

1999 All-America City Award Print-Out Application

National Civic League's
50th Annual All-America City Awards

Mail your completed application to:

National Civic League, Attn: AAC Application
1445 Market Street, Suite 300, Denver, CO 80202-1728
For more information, call 303.571.4343

Part I

Community Name: Fresno, California

City Name (if different): Fresno

County: Fresno

State: California

List the 3 individuals who most actively participated in filling out this All-America City Award application. (Include Name, Title & Organization)

- 1) Carla Glazebrook, Chief of Staff
Office of the Mayor
City of Fresno
- 2) Elaine Tamura, Leadership Fresno Class 15
c/o Saint Agnes Medical Center
- 3) Carol Rauscher, President & CEO
United Way of Fresno County

All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout competition and for follow-up): Include Name, Title, Organization, Address, City, State, Zip, Business Phone/Fax, Home Phone/Fax, and E-mail.

Carla Glazebrook, Chief of Staff
Office of the Mayor
City of Fresno
2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 498-4351 business phone; (559) 488-1015 business fax

If we are designated an All-America City in 1999, we agree to follow NCL's rules regarding use of the All-America City Award logo.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

COMMUNITY STATISTICS

FORM of GOVERNMENT, if applicable (circle one):

Council-Manager, Mayor-Council, Commission

POPULATION (1995 or most recent):

411,600 (1/1/98) Source: California Department of Finance

POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE (+ or -)(1985-1995):

+40.5% Source: California Department of Finance

POPULATION DENSITY (residents per unit area)(1995 or most recent):

3,922 per sq. mi. (1996) Source: Fresno County General Plan Working Papers &
California Department of Finance

RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN (percentage):

48.0% White (non-Hispanic)

7.0% Black

35.9% Hispanic (of any origin)

13.0% Asian

0.9% Native American

22.7% Other

Source: CACI Marketing Systems, CCFI, United Way of Fresno County

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME:

\$ 30,515 Source: CACI Marketing, CCFI, United Way of Fresno County

PERCENTAGE of FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL:

24% Source: 1990 Census

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE:

11.9% (August 1997) Source: California Employment Development Department

POPULATION BREAKDOWN by AGE GROUP (percentages) (if available):

31% Below 18 years

11% 18-24

31% 25-44

17% 45-64

10% Over 65

Source: CACI Marketing Systems, United Way of Fresno County

PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP:

55.2% in the MSA; Source: United Way of Fresno County; 1997 U.S. Census Bureau Annual Report

WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION by INDUSTRY (percentage of total employed in each):

9.2% Manufacturing

22.9% Trade

4.2% Agriculture

37.7% Services

26.1% Other (please specify): Utilities, Finance, Administration, Construction & Communication

Source: 1990 Census

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND:

Set the background for your community's story. Summarize your general community situation (not the three specific projects described in subsequent application questions) and the community environment which contributed to your community's history. (800 word maximum)

Ensure that the following points are covered:

- a. Context of your community within your region;**
- b. Extent and nature of citizen participation in community improvement efforts;**
- c. Degree of success in realizing community goals; and**
- d. Success in including diverse populations in all phases of community improvement.**

1. Assess how well your community is doing, based on each of NCL's ten Civic Index components (review carefully the Civic Index on pages 4-5 of the printed application). Support your claims with examples. Please be candid and include not only positive assessments, but what your challenges are and how you are addressing them.

Thirty-two years ago we were an *All-America City*. People still speak wistfully, almost reverently, about that time in our history. But in the decades since 1967, we've taken a civic beating. Fresno—auto theft capital of America, cow town, crime capital of California—ranked dead last out of 270 cities in the Places Rated Almanac. We deserved our reputation. Gangs ruled the streets, and murders were an almost daily occurrence. Omnipresent graffiti signified the surrender of the good citizens. Police were not hired; infrastructure deteriorated. The people who could, left town. Those who stayed began to blame one another and belittle our own community. Ridiculing ourselves became a favorite local pastime, which reached national proportions as Johnny Carson poked fun at us. We warranted a four-hour mocking as CBS broadcast the 1986 miniseries, “Fresno - the Power, the Passion and the Produce.”

A local columnist declared “...this city practically overnight, turned into a frightening spray-painted vision of how hell must look. Graffiti was inspiring hopelessness. Civilization appeared out of control. There was no way, seeing these city streets, to figure Fresno would ever get better. Only worse.” By 1994 we'd had enough! From neighborhoods to city hall the gauntlet was thrown down—1,300 vandals were arrested and sent to clean-up on the Tagger-to-Work Detail; millions of square feet of graffiti were painted over; crime was addressed on every front and declines were dramatic. The headlines declared “City takes upper can in spray-paint skirmishes,” and “City *feels* safe again.”

