

News Release

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Evers recognizes nine projects that enrich life in rural Wisconsin

‘Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin’ awards to be presented March 12 in Madison

MADISON — Projects that foster partnerships and develop the habits of literacy, farm safety, environmental stewardship, and community service are among nine that State Superintendent Tony Evers will recognize with “Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin Schools, Libraries, and Communities” awards March 12 in Madison.

“These projects support the foundation of their rural communities and help students find a place and purpose in their lives,” Evers said. “The individuals and organizations that have come together to create these projects have truly embraced the importance of keeping rural Wisconsin strong for today and into the future.”

Information about each of the projects receiving “Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin Schools, Libraries, and Communities” awards follows.

Auburndale Farm Safety Program helps students develop habits of farm safety, beginning in elementary school. Farm Safety Day is a partnership between the Auburndale School FFA, Liquid Coin Dairy, Sherry Tired Iron Tractor Club, and the Sherry Volunteer Fire Department. Students in fourth and fifth grades visit the 500-cow Liquid Coin Dairy. A farm tour highlights the dangers and hazards of a modern dairy farm. The fire department conducts first responder practice, emphasizing trauma training and critical 911 communications. In partnership with the class, the dairy and tractor club donate Personal Protective Equipment (ear muffs and safety glasses) for each class participant. Additionally, approximately 40 students, ages 12 to 14, take the University of Wisconsin Extension Tractor Safety Program at the high school, learning how to safely operate a tractor on the highway. Accepting the award will be Mark Cournoyer, teacher at Auburndale High School.

Baby Time, Toddler Time, Rhyme Time are outreach programs linked to the Weyauwega-Fremont School District’s 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) program. The Weyauwega Public Library and Neuschafer Community Library in Fremont host these programs to provide academic, developmental, and social enrichment for children 4 years of age and under. The libraries introduce other services for children and adults, creating habits of literacy that last beyond children’s school-age years. In conjunction with the programs, the school district offers formal services to 3- and 4-year-olds who qualify for special education services as well as outreach for parents to help them identify their child’s needs so they start school ready to learn. Accepting the award will be Traci Zietlow, 4K teacher in the Weyauwega-Fremont School District.

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Cardinal Grill was an outreach effort by the administrative team for the Crandon School District to introduce themselves to the community prior to the start of the 2011-12 school year. Barbeque sandwiches offered on the courthouse square in June, July, and August, were served to more than 800 community members, allowing them to get to know the administrators, two of whom were new and one of whom has expanded duties. Support from the local Chamber of Commerce and Palubicki's Eats and Treats was critical to the success of the activity. Patrons included the courthouse staff, members of the Forest County Potawatomi Tribe, and other community members. A secondary benefit of the grill was \$600 raised to begin the district's Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) initiative. Accepting the award will be District Administrator Jim Asher and Associate Principal and Activities Director Andy Space.

CornerStone Custom Builders Inc. and Northland Pines High School Building Trades Partnership continues a 20-year tradition of constructing a house to provide practical experience to the school's Building Trades Class, which was in jeopardy because of the declining economy and school district budget constraints. CornerStone Custom Builders Inc. supplied materials, eliminating much of the district's financial risk. By bringing in subcontractors and allowing students to see all the stages of home building at their Eagle River factory, CornerStone Custom Builders Inc. has expanded students' learning opportunities to include electrical; drywall; heating, ventilation, and cooling; plumbing; and cabinetry. The partnership has grown to a dozen community businesses that say they are proud to sponsor the program and "feel the hands-on opportunity given to students seeking to enter the building trades profession is invaluable." Accepting the award will be Mike Richie, Northland Pines district administrator, and Glenn Schiffman, owner of CornerStone Custom Builders Inc.

