

Realtors® Care Day 'is best model we've seen'

Association wins Ambassadors for Cities Award for second time

By Susan Shackelford

This year the Charlotte Regional Realtor® Association became the first Realtor® organization in the country to win the national Ambassadors for Cities Award for a second time.

The association won the 2010 award for its partnership with the City of Charlotte on Realtors® Care Day (RCD), along with \$5,000 in funding to be used toward the project. The association received the honor in 2005 for its partnership with the city on the Home GiveawaySM. In both cases, the partnership was through the association's Housing Opportunity Foundation.

Cooperative mission

Sponsored by the National Association of Realtors® (NAR) and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the award began in 2003 to encourage cooperation between Realtors® and their respective city officials to increase affordable housing opportunities.

The association received the award at a ceremony on RCD April 23 at the Allen Street launch site. "This is an incredibly active Realtor® board, and generating more than 600 volunteers over 30 sites, doing major work in the community, is testimony to the association's creativity," said Dave Gatton, director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Council for the New American City.

"We would like to take this (RCD) model and encourage other boards to adapt it to their locations," Gatton said in an interview at the ceremony. "The model is unique based on the number of volunteers, the collaboration with the city and nonprofit sector, and the many local companies providing materials and in-kind contributions. To put all that together in a single

day is quite a collaboration, and shows when people work together they can help a lot of people.

"Realtors® really are ambassadors for their communities," Gatton continued. "Many people aren't likely to speak to city officials or walk into city hall, but they are likely to talk to a Realtor®. Realtors® influence the impressions people have of a community."

Lora McCray, director of NAR's Housing Opportunity Program, said RCD stands out nationally "in terms of scale and intensity. It's the best model we've seen because there are so many partners and they make so much happen."

McCray and Chris Clemons, chair of NAR's Housing Opportunity Committee, also attended the award ceremony. "It's amazing what they (association members) have put together and the great numbers they have involved — y'all are the best," said Clemons, who lived in Charlotte in the 1960s and today is a Realtor® in Cape May, N.J.

Widespread support among officials

This association's relationship with elected officials was clear during RCD. A dozen office-holders, including Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx, took time to visit 19 of the work sites. In addition, thanks to the efforts of many people, eight area municipalities adopted proclamations honoring National Fair Housing Month and noted RCD as part of the effort.

When Conference of Mayors representative Dave Gatton left for the airport on RCD, his excitement was evident. "This has been the most incredible experience ... we need to replicate this project so that Realtors® Care Day appears nationwide," he said. **RR**



Local elected officials and representatives from the National Association of Realtors® (NAR) and U.S. Conference of Mayors present the association with the Ambassadors for Cities Award.