We've come a long way from our origins as a child of the Central Pacific Railroad—the vision of Leland Stanford who saw the potential for agriculture in this valley of rich soil, abundant sunshine and mighty rivers. Today, Stanford's vision is realized, as Fresno County claims its place as the agri-business capital of the world.

From its pioneer beginnings in 1872—as a wild west railroad town, to its development as not only the center for agri-business, but for cultural pursuits as well—Fresno's 411,600 native sons and newcomers, have aggressively pursued their destiny. Our early settlers were Southerners who came west to escape the changes of Reconstruction; Midwesterners who came in search of a better life; *Forty-Niners* who left the gold fields to either invest their wealth in the new town or, not having attained their fortune, to try to find prosperity; and immigrants from many different countries hoping to claim their piece of the American dream.

It was this sense of destiny and opportunity that first brought us to this Central California valley in the late 1800s—Armenians, Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, African-Americans. This in-migration of people with a dream increased exponentially during our first 100 years, as we became one of the fastest growing cities in California. Then, in the 1970s the federal government fulfilled a promise to those who fought for democracy in Vietnam and almost overnight resettled 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees in Fresno—without money, jobs, language skills or a support network.

Today our civic tapestry is woven by hands representing 88 ethnic groups and our voice rings out in 105 languages. We face the challenges of every other major metropolitan area—and a few born of our diversity. We're taking our stand in the neighborhoods because they have all of the ingredients necessary to achieve amazing transformations—leaders, schools, families, churches, children, government, seniors, neighborhood associations, businesses and non-profit organizations. We're becoming a community where the laughter of children echoes up and down the streets of our healthy neighborhoods. From the Fresno Leadership Foundation to the City's Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Department and dozens of organizations throughout

our city, comes the rallying cry: *every neighborhood is unique, but building healthy neighborhoods is do-able, measurable, sustainable and replicable.*

In Fresno, cookie-cutter, instruction-manual, top-down civic renewal is gone. The transformation is amazing as we are living out our 1993 vision statement: “We capitalized on our cultural diversity and created a place that enabled all of our people to experience a sense of community, realizing the value and worth of every person...created collaborative partnerships—public, private and philanthropic...and created a *can do* culture.” The good citizens who surrendered in the decades past, are reclaiming their city and building something truly extraordinary. The formerly blighted Tower District is bustling with restaurants and galleries; Chinatown has returned to its glory, we’ve created the Uptown Arts and Entertainment District, and are about to embark on a dramatic expansion of the Armenian Cultural District.

Geneva Overholser, a Washington Post columnist said, Fresno “...has the sunny, slow, wide-open feel of a farm town. Indeed, Fresno is the nation’s top agricultural producer. Yet it is stunningly diverse. Call it a slice of America’s future—a community with farm-bred values whose face has changed in a generation. You’ll find uneasiness and anxiety here—but also excitement and hope—and some truly remarkable people.” We agree.

A. Citizen Participation (135 word maximum)

We are the headquarters of no Fortune 500 companies—we have no corporate fairy godmothers. Change happens here because 55-66% of us vote in major elections; and because “we the people” turn out in multitudes to make a difference: 30,000 people belong to 1,200 *Neighborhood Watch* groups; 35,000 children are active in the *Police Activities League*; 1,000 members of *Tree Fresno* have planted more than 36,000 trees and shrubs since 1985; and 10,000 citizens have volunteered during the annual *Clean & Green* community beautification campaigns. Together we have built parks, zoo facilities, Little League fields and Habitat homes—and 7,500 youth and adult volunteers have painted 500 homes for the elderly. In a program being modeled in other cities, churches, businesses and school children raised \$400,000 and donated two “Skywatch” helicopters to our police and sheriff’s departments.

B. Community Leadership (135 word maximum)

Because job creation is vital here, “community leadership” is viewed as synonymous with successful economic development. From the formation of the 125 CEO-member Business Council to our 95 neighborhood associations, we are working together to build our future. Under the banner “Fresno Means Business” government is streamlining, cost-cutting, one-stop permitting, and upgrading technology in numerous multi-jurisdictional initiatives. To prepare students for employment, citizens, businesses and government joined together to pass a \$250 million school bond with the highest percentage in California history; and 70% of Fresnoans voted for a library enhancement tax. The medical community joined in to facilitate the creation of a medical academy for the predominantly minority students, who will attend the first high school built in 36 years. As the advocacy group “1000 Friends of Fresno” says, “Don’t get mad, get involved.”

C. Government Performance (135 word maximum)

The 1997 shift to the Strong Mayor form of government has caused some in the community discomfort and frustration, however, the transition from political and civic gridlock continues at an unprecedented pace. In the past five years the size of the Fresno Police Department has grown 61% while crime is down in every major category from 36-63%. Graffiti is nearly gone. Attention is paid to infrastructure—365 miles of city streets have been paved—up five-fold since 1992—new parks have been opened, thousands of trees have been planted. We’re at work on a \$25 million airport expansion, and building new schools and freeways. Downtown—a new exhibit hall, regional medical center, adult school, Amtrak station, \$100 million federal courthouse and Wilberforce University campus. We say proudly that the *construction crane* is our city bird.

