



# CITIES OF SERVICE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### TEN U.S. CITIES LAUNCH HIGH-IMPACT SERVICE PLANS, JOINING 11 OTHERS IN ADDRESSING NEEDS THROUGH IMPACT VOLUNTEERISM

Cities of Service today announced that ten U.S. cities this month have launched efforts to strategically engage volunteers to address the most pressing needs in their communities. Seven of these cities – Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Baton Rouge, Houston, Little Rock, and Orlando – released their “high-impact service plans” this week. All ten cities are recipients of *Cities of Service Leadership Grants*, funded jointly by the Rockefeller Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies. The two-year grants enable cities to hire Chief Service Officers to work closely with mayors to develop and implement these service strategies.

The cities and the high-priority issues they are targeting with service are:

- Atlanta, GA – at-risk youth and city beautification
- Austin, TX – veterans reintegration, education, and health
- Baltimore, MD – drug addiction, crime, and urban blight
- Baton Rouge, LA – neighborhood revitalization and early education
- Chula Vista, CA – education and community health and wellness
- Houston, TX – education, veterans issues, and health and public safety
- Little Rock, AR – childhood obesity, neighborhood stabilization, and environmental sustainability
- Orlando, FL – education and youth crime prevention
- Pittsburgh, PA – youth and neighborhood development
- Richmond, VA – youth and the elderly

The high-impact service plans embody a concept pioneered by Cities of Service called “impact volunteering” – volunteer strategies that target community needs, use best practices, and set clear outcomes and measures to gauge progress. Cities of Service is a bipartisan coalition of mayors who have committed to work together to engage citizens in a multi-year effort to address pressing city needs through impact volunteerism. Founded in September 2009, the coalition includes more than 100 mayors, representing more than 49 million Americans across the nation.

“In New York, we’ve worked to channel volunteers to high-impact opportunities in our areas of greatest need,” said New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. “Mayors everywhere are dealing with diminished budgets and heightened need. We’re working to optimize one of the great resources still in abundance – and that’s the willingness of people to help each other.”

(more)

“The Rockefeller Foundation is proud to support America’s cities through the Cities of Service Leadership Grants,” said Judith Rodin, President of the Rockefeller Foundation. “In these difficult financial times when cities are being forced to do more with less, these ten city leaders have now developed innovative strategies that will tap their own strong community of volunteers and steer them to where help is needed most and can have the greatest impact.”

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg launched New York City’s high-impact service plan in April 2009. Ten additional cities, all recipients of the first round of *Cities of Service Leadership Grants*, followed suit by releasing their high-impact service plans in September 2010. Results in these cities have come quickly. For example:

- In New York, under Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s leadership, more than one million square feet of rooftop have been coated with reflective paint to make buildings more energy efficient, more than \$8 million has been returned to residents through volunteer-supported tax preparation, and more than 54,000 New Yorkers have been trained in life-saving CPR.
- In Los Angeles, under Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa’s leadership, and in partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District, volunteers have helped more than 1,000 high school students at-risk of dropping out return to the classroom.
- In Nashville, under Mayor Karl Dean’s leadership, more than 745 trees and 48 rain gardens have been strategically planted to prevent future flooding, and energy efficient upgrades have been incorporated into the rebuilding of 35 homes damaged by last spring’s flood, leading to an overall energy reduction of more than 30% per home.
- In Philadelphia, under Mayor Michael A. Nutter’s leadership, more than 700 Philadelphians have become Graduation Coaches to help young people in their families and communities succeed in high school, college, and careers.
- In Sacramento, under Mayor Kevin Johnson’s leadership, more than 4,000 people have been trained to respond to emergencies.

The model also has spread to England, where London Mayor Boris Johnson recently announced *Team London*, a high-impact service plan focused on reducing crime, increasing youth opportunity, and improving Londoners’ quality of life.

Each of the high-impact plans released this month outlines specific volunteer initiatives that address pressing local challenges. Sample initiatives for each city are described below.

