Suggested Activities for Georgia Cities Week

Level I Activities

This category allows for **inexpensive, simple celebrations** of Georgia Cities Week. Cities may want to hold just one event or do several throughout the week.

Adopt a Resolution

City Council adopts resolution (sample provided) announcing Georgia Cities Week at regular council meeting

Display City Equipment

Display city equipment, such as fire trucks, police cars, garbage trucks in one place – such as city park -- where public can view them.

- Have department head/mayor/council on hand to answer questions.
- Announce through local media when event will be taking place.
- Have city officials on hand to answer questions.
- May want to post on equipment their costs and the year item was purchased, letting citizens know how city funds are spent.
- Set up poster board displays that indicate:
  - City staff (who they are, responsibilities; required education/training)
  - Hidden infrastructure (# of miles of pipes; what they do; age of infrastructure; information on any projects currently underway)

Tours

Arrange tours of city hall for school groups; explain departments, responsibilities.

- Contact local elementary schools, offer tours and schedule.
- Have designated “tour guide” to lead tours through city hall.
- Discuss on-going projects and any up-coming projects.
- Tours of city facilities may also be scheduled.

Visits/Guest Speakers

Department heads and city officials can visit local schools/civic clubs to discuss the services the city provides or cities in general.

- Contact local schools/civic clubs to offer to visit classes; schedule visits
- Fire fighters, police officers may go to lower grades to explain fire/police protection service the city provides
- City officials, city manager/clerk may want to discuss city government in general with upper grades
- To schedule speakers from GMA’s Speaker’s Bureau, contact Amy Henderson at (678) 686-6226, toll-free outside Atlanta at (888) 488-4462, ext. 126 or email at ahenderson@gmanet.com.

Clean-up Day

A one-day litter pick-up throughout town or limited to the downtown area

- Contact civic groups to ask for participation, particularly Garden Club or Keep Georgia Beautiful*
- Announce through local media the date and times
- Send out announcements on utility bills
- Post information at city hall
- May want city officials to head up "divisions" based on their districts, if applicable

Facts Sheet

Create a one-page flier on facts about the city to give to students

- Include information on the history of the city (incorporation date; how city got its name, interesting facts, etc.); budget information, form of government; who to call at city hall for which services
- Make copies for students to take home to parents

Move Council Meeting to School

Hold regularly scheduled city council meeting at the local high school or junior high to show how council operates

- Contact school principal to see if an assembly can be arranged for the designated day
- Notify public of meeting change (at least 2 weeks in advance)
- Notify all department heads and media of change of venue
- Be prepared to take questions from students following meeting

Town Hall Meeting

Invite the public to a town hall meeting at a location other than City Hall, such as a recreation center or community center, to discuss the community in general, the plans the city has for the future and on-going projects and get community input.

- Find an appropriate location
- Set a time and a date for the meeting. Evenings are usually better, allowing working people to attend
- Advertise the meeting through your local media. Include information on who from the city will be attending the town hall meeting (e.g. mayor and council members, city manager, city clerk, public works supervisor, police chief, etc.)
- Provide attendees with information on who to call at City Hall to report problems or voice complaints.

Recognition Ceremony

Hold a recognition ceremony for city employees and citizens who have contributed to the betterment of the community. Issue resolutions and/or give plaques commemorating their service.

- Ceremony could be included in regular City Council Meeting

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* Resource information on planning a clean up day available through Keep Georgia Beautiful

- If person has been honored by another organization (ie, public works director honored by Georgia Chapter of American Public Works Association), ask that organization to make the award presentation at the ceremony
- Contact your local newspaper about doing a feature story on the person(s) you have selected to receive the award.

Invite Other Groups to City Hall

During the week, invite civic clubs to hold their meetings at City Hall.

Essay Contest

Conduct an essay contest around the theme "If I Were Mayor, I Would . . ." or create your own.

- Ask 6th grade teachers to have students participate in essay contest
- Set deadline for essays to be turned in
- Choose selection panel to select winning essay(s)
- Recognize student(s) and parents at Council meeting and, if possible, award prizes.

Lunch in the Park

Sponsor a community-wide lunch in the park with local entertainment.

- Select a time and place for the lunch
- Invite a local band or high school band or chorus to perform
- Publicize event in local media
- Prepare a contingency plan in case of inclement weather.

