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Municipalities honored for excellence in local government

Alaska Municipal League

Ketchikan - Last month, four Alaskan cities and one elected official were honored with the Community Awards of Excellence during the Alaska Municipal League's 58th annual Local Government Conference.

The awards were created to honor and encourage Alaska's municipalities to improve local government services with innovative, effective and cost efficient programs. These awards can be seen on display by numerous cities and boroughs across the State of Alaska.

Victor Fisher, former Alaska state senator and one of the original signers of the Alaska Constitution, was also in Ketchikan to present Denali Borough Mayor David Talerico the Vic Fisher Local Government Leadership Award, one of the highest honors an Alaska local elected official can receive.

The Vic Fischer Leadership Award is given each year to honor a local elected official or employee who has gone above and beyond customary expectations of his or her position for the betterment of all Alaskan communities.

"It truly is an honor to be here to present this award and to be among the hardest working people in the state of Alaska," Fischer told a crowd of 200 mayors, council members, assembly members and public employees.

Talerico stood out amongst his peers and was selected this year's Vic Fischer recipient for his commitment to the communities of the Denali Borough, involvement in local government and community organizations across the state, and for his work with the Legislature and seeing the passing of legislation for funding both the Public Employee Retirement System and Community Revenue Sharing.

The Community Awards of Excellence winners - Anchorage, Juneau, Mat-Su and Quinagak - were honored in five categories for their superior innovation in community programs.

Anchorage won the Education category for the city's Youth Employment in Parks Program, a 10-week summer program that positively engages a new generation of leaders within the community through training, employment, and outdoor recreation. Anchorage also took home a second award in the Land Use category for the Anchorage Park Foundation, a non-profit program that raises funds to restore the community's aging park. The program began in 2004 and to date has generated over \$15 million for Anchorage parks.

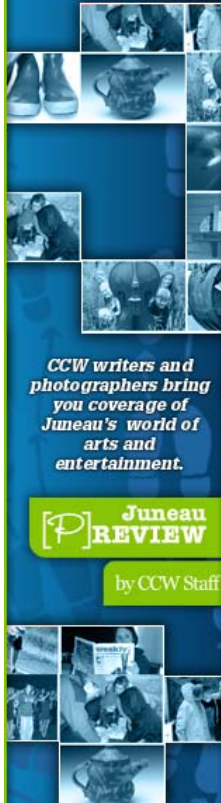
The Mat-Su Borough received its award in the Public Works category for the creation of the Household Hazardous Waste Facility.

The small city of Quinagak, located about 70 miles southwest of Bethel on Kuskokwim Bay, received the Revenue and Finance award for the city's Memorandum of Agreement with the Kwinhagak Tribe. The MOA establishes joint tasks between the Native Village of Kwinhagak and the city to oversee administrative and operation of community facilities. By joining the two governments, the community is able to pool funding, reduce overhead costs, streamline administrative support and provide a single point of contact for residents and visitors alike.




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The final award of the evening was presented to the City and Borough of Juneau for the Bikes, Bikes, Bikes Community Program in the Just a Darn Good Idea category.

The Bikes Program is a partnership between several local non-profits and the CBJ that offers a healthy learning environment for youth and, in turn, provides free bikes for community members to use around town.

The Zach Gordon Youth Center provides a maintenance room where young adults can learn to fix-up and take care of the program's bikes. Members of the community are encouraged to stop by and borrow a bike as a healthy alternative to moving around Juneau.

The winning municipalities submitted a detailed project description of an effective program in their community during the past year. Each program was then compared by a panel of judges with other programs in their respective award category. The Annual Awards categories are set to cover the broad scope of local government services provided by Alaskan municipalities.

The Alaska Municipal League (AML) is a voluntary, nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide organization of over 140 cities, boroughs and unified municipalities in Alaska, representing over 97 percent of Alaska's residents. The League is committed to maintaining and supporting Alaska's local governments and local government leaders. The League provides technical assistance, training, legislative advocacy and information to its members.

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