D. Volunteerism and Philanthropy (135 word maximum)

In 1906, 99% of Fresno’s businesses closed so employees could assist victims of the San Francisco earthquake. Ninety-three years later the spirit continues. In 1999, Fresnoans pledged 1.6 million hours of time during a one-hour televised “Volunteer-a-Thon.” We believe, then and now, that volunteers are the heart and soul of an extraordinary community. Our arts and business communities collaborated to pass the “Arts to Zoo” sales tax, the first of its kind in the state, designed to fully fund our cultural infrastructure. It raised \$1 million for our museums, philharmonic, zoo and other arts organizations. Four-thousand supporters are nearing the midway point in creating a 6,000 acre, 22-mile parkway, wildlife habitat, and recreational trail along the San Joaquin River, and more volunteers are creating a 12-mile linear park by converting abandoned “Rails to Trails”.

E. Intergroup and Intragroup Relations (135 word maximum)

Research published by local 5th graders reports that in 1880, “Fresno had 1,114 residents - 78% white, 172 Chinese, 37 Hispanics, 14 Native American and 2 Negroes.” Today, Fresnoans represent 88 ethnic groups and 105 languages. Appreciation of our rich culture and international identity is expressed through support for the African-American and Arte-Americas Museums, and numerous local festivals. Human Relations Ombudsman, David BearHeart, and dedicated local leaders have healed a major rift, that produced suspicion and threatened violence, in our Asian community, and facilitated a unified Hmong New Year celebration attended by 130,000. We’ve built religious bridges too, through Fresno Area Congregations Together, the Interfaith Sponsoring Committee, Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries and the No Name Fellowship—representing every major church in the city. Here a Jewish Rabbi was named Armenian “Man of the Year.”

F. Civic Education (135 word maximum)

The annual *Character and Civic Education Conference* draws thousands of teachers who teach Fresno and Clovis schools' core values of responsibility, justice, helping others, freedom, integrity, self-worth, respect, loyalty and love; or the "Character Counts!" curriculum, including "Students Together Against Racism" and "Beyond Diversity" training to the districts' 110,000 students. Thousands of Fresnans have graduated from the *Institute for Latino Leadership, Leadership Fresno*, student leadership academies and *Ag Leadership*. In 1992, the Police Department created an unprecedented 17-week program—the Citizens Police Academy, designed to completely expose the inner workings of the department. To reach all citizens, academies offer all classes in Hmong, Spanish and English. Many of the 538 graduates become "Volunteers in Policing" or "Citizens on Patrol", groups supported by young Police Explorers. 80% of whom are Southeast Asian and 60% female.

G. Community Information Sharing (135 word maximum)

In pursuing their goal of "*Building Extraordinary Communities in Fresno County*", the United Way of Fresno County sponsored an exhaustive two-year demographic study of the strengths, weaknesses and assets of our region. The 330-page Vision 20/20 Report, created by 118 civic leaders representing our region's 2,300 community-based organizations, states, "Identifying critical issues, creating community goals based on those issues, implementing solutions, measuring outcomes and developing resources, are strategic steps in our community plan." Not only is this report widely distributed among all segments of our community, but information is also shared through the media, including televised City Council and County Supervisors meetings, *City in Action* cable program; a comprehensive city-sponsored internet site and a community website. Also, through the County Council of Governments and numerous organizations, alliances and their educational and informational programs and materials.

H. Capacity for Cooperation and Consensus Building (135 word maximum)

The *Mayor's Coalition 2000* brings representatives from 36 civic, professional and regional government organizations to a monthly roundtable where issues of concern to the community can be discussed in an informal environment that encourages candor and discourages turf issues. Fresno has joined five neighboring cities to form the "Freeway 99 Beautification Association" and we are working with the county to our north to create the 22-mile San Joaquin River Parkway. We also created the Fresno Regional Foundation to effectively distribute our charitable dollars. Public safety knows no boundaries, thus the City of Fresno donated \$1 million to the County for construction of a bootcamp for juvenile offenders. The first class of cadets won sweepstakes in a veterans parade; the cadets donated their prize money back to the bootcamp to provide seed money for a library.

I. Community Vision and Pride (135 word maximum)

Our vision statement, created in 1993 states; *“The Fresno region is recognized as California’s premier economic hub for agri-business and as a major commercial distribution and transportation center. It is a vibrant community of skilled, educated and productive people who value children and families, celebrate their diversity and have a renaissance spirit—honoring the past, valuing the present and working toward the future.”* We broadcast our “Legends and Legacies,” and display our heritage visually on 13 massive tile murals placed along freeways. The murals, depicting scenes from our past and present, are still being created by local artists, high school students and Rotarians—and are unique in the United States. We celebrate our military heritage at the Legion of Valor Museum, and our agricultural heritage on the Blossom Trail and Wildflower Trail.