Environmental Challenge is an environmental education and service learning program designed to teach students how to identify and solve a local natural resource issue. In the first phase, eighth-grade students investigate natural resource problems and develop reasonable, workable, and affordable solutions. Students present their chosen solutions to resource professionals, school administrators, and community members for evaluation at an Environmental Fair. In the second phase, a high school teacher, college intern, and up to eight high school students implement the solution during the district's summer school session. Students can earn one-half credit in science for participating in the project. The Rusk County Land and Water Conservation Department provides engineering and design support and coordinates the financial and day-to-day planning. The Wildlife Restoration Association, the local wildlife habitat and sportsman club, provides funding for the college intern, student stipends, construction materials, and a full-time volunteer to assist with implementation. Over the years, partnerships have been formed with area school districts, including the Bruce, Flambeau, and Ladysmith school districts. Accepting the award will be Jerry Carow, president of the Wildlife Restoration Association, and Brian Groothusen, science teacher at Ladysmith High School.

Grow Your Own Healthcare Workers is a partnership of the Scenic Rivers Area Health Education Center, headquartered in Cashton, Wisconsin HealthCorps, and the Cashton, La Crosse, La Farge, North Crawford, Viroqua, and Whitehall school districts. Scenic Rivers Area Health Education Center funds, trains, and supervises a Wisconsin HealthCorps member who works with area high schools to encourage health professional careers. The college intern mentors high school students interested in health careers and creates educational opportunities in the areas of public and teen health issues. Activities include taking field trips to area hospitals, developing local Health Occupations Students of America chapters, preparing students to take the Certified Nursing Assistant exam, and assisting with college applications and scholarship essays. Accepting the award will be Martha McCabe, executive director of Scenic Rivers Area Health Education Center; Lisa Olson, program manager for Wisconsin HealthCorps; and Samantha Kraft, Wisconsin HealthCorps member.

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Edward U. Demmer Memorial Library and Three Lakes School District Story Hour Reading Program began in 1963 to introduce reading and provide socialization activities for the community's youngsters. When the district began its kindergarten program in 1967, Story Hour lowered the minimum age requirement to offer literacy skills to younger children. In 1971, the Edward U. Demmer Foundation provided funding to construct a new library building, and Mrs. Demmer suggested dedicating the lower level to facilitate Story Hour. For nearly five decades, thousands of children have had their lives enriched through the sing, read, and play adventures offering during Story Hour. Story Hour takes place weekly during the school year both at the library and at Sugar Camp School, with 15 to 20 children participating at each venue. Adult programs are offered concurrently with Story Hour to further serve community needs. Funding for Story Hour comes through the collaboration of the Three Lakes School District, Demmer Memorial Library, and the towns of Three Lakes and Sugar Camp. Accepting the award will be Janet Dixon, library director for Demmer Memorial Library; Charlotte Horant, story hour director; Vicki Reuling, president of the Demmer Memorial Library Board of Trustees; Dianna Blicharz, representative from Three Lakes School District and member of the Demmer Memorial Library Board; and Tom Rulseh, member, Three Lakes School Board.

Life Skills Class started as a trial transition experience to teach students the life skills necessary for independent living. The program, which now provides annual festivities between students and senior citizens and lunch served by students on Mondays and Fridays, has become an important resource for networking and community interaction in Mercer. The annual Thanksgiving Feast has students working months in advance to prepare the menu, make flyers, and arrange transportation. The bonds being formed in the community have led to donations from a number of organizations to purchase computers. A soup luncheon and open house is planned to recognize donors. Accepting the award will be Irene Rice, special education teacher from the Mercer School District, and Kelly Kohegyi, president of the Mercer School Board.

The Shakespeare Project brings together River Valley Middle School students and members of the American Players Theatre. Students study the play that will be performed the next season and attend workshops by an American Players Theatre actor. Interested students work after school hours with middle school staff to produce the play. Students are involved in set design, learn how to run sound and lights as well as act in the play. Daytime performances are presented for the entire middle school and the district's fifth-graders; an evening performance is offered for parents and community members. Many American Players Theatre actors also attend the performances. The following fall, middle school students and staff attend a professional production of the play. The project brings together a number of community groups that help offset production and field trip costs. Accepting the award will be River Valley School District teachers: Martina Adesokun and Tina Benish-Holmes, language arts; Tony Cavagnetto, instrumental music; Nick Ehlinger, vocal, general music, and drama; Susie Hauri, reading; and Sue Quale, art.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2012_40.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>.