



For more information, contact:  
Kate Hoagland  
Ash Institute  
617-495-4347  
[kate\\_hoagland@harvard.edu](mailto:kate_hoagland@harvard.edu)

## **YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM WINS AWARD FROM HARVARD**

### ***Hampton, VA Program Wins \$100,000 Award***

**Cambridge, Mass., – July 27, 2005** – The City of Hampton’s (VA) Youth Civic Engagement Program has won the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award. The Innovations Award is a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, and is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government. One of six award winners, Youth Civic Engagement will receive a \$100,000 grant to support replication of its significant and creative efforts.

The Hampton program turns the notion of youth as consumers of public services on its head, and instead empowers young people as leaders in their schools, neighborhoods and city government. It engages youth as advisers within a Neighborhood Youth Advisory Board, Teen Advisory Groups for Parks and Recreation, the Superintendent’s Advisory Group and secondary school advisory teams. A special group of 24 young people also serves as the City’s Youth Commission and on other appointed committees throughout the city.

“This program truly harnesses the power of our youth,” said Stephen Goldsmith, Director of the Innovations in American Government Awards. “It gives young people a stake in their communities and at the same time prepares them to assume the reins as leaders in government.” Gowher Rizvi, Director of the Ash Institute, added, “Hampton has changed the social contract with its young citizens, and the city—and the nation as a whole—has benefited greatly because of it.”

High school-aged youth participate based on their commitment to making a positive impact on their peers. As commissioners, they serve as equal voting members on the city's Neighborhood, Unity and Parks and Recreation Commissions. Proposals, developed by two teens employed by the Planning Department, are included as an official element of the city's comprehensive plan, and their approved recommendations are adopted by the City Council as official city policy.

"If we want young people to take interest in their communities and public service, we have to involve them in process – from the ground up," said Patricia McGinnis, President and CEO of the Council for Excellence in Government. "The Youth Civic Engagement program is a model that is exciting, successful and possible for other jurisdictions to replicate."

The City of Hampton's Youth Civic Engagement Program

(<http://www.hampton.gov/foryouth/index.html>) was one of more than 1,000 applicants for the 2005 Innovations in American Government Award. Eighteen finalists delivered a public presentation before the National Selection Committee at Harvard University on May 11, 2005. The Committee, chaired by David R. Gergen of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard, included former Maryland Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, former San Diego Mayor Susan Golding, former White House Deputy Chief of Staff Maria Echaveste and former Congressman William Clinger. The award was presented today in Washington, D.C.

For 18 years, the Innovations in American Government Award has recognized quality and responsiveness at all levels of government, honored government efforts that are creative, effective and address significant problems, and has fostered the replication of innovative approaches to the challenges facing government. The award is a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government.

**The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation** ([www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu)) at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government fosters excellence in government around the world in order to generate and strengthen democracy. Through its awards program, research, publications, curriculum support, and global network, the Institute champions critical milestones in creative and effective governance and democratic practice.

**The Council for Excellence in Government** ([www.excelgov.org](http://www.excelgov.org)) is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to improve government performance by strengthening results-oriented management and creative leadership in the public sector, and to build understanding by focusing public discussion on government's role and responsibilities.

For more information on the Innovations in American Government program and this year's award winners, please visit [www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu) or [www.excelgov.org](http://www.excelgov.org).

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