



Civic Action

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Yes, Virginia, There are Good Examples of Police-Community Relations

By Doug Linkhart, President of NCL

The media coverage of the past few years has highlighted some serious problems in police-community relations, particularly among police officers and people of color. Thankfully, this attention is leading to some much-needed conversations and reforms.

At the same time, it's important to note that there are many communities where police and community members work harmoniously to keep their communities safe. Some of the winners of our All-America City awards demonstrate benefits that can be realized from this kind of positive civic engagement.



Let's start with Virginia, where the City of Norfolk, a city in which civic engagement is a way of life, where community leaders and police have created the Redefining Community Campaign. The goal of this campaign is to cultivate trust and mutual respect among community members and police, with special attention to racial perceptions and relations.

Across the country, Spokane, Washington has been a model of community policing for decades. One of their recent projects is the Youth and Police Initiative (YPI), an early intervention and prevention program that works to build trust in the law while reducing stereotypes by providing training, team-building and role playing to create productive relationships among youth and police officers.

Up north, in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, the police department works hand-in-hand with the school district to mentor kids, improve attendance and performance, and engage kids in positive relationships with police. The city has created a Peace Park and Police and Fire Tribute of Peace, and the police department offers "Shop with a Cop," "Coffee with a Cop," and "Eat and Greets."

As we join the rest of the country in mourning the deaths of the police officers in Dallas, as well as the recent victims of police shootings, NCL will continue its commitment to identify and share examples of what's possible, initiatives that demonstrate the kind of civic engagement that all communities should enjoy.