J. Regional Cooperation (135 word maximum)

“It has to be one of the most remarkable grassroots alliances the nation has ever seen,” states Washington Post columnist Neal Peirce “builders and environmentalists, farm and business interests, forces historically at sixes and sevens, suddenly agreeing that overheated, land-consumptive growth needs to be corralled.” Fresno’s Growth Alternatives Alliance was lauded by Vice President Gore for its 1998 report, A Landscape of Choice, which creates a common vision for the future of all of the cities in Fresno County that will guide urban development and protect the most productive agricultural land in the world for the next 30 years. Not only do area planning commissions meet collectively, as needed; but citizens in Fresno and 14 small cities form a Transportation Authority, which has generated \$750 million and is jointly constructing 500 lane-miles of freeways.

2. NCL believes a strong civic infrastructure provides the skills and processes for a community to effectively address important local issues. Using the ten components of NCL's Civic Index as a guide, discuss how your community's civic infrastructure is helping the community address its key challenges. (750 word maximum)

Give examples of how your community has encouraged:

- a. The most basic challenges and concerns of the community;
- b. Collaboration between community sectors; and
- c. Shared decision making among diverse segments of the population.

Fresno’s greatest strength, our agricultural foundation, is also our Achilles heel. We derive much of our livelihood, and our identity from our agricultural roots. Agriculture is directly responsible for \$3.3 billion annually and one-third of all jobs in the San Joaquin Valley. But being married to the land makes us vulnerable to so much that is beyond our control—drought, floods, pests, politics and world market conditions. In four days in December 1998, our valley lost \$634 million in freeze damage to citrus. In what has become an almost ordinary display of compassion, within

10 days the “Freeze Relief Coalition” was formed; and in just over two hours 26,000 pounds of food was collected for our neighbors in need. Donations totaled \$144,000, and the assistance is still coming. But the much heralded generosity of Fresnoans is not the long-term solution to the needs created by high unemployment.

Building a base of consistent, diversified employment is the foundation of our future. In the past five years we have co-located the Central Valley Business Incubator and the Entrepreneurial Resource Center within the cutting-edge Center for Advanced Research and Technology, a complex jointly operated by all of our local educational institutions. Yet, despite these innovations, crime (and the perception of crime), and employment are so intimately intertwined here, they cannot be separated. When Gap Inc. CEO, Don Fisher, arrived to discuss locating a regional distribution center in Fresno, his first question was “If we choose Fresno, can we build a fence high enough to protect our workers and their cars?” Regardless of achievements such as Outlook Magazine’s selection of Fresno as one of its “*top 25 cities for doing business*,” addressing the crime problem was clearly a mandatory first step in creating employment.

The tragic death of a beautiful teenage girl made us the birthplace of the “Three Strikes and You’re Out” and “Use a Gun and You’re Done” laws. We began hiring significant numbers of new officers for the first time in 20 years. But the still-scarce law enforcement resources had to be allocated and leveraged differently. The shift to Community Based Policing reinforced the need to make citizens, other enforcement agencies, churches and community organizations our partners. In 1996, the Fresno Police Department became the first in California to partner with the California Highway Patrol and the Probation Department to “Help Eliminate Auto Theft”. A \$10,000 grant from Allstate Insurance purchased the computers that linked the agencies’ databases and auto theft plummeted 60% in four years. The HEAT Team was named one of the top three programs in the U.S. by the International Association of Police Chiefs.

And in a neighborhood long torn apart by bitter conflict between the police and the low-riders was born “Cruise Control”—a partnership between the police, cruisers, residents, and business owners. Proud of their collaboration, participants wear t-shirts depicting a patrol car and low-rider nose to nose. Not only is crime down in the cruise zone 32-71%, but the car clubs are maintaining and beautifying “their streets.” Hundreds of low-riders and residents recently threw a surprise party for the area police captain. Citing the transformation—on the streets and in their hearts—they proclaimed, “We’re more than partners, we’re family.”

And in another stunning example of an amazing, if unlikely partnership, business executives create “Hope Now for Youth”, pledging to employ every gang member who successfully leaves the streets. Believing that, “if you can’t earn a legal income, you can’t live a legal life,” Fresno’s private sector has provided meaningful employment to 410 former gang members. Generous volunteers also offer GED and job training, medical care, tattoo removal, counseling and loving relationships. At the annual Hope Now banquet, there was hardly a dry eye in the house as nearly 800 people—judges, former gang members, employers, law enforcement officers and volunteers—celebrated together. The recidivism rate for the young men of Hope Now is 5%.

