

## **Sarasota-Manatee wins All-America City Award**

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Posted Jun 16, 2017 at 3:48 PM  
Updated Jun 16, 2017 at 6:00 PM

This year, the National Civic League designation focused on communities engaged in the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

DENVER — The Sarasota-Manatee area has been recognized by the National Civic League with an All-America City Award at a conference here.

Begun in 1949, the All-America City Awards recognize efforts that bring together different sections of a community to tackle pressing issues. The award is given to 10 communities each year, ranging from major cities and regions to towns, villages, counties, neighborhoods and tribes.

This year, the awards focused on communities engaged in the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, which is being implemented in more than 300 regions and more than 40 states across the country. That campaign works to increase the number of students who are reading at or above grade-level by the end of third grade.

The National Civic League cited the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's ability to "innovatively engage families" in the effort to increase reading proficiency.

"Our regional movement has been recognized due to the outstanding partnerships we have in Sarasota and Manatee counties, involving all sectors, dedicated to and centered on the success of our children and their families." said Beth Duda, director of the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.




The awards were presented at GLR Week, which brought together Grade-Level Reading Campaigns and partners to share ideas and learn about successful tactics for increasing reading proficiency in children.

“The Suncoast Campaign brings together strong leadership, powerful ideas and a work ethic that is second to none,” said Ralph Smith, managing director of the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

The Suncoast campaign was represented by Duda, Sarasota County School Superintendent Todd Bowden, Sarasota County Public Housing Director William Russell and Manatee County School Superintendent Diana Greene, as well as representatives from the Patterson Foundation; United Way of Manatee County; Big Brothers, Big Sisters; Community Foundation of Sarasota County; Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, Sarasota County Government and Manatee Public Libraries, among others.

Hundreds of communities applied for the award and there were 27 finalists. Other winners include Kansas City, Missouri; San Antonio; and Springfield, Massachusetts.



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Participants in the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading accept the All-America Cities award in Denver, Colorado, on Friday, June 16, 2017. [Herald-Tribune staff photo / Brian Ries]