Springfield’s Holt receives 2019 City Manager of the Year Award

MEMPHIS, Tenn. ----- With a history almost as old as the state of Tennessee itself, the city of Springfield has long served as a commercial and cultural center for the surrounding agricultural community.

In a time when many rural communities are struggling, the city of Springfield continues to flourish. One of the city’s greatest assets is undoubtedly its city manager, Gina Holt, who has served Springfield for nearly 30 years.

The first female city manager in Springfield’s history, Holt’s passion and ambition for Springfield has earned her numerous accolades, including being profiled in ICMA’s Public Management magazine in March of last year.

It is for this reason that the Tennessee City Management Association (TCMA) has recognized Gina Holt as its City Manager of the Year for 2019. Holt was presented the award Tuesday, June 25, 2019, at the 80th Annual Conference of the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) held at the Memphis Convention Center.

The award is presented each year to acknowledge Tennessee managers, administrators, or assistants who have made exceptional contributions to their community and profession.

Holt’s career in public service began after college. Intent on entering the business world, Holt soon found herself working for the federal government in Washington, D.C. She worked in the White House for President Ronald Reagan’s Office of Management and Budget, as well as served a stint at the U.S. State Department. She also served on Senator Howard Baker’s staff in Washington along with another young Tennessean by the name of Bill Haslam.

Returning to Tennessee, Holt continued her public service career on the local level. During her time with the city of Springfield, she was instrumental in the development and creation of the Tennessee Energy Acquisition Corporation (TEAC) in 1996. TEAC began as a joint venture originating from Springfield and Clarksville for increased natural gas buying power to lower costs for ratepayers. It has grown into a regional, nonprofit public corporation serving publicly owned natural gas distribution systems and more than 480,000 natural gas customers.

Another visionary project Holt helped spearhead was Playground 2000, a program that launched in 2000 and is still operational at a city park today. She has been integral in the planning of and continues to oversee a tremendous downtown revitalization effort that has capitalized on the regional growth and new energy. This revitalization transformed the historic downtown of Springfield from a deserted area to a vibrant, merchant-filled place of pride for the community.
She also played a key role working with other local leaders in consolidating the E-911 dispatching service across all of Robertson County. The consolidation allowed for pooled resources and cut costs for dispatching services.

She was on the leading edge of the trend among public entities to self-fund their health insurance plan. Because of her effort and fiscally sound plan management, the city has saved employees and taxpayers millions of dollars in premium payments that are no longer necessary. In fact, the city has had two straight years without a premium increase – a remarkable feat in the modern healthcare market.

Beyond her role with the city of Springfield, Holt has always made time to serve other organizations when needed. She was on the board of the TML Risk Management Pool – now Public Entity Partners – for nine years. She is an alumnus of the 2003 class of Leadership Middle Tennessee and later served on the board of directors. She is an active member, past board member, and past-president of the Tennessee City Management Association. She is also a member of the International City/County Management Association. Additionally, she has served as a board member of the Tennessee Municipal League.

“Gina has exemplified dedication to the profession,” Springfield Assistant City Manager Ryan Martin said. “She has established a legacy and example of what selfless service should look like.”

Holt is also active in numerous civic and local organizations in her hometown. She is an active member of the Springfield Baptist Church and is an active member and past-president of the Springfield Kiwanis Club. She is also currently serving on the board of directors of the Robertson County Chamber of Commerce.

The Tennessee City Management Association is a professional association of appointed city managers and administrators and assistants that focuses on providing continuing education, technical assistance, training, and information resources to its 120 members. Managers are appointed by their elected boards to oversee the day-to-day operations of their cities or towns. Professional administrators work in partnership with their elected boards to create excellence in local governance.