And, Gap Inc. did choose Fresno—over 111 cities—and is nearing completion of a \$200 million distribution center, showing that safe cities attract jobs and investment. And, instead of building a fence around their property, Gap Inc. built a park.

Native son, Pulitzer Prize winning author William Saroyan, said of his town... “I came to see from the perspective of far away cities, some of the charm and some of the depth, dimension, and potential of Fresno...”. We have all of those things—charm, depth and potential, but we also have determination to once again be called an *All-America City*.

Part II

Part II requires a description of three recent community-driven projects that have significantly impacted the community since 1996. Regardless of when each project was begun, focus on the progress achieved during the last three years. The projects should illustrate the community's ability to:

- 1) anticipate problems by proactively dealing with community challenges, **and/or**
- 2) respond in collaborative and resourceful ways to a current critical problem.

Please Note:

All or some aspect of Project One should show how the lives of youth and children in the community have been tangibly improved.

You can either have all projects dealing with anticipated problems **or** all focusing on current challenges **or** a combination of the two.

In addition, all projects selected should exemplify extraordinary civic accomplishments for your community, made possible by collaborative efforts of individuals and the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

1A. Briefly describe the first (Project One) of the three projects. This Project One should have significantly impacted youth since 1996. (200 word maximum)

OSO DE ORO LAKE PARK

Landscape Architect magazine declared, “Once in a great while a unique project comes along that meets the special needs of a community. The Oso de Oro Lake Park for physically challenged children is such a project.” Oso de Oro, meaning “Bear of Gold” has, according to the parents of the blind and physically challenged children who use the park, become a gift of gold. This innovative park was constructed with meticulous attention to the unique physical, emotional and educational needs of the children. It also showcases the natural and cultural history of California and includes: a frontier fort, Spanish ruins, maze for the sight impaired that features historic and relief tiles, mining town, antique boat, swings adapted to four levels of ability, and big and little kids play areas; even touchable art—including a statue of the California Grizzly Bear—worn down by curious hands. The ability to touch nature was created in a live stream and gold panning area; and the ponding basin offers docks to observe the aquatic, wildlife and migratory bird habitat. A mother said it best, “In this magical park there is freedom from limitations and freedom to be adventurous. All God’s children are equal in this place.”

1B. What prompted the community to undertake this project? (200 word maximum)

The basin park was designed to meet normal stormwater management requirements and to offer unparalleled recreational opportunities to disabled children in our region. Flood Control manager, Doug Harrison believes, “Oso de Oro is setting national standards for park design and the public/private partnerships required to build them.” Conventional design concepts were turned upside-down—not a park for the able-bodied that is accessible to the disabled, but a park specifically created for the disabled—“accessible” to their able-bodied friends and family. In an unanticipated side benefit, the park has proven to be very popular with the elderly and the disabled parents of able-bodied children. Planning took four years to ensure that no detail was overlooked—rails that don’t splinter, play areas where wheelchairs don’t get stuck in the sand, mazes that can be used unassisted by the sight impaired, and restroom stalls designed to ensure privacy and with sufficient room for assistance by an aide. Most parks spark controversy over traffic, litter and noise, but Oso de Oro has literally and figuratively broken down barriers between the park and the neighbors—as 100% of the homeowners adjoining the park took down their fences, built up a sense of community and welcomed the park to the neighborhood.

1C. What attempts were made to involve citizens and youth directly affected by the project in program development and to what extent were they successful? How were diverse segments of the population involved in the decision-making process? What general difficulties were encountered? (200 word maximum)

The initial challenges for the all-volunteer Citizens Design Team, of able-bodied and wheelchair-bound specialists in adaptive recreation and physical therapy, were in fulfilling an uncompromising quest to meet *all* of the special needs of the children—not just a few of them. Committee members traveled the U.S. to visit renowned facilities; discussions were held with parents, neighbors, children and educators. Contributions totaling \$340,000 were complemented by in-kind donations from artists, suppliers and contractors. The park is even maintained by developmentally disabled adults called *ArcWorkers*, sponsored by the private sector. The park opened with thousands joining in joyous celebration on June 8, 1995. Five months later, the big kids play area was surrounded by yellow crime scene tape—reduced to a smoldering pile of rubble by an arsonist. A citywide chorus of outrage was followed by an outpouring of support, as school children brought their allowances and “Pennies for the Park”, musicians staged concerts; and local media outlets held a “Rebuild the Dream” telethon. The response was so overwhelming, the mayor referred to it as “a state of divine disorganization.” In days, \$99,000 was raised and soon the play area was rebuilt and re-dedicated—to the cheers of the kids and the city.

