

News Release

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Projects that enrich rural Wisconsin to receive awards

Evers to present nine 'Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin' awards on Friday

MADISON — Projects that link school food service programs with local food producers, provide professional training and networking opportunities to rural librarians, and promote lifelong wellness through high-quality recreational activities are among nine that State Superintendent Tony Evers will recognize with “Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin Schools, Libraries, and Communities” awards Feb. 1 in Madison.

“Educational excellence and community building exist throughout rural Wisconsin,” Evers said. “These individuals and organizations exemplify the wonderful work that is going on each day in support of our students and communities.”

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

Adams Community Theatre (ACT) is more than the restored 1946 Adams Theatre building. ACT is a group of local residents whose time, talent, and energy are creating a home for the arts on Main Street in Adams. The nonprofit group purchased the theatre building in February 2012. Since then, ACT has replaced the roof; the heating, cooling, and ventilating systems; and made other repairs to the facility. Local musicians performed for the theatre’s opening in May 2012. Since then ACT has offered dramatizations of local history, Broadway shows, and classical films. ACT Youth, a troupe of middle and high school students, has performed for elementary students, including the winter production of “It’s a Wonderful Life.” Partner individuals and organizations include the Adams County Library, city of Adams, Friends of the Library, Mayor JanAlyn Baumgartner, Adams Columbia Electric Coop, and Mid-State Technical College. Accepting the award will be Kris and Tom Bougie and Sandy Pheiffer, ACT volunteers.

Cambridge Community Activities Program (CAP) began in 2003 as a nonprofit organization to encourage and promote lifelong wellness through high-quality recreational activities and learning opportunities. Through collaboration with the Cambridge School District, Cambridge CAP offers before-and after-school care in the elementary school, the only such four-star rated program in the state. The organization also offers a youth center in the middle school, operates the district pool, and a food pantry. Additionally, Cambridge CAP offers youth and adult sports, fitness, and enrichment programs, opening the school buildings for community access. Cambridge CAP works with the Friends of the Library, Optimist Club, Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, Dane County Sheriff’s Department and Human Services, and the Cambridge

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Foundation. Accepting the award will be Bridgett Hermanson, Cambridge CAP executive director, and Bernie Nikolay, superintendent of the Cambridge School District.

Granton Community Library: School and Community Collaborating, enhanced library services through cooperation. The Samson Memorial Library had outgrown its space, and as a small rural library, had limited funds to automate operations or expand library hours. The library board and village board worked with the school district to develop a combined library to benefit students and the community. In fall of 2012, the Granton Community Library opened, offering more space for materials, expanded hours for the community and students, wireless Internet access, and interlibrary loan. The library has connected with the after-school program to provide enrichment for students. Additionally, the library has started a book club to engage adults and teachers, further strengthening community connections. Partners in the project are the Granton Area School District, Village of Granton, and Wisconsin Valley Library Service. Accepting the award will be Kay Heiting, Granton School District IMC director.

Harvest Challenge — Vernon County Farm to School brought together four student teams, school staff, and chef mentors. The challenge involved menu planning and cooking, highlighting the benefits of fresh and nutritious local foods in school lunch programs. Teams from De Soto High School, La Farge High School, Viroqua High School, and Youth Initiative High School created a featured school lunch for the judging panel. The community event included a public tasting and silent auction with musical accompaniment by the Viroqua High School String Ensemble. Primary sponsors were the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Organic Valley, AmeriCorps Farm to School, Viroqua Food Coop, Valley Stewardship Network, Vernon Memorial Healthcare, and Viroqua Area School District which hosted the event in the school cafeteria. Accepting the award will be Shawna Bohan, Vernon County Farm to School Project coordinator; Monique Hooker, chef mentor; and Marilyn Volden, Viroqua Area School District food and nutrition program supervisor.

