



District of Columbia Appleseed is an independent nonprofit organization that works to solve problems affecting the daily lives of those who live and work in the District of Columbia area—from health care to voting representation to education reform to environmental concerns to jobs and housing.

For several years, DC Appleseed has been looking for ways to give District residents and the city's large non-resident workforce the opportunity to participate in the process we are engaged in every day—devising constructive ways to solve problems affecting their lives, and advocating for these solutions until they are implemented.

We believe that area residents—the people most affected by the District's problems—should always have a mechanism for bringing their ideas for solving problems to city decision-makers. DC Appleseed's *Solving DC Problems Campaign 2006* was undertaken to provide area residents with such a mechanism. We did so at a time when we think such a mechanism would be most effective—a time of transition between mayoral administrations.

#### **Solving DC Problems Campaign 2006**

DC Appleseed's *Solving DC Problems Campaign 2006* began on March 30, 2006 and ended on June 5, 2006. The purpose had several purposes:

## INTRODUCTION

- Solicit and gather ideas of District of Columbia residents and the city's large non-resident workforce on (a) what they believe to be the District's biggest problems and (b) how to solve them.
- Compile collected wisdom in a clear, user-friendly format and present the information to the public, including government officials and candidates for public office campaigning the local 2006 elections.
- Facilitate voter registration and participation in the District.
- Stimulate constructive dialogue between District residents, the District's large resident and non-resident workforce, and the public officials who govern the jurisdiction where they live and work.
- Make the most pressing concerns of area residents part of the debate in the local 2006 elections and create a publicly-molded "platform" for the new leaders of the Nation's Capital.
- Identify ways to implement the best and most feasible solutions proposed as part of the initiative.

#### **Phase One:**

##### **Facilitating Dialogue, Gathering Ideas**

To achieve the purposes described above, DC Appleseed launched *Solving DC Problems Campaign 2006*, asking residents of the National Capital area to submit ideas about the District of Columbia's biggest problems and how they think they should be solved.

As incentive, we made it a contest: the best idea received \$5,000, the second-best \$2,500, and the third-best \$1,000.

The contest was very successful in generating ideas. Between March 30, 2006, and May 5, 2006, nearly 1,200 ideas were submitted online and via fax and mail by residents of all eight of the District's Wards and surrounding states, including Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Submissions are posted at [www.solvingDCproblems.com](http://www.solvingDCproblems.com) and viewable by topic or geographically (by home jurisdiction of entrant). Visitors to the website may read and/or comment on posted ideas.

Once all of the ideas were submitted, a panel of 16 judges (DC Appleseed staff and Board members) narrowed the pool of ideas to 20 finalists. These 20 finalists were announced and posted online on May 18. The public voted online through June 2 to select the three winners. We announced those winners on June 5. The three winners presented their ideas to the District's Mayoral candidates at a forum on June 8. The 20 finalists and winning ideas are featured throughout this book

We also held a special *Solving DC Problems* contest for K-12 students in the District. District students submitted over 250 ideas for solving District problems. Our panel of judges selected the best idea from each grade level—elementary (K-4), middle (5-8), and high school (9-12)—and one best overall idea. Winners of the school contest were also announced on June 5. The winning student ideas are also featured throughout this book

The student with the best overall idea presented her idea to the 2006 Mayoral candidates at a June 8 Mayoral Forum along with the three adult winners. And on June 12, during pre-game activities, the Washington Nationals Baseball Club honored the winning students on the field at RFK Stadium before the Nationals play the Colorado Rockies.

In addition, Stuart Hobson Middle School in Northeast D.C., the school with the highest participation in the contest, is now working with Johnson's Florist and Garden Centers and landscape architects from the firm Oehme, van Sweden & Associates on its prize—the free installation of a “learning garden” on its campus.

## **Phase Two: Presenting Collected Wisdom, Encouraging Ongoing Participation**

This book summarizes the nearly 1,500 ideas for solving problems facing the District that were submitted during *Solving DC Problems Campaign 2006*. DC Appleseed has attempted to present the ideas objectively—without editorial comments. Accordingly, the views expressed in this book are the views of the individual participants of *Solving DC Problems Campaign 2006* and do not necessarily reflect the views of DC Appleseed.

The ideas cover a broad variety of issues, which we have categorized by topic in chapters on:

- Governance & Fiscal Policy
- Education
- Public Safety
- Transportation
- Real Estate & Housing
- Health
- Social Services
- Public Works & the Environment
- Arts, Recreation & Tourism

We have also devoted a Chapter specifically to the ideas of students in the District. Although the kids' ideas cover almost all of the same issues as the adults, we believed the ideas grouped together form a powerful statement of the issues facing our city's students.

We hope this book will be used as a reference tool by the District's leaders and government officials to help inform their work in coming years. Although the book is only a summary of the ideas, each of the ideas may be viewed in its entirety at [www.solvingDCproblems.com](http://www.solvingDCproblems.com).

We also hope this book will inspire area residents to share creative, constructive ideas for solving District problems and take advantage of every possible opportunity to have their voices heard. The *Solving DC Problems* website—[www.solvingDCproblems.com](http://www.solvingDCproblems.com)—is available for the submission of ideas. In addition to submitting ideas, the website allows individuals to email their ideas or the ideas of others to public officials, and read and comment on all submitted ideas.