1D. What significant impacts has this project had on the community? Include quantifiable results as well as changes in the way the community confronts critical local issues. (200 word maximum)

Since 1995 more than 250,000 people have enjoyed the ten-acre park. Demand is so great that a reservation system was implemented in 1996; and 33,000 people have reserved the pavilions for birthday parties, school events and family gatherings. Oso de Oro has received numerous awards

from organizations and publications representing the disabled, contractors, public works, rehabilitation and government; including the California Parks and Recreation Society's "Facility Design Award of Excellence in Park Planning and Innovation," and the national American City and County "Award of Merit." The park exceeds our community's expectations by providing groundwater conservation, recreation, education *and* inspiration. The park hosts wheelchair basketball demonstrations, "Blind Babies" Easter egg hunts and performances by Break the Barriers—a dance and gymnastics team featuring able-bodied and disabled performers. Oso de Oro has a serious side, offering opportunities for physical development on the mobility training platform for the blind, and elevated therapy and exercise platform. But the most important measurable outcome, is the laughter of the children and the words of parents, as expressed by the mother of a five year old who is both blind and wheelchair bound, "Look out there at my son. In this park, he's just a regular kid."

1E. For Project One, list up to five principal groups and organizations involved. Summarize their contribution to the project.

Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District: Conceived, designed and constructed the project through the support of its board, staff and Citizen Design Team. Staff members volunteered weekends to construct the mining town.

Fansler Foundation: Local hotel chain funded the entry plaza and restrooms; and numerous other businesses-sponsored elements of park construction.

Fig Garden Rotary Club: Funded the stream-side play area and the "S.S. Ratliff", a boat feature named after a club member with terminal cancer; and is representative of the 266 other service clubs, individuals and organizations that contributed.

Fresno Unified School District: Funded and provided creative input for the Arts and Crafts Pavilion; and provided student-supported fundraising, and park maintenance by Assistant and Junior Park Rangers.

Tree Fresno: Local non-profit organized students and adults to plant 122 trees on the ten-acre site.

1F. For Project One, identify three individuals who were active leaders. (Include leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors.)

- 1) Doug Harrison, General Manager; Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District
- 2) Janet Carpenter, Recreation Therapist; Valley Children's Hospital
- 3) Kim Lee; parent of disabled child/teacher

2A. Briefly describe the second main project (Project Two) that has significantly impacted the community since 1996. (200 word maximum)

STONE SOUP PARTNERSHIP

The name “Stone Soup” is from a folktale in which everyone shares their talents and resources to nourish a healthy community. In honoring Stone Soup’s founder, Kathy Garabed, Temple Beth Israel presented her the Social Action Award for *tikkun olam—repair of the world*. This award and the President’s “Points of Light” Award recognize Stone Soup’s impact on the predominantly impoverished Southeast Asians living in the two-block area commonly known as “Sin City.” The Partnership has become a model for relationship-driven neighborhood revitalization, as fear and despair are conquered by the El Dorado Residents Association, churches, the City of Fresno, apartment owners and managers, Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries and numerous educational institutions. Individuals and organizations have joined together to provide health services, citizenship classes, parenting workshops, English courses, job counseling and children’s programs to the 8,000 residents of El Dorado Park. New immigrant, Phouang Phagnasay stated, “My family gave up everything to fight for democracy. Now half-way through my life, I’ve had to start over. I don’t mind being called a refugee, but people in America forget that they were once like us.” Today he is a university graduate and contributor to the “Stone Soup.”

2B. What prompted the community to undertake this project? (200 word maximum)

The impetus for the Partnership ran in the front door. Ordered to be initiated into the *Tiny Rascals Gang* by shooting a rival, a frightened eight-year old, carrying a loaded weapon sought refuge in the Wesley United Methodist Church office. He was typical of the neighborhood’s youth who were caught between the culture of their immigrant parents and the culture of their new American homeland. The children walked a tightrope—gangs, drugs and despair on one side and the *American Dream* as close as the university a few blocks away. Director Garabed galvanized her church and area residents, and went to work helping our new neighbors learn, or re-learn, how to manage life’s basic challenges. Employment counseling was less about what to wear to an interview, than explaining to those who were used to working when the sun came up and sleeping when it got dark, what a clock is, and why time is important in American culture; stressing the value of regular school attendance to those who had never been to school. And, trying to help a newcomer, whose status had been determined by the number of chickens he owned, understand why he could not keep chickens in his apartment.

2C. What attempts were made to involve the citizens directly affected by the project in program development and to what extent were they successful? How were diverse segments of the population involved in the decision-making process? What general difficulties were encountered? (200 word maximum)

One of the greatest challenges was reversing the resentment and family breakdown caused by Southeast Asian youth moving away from the culture of their parents—a culture they identify with war, poverty and resettlement camps. In an unusual twist, it is American volunteers encouraging respect and appreciation for Asian culture by facilitating classes in language, dance, art, cooking, acting, mural painting and writing. Literacy courses, newsletter publishing, video production and other activities may be offered in Khmer, Lao, Hmong, Filipino, Japanese or Korean. Yet, as faith-based organizations joined City and program staff to “make soup,” volunteers had to

overcome numerous cultural, gender and language barriers. Community leadership training meetings had to be translated into 3-5 languages, and American women learned not to sit with Hmong men, lest they be perceived as prostitutes. Residents were taught to identify their own problems and create solutions—such as driving classes for Hmong women, who had never had an opportunity to drive. Today residents serve as board members, counselors and volunteers. Students from the neighboring university studying nursing, speech, English, health education, criminology and athletics, have become vital resources. And property owners who had considered abandoning their buildings in despair, rallied to dramatically improve living conditions.

