

Award for Career Development in Memory of L. P. Cookingham



MARK M. LEVIN

Each year, ICMA presents the Award for Career Development to a corporate member who has made a significant contribution to the development of new talent in professional local government management. The award commemorates former ICMA president L. P. (Perry) Cookingham, who is credited with creating the local government internship. This year, ICMA presents the Career Development Award to Mark M. Levin, city administrator of Maryland Heights, Missouri.

During his long tenure in city management, Mark Levin has made a point of dedicating significant time and effort to foster enthusiasm in, and provide learning opportunities for, young people contemplating or entering the profession. As a city manager, adjunct professor, task force member, and, above all, mentor, Mr. Levin has contributed significantly to the development of talent in the profession.

Perhaps the most notable product of his dedication has been the city of Maryland Heights internship program, which began in 1986. By design, the program introduces the interns to all governmental and quasi-governmental functions that take place in our society. Each Friday during the summer, the interns are taken on a field trip to a designated site—the fire station, a construction project, water and sewer facilities, etc.—to gain a true sense of what is involved in providing citizens with the many services they take for granted. Since the program's inception, approximately 50 students have participated, and a significant number have gone on to work in municipal management in one capacity or another.

As chairman of ICMA's Advisory Board of Graduate Education, Mr. Levin has shared his passion for the city's internship program, advocating a nationwide effort to create new municipal management internships and support those already in place. As one of the more tangible results of this effort, ICMA created an Internship Toolkit, which offers guidelines for determining whether an internship program is right for a community and, if it is, how such a program should be created.

Mr. Levin's influence goes beyond the students who find their way to internships and into the classroom. He has taught a variety of local government management courses at a number of graduate schools in the St. Louis area. Many of his public administration students have joined the ranks of city managers; he has even provided a few of them with entry-level positions in order to further their learning and development.

Renowned for his willingness to provide support for young managers and assistants, Mr. Levin goes out of his way to provide insights and examples to other managers seeking ideas, comfort, or advice. By discussing the tough issues and

explaining why he makes the decisions he makes, he helps others find an answer to their problems in a way that encourages them to think, grow, and become better versed in the concepts underlying the municipal management profession.

In the past eight years, the city of Maryland Heights has had four assistants. Each came to the city with limited experience in local government and the desire to gain the knowledge and abilities needed to move on as city manager of another community. Under Mr. Levin's tutelage, each of the four has accomplished this goal.

Under Mr. Levin's careful plan, each assignment has a purpose, each discussion is a lesson, and each mistake is welcomed as a learning opportunity. Robert M. Shatto, the current assistant to the city manager, writes of the time Mr. Levin has spent with him: "These are the things that have allowed me to grow; these are the conversations that allow me to feel comfortable in meetings; and these are the experiences that motivate me to continue on this journey to become the best public servant (city manager) I can become..." Mr. Levin goes above and beyond what is necessary to make sure he is more than a boss or supervisor; he makes sure he is a mentor, someone that aids my development as a future manager and, probably more important, my development as a person." ■