- In Atlanta, as part of Mayor Kasim Reed’s plan *Forward Together*, volunteers will provide out-of-school programming at the city’s recreation centers – called Centers of Hope – to help mentor, tutor, provide education on fitness and healthy lifestyles, and complete physical improvement projects that support core programming for youth development.

- In Austin, as part of Mayor Lee Leffingwell’s plan *ServeAustin*, 100 female veteran volunteers will be trained to reach out and mentor all female veterans returning to Austin, to ease their transition into civil society and provide for better access to benefits, resources, and services.
- In Baltimore, as part of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake’s plan *StepUp! Baltimore*, 100 volunteers, all individuals who have sustained recovery from drug addiction for at least two years, will be placed in addiction treatment centers to serve as “peer recovery advocates” to support others in recovery. While the needs of treatment centers will vary, the goal is to support up to 1,000 people in recovery, ultimately helping to increase the number of Baltimoreans who sustain recovery from addiction.
- In Baton Rouge, as part of Mayor-President Melvin “Kip” Holden’s plan *Baton Rouge Proud*, an estimated 200 volunteers will clean up and revitalize 20 blocks in deteriorating neighborhoods to reduce blight and increase neighborhood pride.
- In Chula Vista, as part of Mayor Cheryl Cox’s plan *Chula Vista Serves*, approximately 5,000 volunteers will be trained to serve as Graduation Coaches to support at least 5,000 students in graduating from high school while exposing them to college and career pathways. This will contribute to the city’s Graduation Works! Campaign, which aims to have the highest graduation retention rate among similar cities in California.
- In Houston, as part of Mayor Annise Parker’s plan *Houston SERVICE*, 10,000 volunteers will be trained in hands-only CPR and will then train five friends and family on their own, to bring the total number of residents trained in CPR to 60,000. This will improve the city’s ability to respond to sudden cardiac emergencies.
- In Little Rock, as part of Mayor Mark Stodola’s plan *Little Rock Serves*, volunteers will engage 1,400 children at up to seven elementary schools in a school-based garden-enhanced nutrition education program that provides at-home garden mentoring for students, as well as a volunteer supported walking program that increases levels of physical activity among students, with the goal of reducing childhood obesity in Little Rock.
- In Orlando, as part of Mayor Buddy Dyer’s plan *ORLANDO CARES*, volunteers will implement a new program, Mayor Buddy’s Book Club, to engage 1,000 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in reading more books, while other volunteers will reach out to and enroll at least 250 children in pre-K programs. Both of these initiatives aim to improve literacy instruction and ultimately help increase childhood literacy.
- In Pittsburgh, as part of Mayor Luke Ravenstahl’s plan *servePGH*, city employees will be encouraged to volunteer as 6<sup>th</sup> grade mentors through an Executive Order signed by the Mayor, which gives special allowance for city employees to serve during the work day while challenging other employers to do the same. The goal is to increase the number of mentors across the city, thereby increasing students’ engagement in school.

- In Richmond, as part of Mayor Dwight C. Jones' plan *Neighbor-to-Neighbor*, volunteers will serve as one-to-one mentors to low-income students in the city's eight middle schools. This initiative aims to serve 1,100 students in the first year and reach 5,300 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade students by 2014, with the goal of increasing the number of youth who transition on time from middle to high school.

### ***About Cities of Service***

American cities face serious challenges and many mayors want to take advantage of every resource available to them – including the time and energy of public-spirited residents – to address those challenges. But in cities across America today, citizen service is often an underutilized or inefficiently utilized strategy by municipal governments. Founded in September 2009, Cities of Service supports mayors to leverage citizen service strategies, addressing local needs and making government more effective.

More information about the coalition can be found at [www.citiesofservice.org](http://www.citiesofservice.org).

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Contact: Nick Bernstein  
212.205.0160  
[info@citiesofservice.org](mailto:info@citiesofservice.org)