2D. What significant impacts has this project had on the community? Include quantifiable results as well as changes in the way the community confronts critical local issues. (200 word maximum)

Tossed-out sofas, bullet-riddled streetlights, drive-by drug deals and gang shakedowns marked the “Sin City” era. According to the 1990 census, this zipcode had the highest percentage of people living in poverty in the state. In 1992 the neighborhood was home to 5-6 gangs that boldly intimidated residents who tried to attend church. Today crime has been reduced by more than 53% and calls for police service are down dramatically. Stone Soup has leveraged donations, grants and in-kind contributions to convert an abandoned 16,000 square foot office complex into a four-building neighborhood center. Residents find employment through the on-site Job Development Center; and are supported by hundreds of student volunteers from the university, community college and high schools—who benefit from gaining valuable “real world” experience. Today kids play outside or participate in organized sports, neighborhood carnivals, sock-hops or the Book Friends Club—they have even lobbied City Hall. Once omnipresent, gangs and graffiti, are now “visitors” in this neighborhood. The word *Hmong* means “free people who want to live in quiet and peace.” Stone Soup is successfully helping to create the vision expressed in that name, and reclaiming El Dorado Park as “Safe City.”

2E. For Project Two, list up to five principal groups and organizations involved. Summarize their contribution to the project.

El Dorado Housing Association: Apartment owners, property managers, individual homeowners and area residents - rehabilitated rental properties, removed debris, sponsored neighborhood clean-ups and enhanced the physical living conditions.

City of Fresno: Provided a \$75,000 Neighborhood Revitalization grant, painted over graffiti, trimmed trees and repaired streets and street lights. The Fresno Police Department provided Neighborhood Patrol Officers, evicted gang members, and “weeded” the area; and in November, 1998, moved into a substation donated by Stone Soup.

Fresno State University: Provided grants and funds to help operate some of Stone Soup’s earliest programs. Also partnered in starting the After School Enrichment Program, the language academy, Fresno READS and the Socialization Center for Southeast Asians.

Share America: Sponsors provide funding to support childrens’ medical and dental health; and purchased clothing, school supplies and gifts.

Fresno Regional Foundation: Provided grants to complete the renovation of a commercial community kitchen, where cooking and nutrition classes are offered; as well as offering technical support to enhance the Partnership’s effectiveness.

2F. For Project Two, identify three individuals who were active leaders. (Include leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors.)(Give each person's name, title, organization, address, and telephone number)

- 1) Robert Kittredge, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, California State University, Fresno
President, Stone Soup Board of Directors
- 2) Dr. John Nguyen, Owner/CEO
Creative Presentations
- 3) Kong Vang
Fresno READS Coordinator
AmeriCorps VISTA

3A. Briefly describe the third main project (Project Three) that has significantly impacted the community since 1996. (200 word maximum)

CARE FRESNO

Fresno had a staggering crime problem that was disproportionately affecting low-income apartment residents. Despite a genuine effort by law enforcement to enhance *public safety*, traditional approaches involved the *public* only superficially, and left few with a feeling of true *safety*. Established in 1995, the Care Fresno mission is “*building partnerships to restore safe neighborhoods*”—permanently. The team is composed of one full-time police officer, one civilian staff member, 24 churches, 400 volunteers and owners of formerly high-crime apartment complexes, who donate vacant units for use as Neighborhood Resource Centers. In these centers, Care Fresno creates customized programs to serve the special needs of 2,200 apartment residents. Fresnoans have donated more than 10,000 books, used computers and furnishings for the resource centers; and volunteers have provided 73,000 hours of tutoring, mentoring, job training and other services. Since 1995, Care Fresno has established 30 neighborhood centers, and enjoys extraordinary partnerships with property owners and managers, local non-profit groups, government agencies, educators and businesses. Children tutored at the centers are showing record-breaking improvements in grades and school attendance, and calls for police service have dropped by a sustained average of 60%. Where Care Fresno goes, life becomes about living, not just surviving.

