fax (888-314-6053) by Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 11:59 p.m. PST; and, 2) mail one hard copy with \$200 (*You only pay \$100 application fee if you submit a Letter of Intent to Apply by November 25) application fee to:
National Civic League, 6000 East Evans Ave., Suite 3-012, Denver, Colorado 80222. NEWNCL ADDRESS!**

Need additional guidance? Email aac@ncl.org or go to www.allamericacityaward.com for announcements of upcoming conference calls for prospective applicants, links to the 2014 event program featuring the projects of 2014 participating communities, videos of the previous jury presentations, and more or call NCL at 303-571-4343.

Timeline:

September 2014-February 2015 – Monthly conference calls with NCL staff and AAC community leaders to learn more about the benefits of AAC, application tips for success, and to share best practices.

November 25, 2014 -- Letter of Intent to Apply Due. *Save \$100 of the application fee if you submit a Letter of Intent to Apply by November 21, 2014.

March 10, 2015, Tuesday -- Application Due

Early April 2015 -- Finalists Announced
Finalist community-wide delegations will be invited to Denver to present.

April-June 2015 – Finalist communities assemble your cross-sector community delegation to present your story at the June 2015 awards event and peer-learning conference. Raise the funds to send your delegation to the June event in Denver. *Finalist community delegations will be asked to present their story to a national jury of civic, local government, business, philanthropy, and community experts. All applicants are invited to participate in the June workshops and networking opportunities!*

June 11-14, 2015, Peer-Learning Workshops & Awards Competition/Presentation in Denver, Colorado

July 2015-Feb 2016, All-America Cities tell their community's story through a series of AAC/NCL coordinated conference calls and regional forums to the AAC network.