

## News Release

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### Nine projects receive recognition for services to rural communities

*'Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin' awards to be presented Feb. 22 in Madison*

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers will recognize nine projects that provide services to their rural communities, enriching the quality of life in rural Wisconsin.

“The small towns and rural communities that dot Wisconsin’s landscape make valuable contributions to our state’s heritage,” Evers said. “The talented individuals and organizations accepting “Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin” awards have made a commitment to their schools, libraries, and communities.”

A noon ceremony to recognize the nine projects receiving awards will be held at the State Capitol in Madison on Feb. 22. Projects receiving “Standing Up for Rural Schools, Libraries and Communities” awards are

**2009 Coleman High School Career Fair: Acres of Diamonds in Our Own Backyard** brought more than 90 presenters in 16 career clusters to Coleman High School for the first-ever career fair. More than a third of the presenters were high school alumni, which demonstrated the varied career possibilities for graduates of small rural schools. Support for the fair came from the Cougar County Business Association, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, staff from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and University of Wisconsin College Marinette as well as a number of local businesses. Dr. Robert Werley, Coleman district administrator, nominated the program and will attend the ceremony to accept the award.

**Education through the Arts** is founded on three school and community partnerships that enrich and enhance education at Washington Island School. Dramatic Arts in Education teaches the students the fundamentals of theater, with a focus on imagination, improvisation, puppetry, and acting. The drama club offers older students the full range of theater skills and culminates with plays for the school and community. Dan Hansen, teacher, composer, and performer, presents weekly lessons for kindergarten through eighth-grade students. As part of the Music Festival Committee partnership, he works to bring in area musicians to perform and teach as well. The Miller Art Museum Master Artists Picture Program is run by volunteer presenters from the community who augment the services of Tom Hokkanen, the school’s only art teacher. Students learn art appreciation and history through interactions with caring and talented community members who share their love, understanding, and appreciation of the visual arts. Dr. Susan Churchill-Chastan, Washington Island School district administrator, nominated the program and will attend the ceremony to accept the award.

**Food-4-Thought** began in early summer 2008 as a grassroots effort by parents and teachers in the elementary schools of the Prairie du Chien Area, Seneca, and Wauzeka-Steuben school districts to establish healthy eating habits by teaching students about the path from farm to fork. Through an early grant, two part-time AmeriCorps members worked closely with teachers,

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parents, the PTO, food service staff, and local farmers to procure foods, build a school garden, and develop school-based education programs. Community businesses, civic organizations, and individuals have donated generously of their time, money, and services to make the project a success. Garth Frable, Prairie du Chien city planner, nominated the program. Kathleen Hein, Farm-to-School coordinator, and Marty Green, AmeriCorps member, will attend the awards ceremony to accept the award. A number of teachers, farmers, and community members who contribute to Food-4-Thought also will attend the program.

**Green and Growing: Washburn School District Garden Project** gets all of the district's 560 students involved in preparing the soil, determining how much seed is need for the class's assigned crop, then planting, tending, and harvesting the crop and composting waste. Throughout the school year, fresh produce is incorporated into menus for the school breakfast and lunch programs. Rich with community partnerships, two AmeriCorps Farm-to-School members deliver nutrition education in classrooms and in the garden, inmates from the Bayfield County jail weed and water during summer break, Northland College's Outdoor Education program and the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute work with school personnel to evaluate a Green and Healthy curriculum, and local businesses provide materials and services to support the project. Susan Masterson, Washburn School District administrator, will attend the program to accept the award. Sharon Steward, Rural Advisory Council member, made the nomination.

**Parent University** is an annual event by Flambeau's Community Education program to support parents' efforts to strengthen the academic and personal success of their children. The free event fosters collaborative efforts among parents, educators, and community members. Mini-sessions to address parental concerns range from homework help, creative and academic enrichment, college transitions, and dealing with risk behaviors including alcohol, drugs, teen sex, and cyber bullying. The sessions are presented by local individuals and organizations. Sharalyn Overhagen, community education secretary, and Connie Gasior, PK-12 principal, will accept the award. Other community members active in Parent University's success also will attend.

**Sober Cruising** is a cross-community collaboration project by New Paradigm Partners Inc. The project identified assets within each of five participating communities and brought youth together for weekly events during the summer. The 40 participating middle school youth swam in Birchwood, learned about a small movie theater in Bruce, discovered the interpretive center and trails near New Auburn, met retiree pilots in Shell Lake who took the youth for a test ride, raked leaves for older home owners, and attended other team building events, highlighting healthy, alcohol-free choices for youth within rural communities. Support for Sober Cruising has led to additional events during the year, plans for a full summer, community connections for youth that teach and develop leadership and collaboration skills, and new partnerships including guitar lessons and an aviation club for youth. Jim Goodpaster, project coordinator for New Paradigm Partners Inc., nominated the project and will attend the awards ceremony along with other project coordinators and student representatives from the Birchwood, Shell Lake, New Auburn, Northwood, and Luck school districts.

**Splash of Red Cranberry Tours**, an outgrowth of the Pittsville High School Cranberry Science class, have grown from five tours and 60 guests the first year to more than 600 guests from every state in the nation as well as visitors from Germany, Japan, Canada, and Australia. Developed by William Urban, Pittsville agriculture education instructor, the student-led tours provide a comprehensive and interactive look at a cranberry operation, giving students an opportunity to teach what they've learned in class and practice public speaking and leadership skills while boosting local tourism. The grower insisted that money from the tours help increase scholarship and travel opportunities for students and FFA members. Students, Abby Swoboda and Amy Miner, will attend the award ceremony, along with other students and guests involved in the community project, to accept the award.

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**Together for Jackson County Kids**, an anti-drug and community-building project, seeks to improve the lives of Jackson County youth through a variety of collaborative efforts. The coalition works with community-based, youth-serving organizations and sponsors a number of safe and healthy activities for youth. Financial resources support training, community and parent education programs, and activities to reduce tobacco use and underage drinking in the county. Coalition members include the Jackson County Department of Health and Human Services; Black River Falls, Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan, and Melrose-Mindoro school districts; Jackson County law enforcement; the Ho-Chunk Nation; and Boys and Girls Club of Jackson County. Barbara Blackdeer Mackenzie, a Rural Advisory Council member, nominated the program. Lisa Hodge, project director and grant manager; Bill Van Meer, Alma Center district administrator; Kristi Hanson, Jackson County Public Health; and Outreach Coordinators Brody Bayus and Sara Sexton will accept the award.

**Wilton Public Library Literacy Outreach** offers a number of activities. In the summer, the library brings volunteers from the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse to tutor Hispanic children from the Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton School District who live in the village and surrounding communities to help students retain school year reading growth. Additionally each week of the summer, special guests present on a thematic topic. The program culminates with a celebration that brings families and children together. Year-long library outreach programs include preschool story times and playgroups. Additionally, the Wilton Public Library provides the only public Internet access for economically disadvantaged children and their families, serving technology literacy needs for the community. Karen Carr, Wilton Public Library director, and Kate Oganowski, peer group mentor for the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, will attend the ceremony to accept the award.

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**NOTE:** This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2010\\_24.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2010_24.pdf). A photo gallery from the awards program will be available on the Department of Public Instruction website at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/photos.html>. Links to photos and video submitted by award recipients also will be available on the photo gallery page.