3B. What prompted the community to undertake this project? (200 word maximum)

Traditionally, dealing with high crime neighborhoods meant sending the police to respond to criminal activity—over and over again. Department protocol was to enforce the law and leave—no attempt was made to prevent the next 911-call that would soon follow. The advent of Problem Oriented Policing produced a more effective model, as officers worked aggressively to weed the criminal element out of an area—only to have problems return as soon as their backs were turned. Untold resources, and perhaps even lives, were wasted in this cycle as neighborhoods relapsed into criminality because the underlying causes—illiteracy, poverty, absent role models and broken relationships of every type—still existed. Police Chief Ed Winchester stated, “More police and prisons will not *cure* crime. Only strategies that unleash the power of citizens to take back their own neighborhoods will result in long-term change that will eliminate crime at its roots.” In Fresno, the courage to make change takes root in neighborhoods that are respected as unique, where progress is “owned” by individuals—not the Care Fresno organization. Even privacy is respected, as elected officials and media are banned from Care Fresno locations until the residents have sufficient pride and confidence in *their* accomplishments to welcome a visit.

3C. What attempts were made to involve the citizens directly affected by the project in program development and to what extent were they successful? How were diverse segments of the population involved in the decision-making process? What general difficulties were encountered? (200 word maximum)

The hopelessness that inspired Care Fresno was expressed by a 13 year old boy who said, “Why should I go to school? I’m going to be dead by the time I’m 15.” Today that boy is an outstanding student; but the transition from distrust to acceptance to restored relationships is generally a slow process—in individuals and neighborhoods. As volunteers from neighborhood

churches first arrived to tutor children after school, residents were eager to complain, but few were willing—or knew how—to work toward solutions. Care Fresno always begins by offering help with homework, reading mentors or other literacy programs for children. Then before additional programs are added, residents are surveyed to determine their specific needs, hopes and dreams. Volunteers have no ironclad instruction manual, just a commitment to listen carefully and serve compassionately. Grassroots neighborhood leadership is nurtured as residents develop their own management teams and create their own goals. Typical of the respect that Care Fresno shows to the diversity of each neighborhood, staff and volunteers helped one neighborhood convert a vacant field, littered with needles and condoms, into a park; and another to create safe Halloween activities for their children. No two sites are the same.

3D. What significant impacts has this project had on the community? Include quantifiable results as well as changes in the way the community confronts critical local issues. (200 word maximum)

Care Fresno has been honored for innovation and achievement by the *Drucker Foundation*, *California Attorney General* and the *National League of Cities*. This highly effective and collaborative model is continuously replicated and has truly restored safe neighborhoods—with calls for police service drastically reduced from 200 calls per month to six in some locations. And crime has stayed down—because the residents have emotional ownership of their neighborhoods. Schools that said a 7% increase in student reading levels would be considered very successful, have seen Care Fresno students increase reading scores a record-setting 17%. Recently a storage facility was donated that will allow volunteers from all 30 sites to store and disperse donated books, furnishings and supplies. As groups mature they are setting their own goals and marshaling resources to achieve *their* specific objectives—coached by caring volunteers. Like birds leaving the nest, truly mature resident groups often “disown” Care Fresno and fly on their own—a goal heartily supported by Care Fresno staff and volunteers, who have raised up neighborhood leadership that has the confidence and pride of ownership that enables them to identify and solve their own problems—and to enjoy the simple pleasures of living in safety, self-determination and hope.

3E. For Project Three, list up to five principal groups and organizations involved. Summarize their contribution to the project.

Evangelicals for Social Action: Non-profit faith-based coalition houses the Care Fresno staff of two, and works in direct partnership to recruit volunteers from Fresno-area churches.

City of Fresno: Police Department provides one full-time officer, necessary intervention in a neighborhood and background investigations on all volunteers. Many police officers also volunteer their time on the board of directors and in the neighborhood centers. Support from all city departments (community sanitation, housing, public works, parks, code enforcement, etc.) is available, as needed.

California State University, Fresno: Promotes the Care Fresno concept in their classes and encourages students to volunteer. To date 37 students have served as resource center volunteers.

Apartment Owners: Twenty-eight owners have donated utility payments and the use of an apartment for a resource center. Their generosity, and the support of their managers, creates a place for resident meetings, after school care for children and classes of all types.

Fresno and Clovis Unified School Districts: Both districts have given all of their schools approval to work with Care Fresno staff and volunteers so that communication between volunteer tutors and teachers is possible. This enables the volunteers to meet the needs of the individual students and to reinforce what the teachers are doing in the classroom.

3F. For Project Three, identify three individuals who were active leaders.(Include leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors.)(Give each person's name, title, organization, address, and telephone number)

- 1) Alan Doswald, Executive Director; Evangelicals for Social Action
- 2) Darrell Fifield, Deputy Chief; Fresno Police Department
- 3) Dr. Jackie Ryle, Owner; Empowerment Strategies

[End Of Application](#)

Mail your completed application to:

National Civic League, Attn: AAC Application
1445 Market Street, Suite 300, Denver, CO 80202-1728
For more information, call 303.571.4343