Press Visits

Make appearances on local radio/television shows to discuss city government.

- Schedule appearances at least one week in advance
- Be prepared to discuss the importance of city government, services provided, city's history, etc.

Newspaper Coverage

- Submit a guest column from the mayor
- Encourage local paper to prepare a special series or section of paper on the city and services it provides or on the history of the cities in the area

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Level II

These activities take a little more time to plan and employee/funding resources.

Open House

Invite the public to an open house at City Hall.

- Publicize event well in advance
- Have appropriate staff on hand to offer guided tours and answer questions
- Provide “hand-outs” summarizing city department responsibilities and a “tip sheet” on who to call within city government
- Provide cookies/punch for the public (may want to ask a local retailer or Chamber of Commerce to sponsor refreshments)
- If holding an art contest (see next item) display art on walls during Open House

Art Contest

Sponsor an art contest for children ages 5-12; display artwork at City Hall

- Ask local newspaper to partner in this project
- Ask local businesses to promote the contest through posters/flyers
- Six weeks ahead, begin soliciting art in the paper
- Set a one-month deadline
- Use the enclosed black and white Georgia Cities Week art or create your own theme such as:
  - “How I See My City”
  - “Historical Buildings in the City” (or designate a historical building)
  - “Services Cities Provide”
- Select committee (city employees, business owners, media, etc) to pick winners
- Select winners according to age groups
- Honor winners at City Council meeting

Home Ownership Seminar

Sponsor a seminar on homeownership for residents.

- Invite banks/lending agencies, Realtors and neighborhood associations to participate
- Invite local garden clubs/Extension Service agents to talk about seasonal plantings and creating attractive yards
- Hold the event at a central location
- Discuss how to become a homeowner and responsibilities of ownership
- Provide information on services the city provides (trash pickup, recycling, zoning, etc)

Parade

Hold a parade of city equipment, departments.

- Invite civic groups, schools to participate
- Publicize event well in advance
- May want to conclude with a picnic in a city park

Trivia Quiz

Sponsor a City Trivia Quiz throughout the week

- Create trivia questions for the week; may want to include city's history, form of government, budget, services, etc.
- Partner with local media – radio, newspaper or television – to ask questions
- Ask Downtown businesses to donate prizes for winners (line up prizes at least one month in advance)

Business Breakfast

Invite local businesses to a breakfast with city officials.

Use Social Media

If your city has a Facebook page, use it to celebrate!

- Where in Your City photo contest – post a photo of some item in your city (a plaque, monument, etc.) and ask the city's Facebook Friends to identify the item
- Post trivia questions on Facebook and Twitter
- Use Twitter and Facebook to promote all your other Georgia Cities Week Events

Legislative Tour

Take your legislative delegation on a tour of your city and showcase achievements, how state grants/loans have been used and where challenges remain.

- Invite other cities in your county or region to participate with you.
- Set a schedule of what you'd like to show your legislators.
- Work with your legislators to find a day that works for most of them
- Provide them with written information; for example, if your city received a GEFA loan, how much the loan was for, the city's investment and how the funds have improved services and/or quality of life for your citizens.
- Have appropriate city employees on hand to answer any questions
- Be sure to say '"thank you" for any support your city has received from the state!

Mix it Up with Cooking Contests

- Recognize the farmers and cooks in your community with a farm-to-table contest or demonstration of recipes made from locally-sourced items.
- Coordinate with your local Farm Bureau and/or Extension Agent Office to establish rules, if a contest, or experts if a demonstration
- Select judges, if holding a contest
- Set the time and place for the event; if you have a Farmers' Market, that would be an ideal partnership
- Notify the media and the public through social media and word-of-mouth
- Select winners during event
- Publicize the results

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Level III

This level requires more elaborate planning and/or funding.

Shadowing

Work with junior high or high school to allow students to "shadow" city officials at work

- Contact civics/government teacher to discuss using shadowing as an aid to teaching local government
- Pick one day where the students will be matched up with a department director (more than one student may be matched with city staffer)
- Week before date, provide students with job descriptions/requirements for city positions
- Begin the day with a briefing at city hall and have the student(s) follow the department director in his/her duties for the morning
- Meet again at lunch for a debriefing and a Q&A session

Mock City Council Meeting[+]

One of the most common forms of participation, allows students to experience city government.

