



For Immediate Release:

## **Municipal Association of South Carolina Honors City of Anderson with Achievement Award**

The City of Anderson has received the 2016 Public Safety Municipal Achievement Award in South Carolina for its *Law Enforcement and Community Relations Task Force*. City officials were notified of the award which was presented at the Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) annual meeting in Charleston in July. More than 30 cities and towns submitted projects to compete in nine award categories. The competition included a written application and an oral presentation to a panel of judges from across the country detailing the initiative's goals, strategies and outcomes.

A judge for the MASC Achievement Award said of Anderson's "Law Enforcement and Community Relations Task Force" initiative: "It is amazing that you have done so much in just over a year. Very impressive. You are to be commended for your success."

The City of Anderson's winning initiative in the Public Safety category began as a grassroots effort led by City Council Member Dr. Beatrice Thompson. The purpose was to ensure positive relationships, starting in minority neighborhoods, as a buttress to violence. The Anderson Police Department and City officials quickly appreciated the value of the effort, joining forces to create the *Law Enforcement and Community Relations Task Force (LECRTF)*. The City provided the sustainable structure for the program to thrive under the direction of Police Chief Jim Stewart. With a vision to balance effective crime control with an appreciation of how citizens are treated, the *LECRTF* engaged 4,000 citizens at 63 events in 2015.

Rev. James Clark of Wilson Calvary Baptist Church serves as chairman of the group which is made up of 25 members including representatives from the Anderson Police Department's Command staff, local pastors, School District 5, other governmental agencies, nonprofits and private citizens.

"We are very proud of our work," Dr. Thompson said. "And we are thrilled that we have been recognized statewide for our efforts to make a positive impact with lasting results. It feels good to be number one and even better to know that in addition to our work here, we can now help inspire cities across the state and beyond."

The *LECRTF* has at its core public outreach to strengthen and enhance relationships between law enforcement and the community. Public involvement is paramount. Each interaction is a chance to listen and learn from constituents to address questions or concerns, to build trust and to influence policy. Activities of the group in 2015 included:

- 7 Schools (discussion forums and education)
- 12 Churches (bible schools and fall festivals)
- 3 Community Center summer programs
- 10 Non-Profit organizations (educational event tie-ins)
- 4 Training classes
- Public forums (neighborhood committees)
- Civic Clubs (guest speakers)
- 4 projects for needy

Chief Stewart said "We have been actively committed to this effort, realizing the difference it has already made. We have established relationships deep within our community that will serve us well into the future. I can't thank Dr. Thompson and the members of the *LECRTF* enough. We are proud of our award winning City and Police Department and we look forward to sharing our success across the state."

One of the group's most innovative and successful initiatives has been "Ice Cream with a Cop" held last summer at area bible school events. "The children had a chance for positive interactions with police officers," said Rev. Clark. "It was a joy to see the children play with sirens and lights in patrol cars and to have the officers serve them ice cream. The positive impressions will last a lifetime."

Started in 1987, the MASC program provides local government officials and employees the opportunity to receive deserved recognition for superior and innovative efforts in local government. The program also provides a forum for sharing the best public service ideas in South Carolina.

"Our Task Force partners and our City employees are very deserving of this recognition," said City Manager Linda McConnell. "We are aware of the great work they do day in and day out and it is nice to receive top state honors from MASC for it."

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