- Begins with an election among junior/senior high school students for positions in city government. Or, teacher may assign positions
- Students are given a real life scenario and the various positions interested parties would have on the issue
- Public officials, business leaders, neighborhood associations may visit classroom in the week before the mock council meeting to discuss how they would respond to the scenario
- The mock council meeting is usually held during a school assembly, with student "elected" officials conduct meeting, and participation of students designated as "department heads," "public" and "press"
- City officials and city staff may want to be present for mock council meeting to add support, visibility.

Mock City Council Meeting II

Another way of doing this is for elected officials to either go to the schools or invite students to City Hall for a mock meeting conducted by the city officials.

- Cities may want to prepare an agenda that highlights some of the issues students are most concerned with, such as debate about a curfew or parks and recreation.
- Prepare the agenda well in advance and allow students an opportunity to review it (usually at least a week in advance of meeting)
- If students are to play the roles of department heads, the public and the press at the council meeting, give them job descriptions, what their roles at the meeting would be and concerns each group might have about items on the agenda

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[+] See insert on Mock City Council Meeting for timeline, design of Mock Council Meetings

Storytelling Contest

Invite members of your community, or specific age groups such as 15-24 year olds, to tell their story of your city through video, pictures or in words. You can use the theme of Georgia Cities Week, “People, Place, Purpose” as the theme for the contest, ie, tell the story of a person who was instrumental in your city’s development or tell the story of a place in the city that holds special meaning to the individual. Or you may choose a different or no theme for the contest.

- Feature the entries on your website and/or Facebook page
- For video entries, consider a “screening” party where the community can get together to view the entries.
- Decide how winners will be selected: An open community vote or judges?
- Celebrate the winners!

Quiz Show

Host a quiz show for area teens.
May be used for junior high or high school students
Contact teacher to discuss the Quiz Show plan and format

- Select date/time and place for quiz show (may be at school assembly, civic club meeting, etc.)
- Select emcee to read questions
- Develop questions, focusing on role and responsibility of city government and its services, city history and facts about the city.
- The format for the show may run as follows:
  - Two teams with three “contestants” each
  - Each contestant has a bell to ring to signify an answer
  - Emcee asks the question, first team to ring in is allowed to answer
  - Contestants may consult with team members, but can’t go over 30 seconds
  - If the answer is incorrect, the other team has 30 seconds to answer.
  - Points should be awarded for each correct answer; no points given for incorrect or incomplete answers
  - Winners are determined by the highest number of points
  - The winning team should be honored at the next City Council meeting
  - Local businesses may be willing to donate additional prizes for the winners and “runners up.”
- May be aired on local access television station, where available

Career Day

Introduce high school students to the career opportunities available in city government.

- Schedule a career day at the high school through the school counselor’s office or find out if a career day is already scheduled for juniors and seniors and if the city may participate
- Work with City Manager or Human Resources Department to gather job descriptions/requirements for positions within city government

- Ask department heads/employees to be on hand at career day to answer questions concerning what they do, what education/training is required

Scavenger Hunt

Send your citizens on a scavenger hunt for information and history about your city.

- Create a form with questions for citizens to answer, such as "According to the monument in the town square, where did General Whatshisface go after founding the City of Celebration?"
- Locations to send them to can include city cemeteries, utility departments, recreational facilities, etc.
- Ask for a signature from a downtown merchant on the form
- Make forms available at a central location, such as City Hall or Visitors Center, or at several merchants
- Correctly completed forms should be turned in to the city and a drawing held to award a prize or prizes.

On-Line Scavenger Hunt

If your city has a website, you may want to adapt the scavenger hunt to help educate your citizens about the website and accustom them to finding information on your site.

- Create a form that can either be picked up in a central location or downloaded from the website.
- Ask questions such as, "What is the City of Celebration's average police response rate?" and give information on where to find the information on the site.
- Be sure to ask for a signature on the form from a downtown business!
- Forms should be turned into City Hall and a winner drawn from the correctly completed forms.

City 5K-Fun Run

Get your people moving! Organize a fun-run and/or 5K that shows off your downtown and your Parks and Rec. Department. Invite local clinics or hospitals to provide wellness screenings after the race and information on good nutrition, proper exercise and the importance of seeing a doctor on a regular basis. If your event ends in a city part, you may want to combine this with an equipment display or city festival.

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