Lake Holcombe/Cornell 21st Century Community Learning Center and Northern Region Family Literacy Program brings together adult literacy efforts, community education, and after-school supports in the “Lighted Schoolhouse” concept that stretches resources to serve residents and students of both districts. Through innovative funding strategies and the passion and talent of school and community leaders, the three programs seamlessly provide basic literacy and GED preparation for adults who left school without a diploma, continuing education for employment skill development, and after-school support with homework help and academic enrichment for students. Parents learn alongside their children, sending a powerful message of the importance of continuing education. Accepting the award will be Julie Kosher and Andrea Smith, of the Lake Holcombe and Cornell school districts, and Kathy Walthers, Northern Region Family Literacy Program.

Lake Superior Libraries Symposium is a grassroots professional development effort led by a diverse group of school, academic, and public librarians. Finding it nearly impossible to participate in professional development opportunities that are a half-day drive away or more, the group planned a regional conference, offering quality presentations, training, and networking opportunities for rural librarians. Held June 1, 2012, the event attracted more than 140 librarians from northern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. A second event will be held in June this year. Leading the professional development planning were librarians from Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, University of Minnesota Duluth, University of Wisconsin-Superior, Superior Public Library, Superior School District, Duluth Public Library, Marshall School in Duluth,

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Arrowhead Library System in Minnesota, Northern Waters Library System, and the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth. Accepting the award will be Adam Brisk, Marshall School; Carolyn Caffrey Gardner, UW-Superior; and Matt Rosendahl, director of learning resources for WITC.

Lodi FFA Community Closet began as an FFA community service activity to assist fellow students who do without basic needs. FFA students painted and installed shelving in a high school storage room and organized items collected from a clothing drive held during Homecoming Week. Students sorted more than 1,000 items, washing and drying them to stock the closet. In addition, toiletries and food items were purchased with funds from the FFA chapter or donated by individuals and organizations. Keeping the closet private was a primary concern, and handled by designating one contact person for those requesting use of the service. The FFA chapter also developed a wish list for closet users to fill out in the event they needed something that wasn't available. The Community Closet grew as the community became aware of the service activity, with bountiful donations and requests for community members to be able to access it. Local churches and food pantries promote the closet to their patrons. Students also conducted a toy drive for the holidays and translated the wish list into Spanish to serve the Hispanic community. Accepting the award will be Linda Purtell, Lodi High School secretary, and Abbey Ryan and Sarah Shimshak, students and FFA members.

Northwood Regional Learning Collaborative Partnership is a cooperative effort among the school districts of Crivitz, Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine, and Wausaukee and the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College's (NWTC) Crivitz campus to provide dual credit opportunities to students at the three high schools. Without collaboration, the three rural districts would find it impossible to offer advanced coursework in their individual high schools due to lack of student numbers and funding issues. By using flexible scheduling and cooperation, high school juniors and seniors have access to technical college classes in welding, nursing, automotive, and engineering. Classes are taught in Wausaukee with NWTC equipment and staff members. Students are certified and career-ready upon high school graduation, moving into technical skill jobs in their local communities. Accepting the award will be Bob Berndt, superintendent in the Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine School District; Jan Dooley, superintendent for the Wausaukee School District; Patrick Mans, superintendent for the Crivitz School District; and H. Jeffrey Rafn, president of the NWTC in Green Bay.

Technical Education Outreach Project has pursued a number of community service activities that required students to use budgeting, organizational, and communication skills. In 2012, technology education students from Frederic High School refurbished a floating boat ramp at Coon Lake Park. Students had to disassemble the old, rotten ramp; sandblast rusty sections; paint steel beams; and reassemble the boat ramp with new composite decking. Rebecca Harlander, chair of the village of Frederic Park Board, said Mr. Krueger and his students earned an A+ for their work. "It has been a huge relief for our park board to know this dedicated educator recognized the value of providing students the opportunity to take their skills learned in the classroom and see the impact those skills have had on our community by providing a much needed safe and healthy recreational opportunity," she wrote in nominating the project. Accepting the award will be Duane Krueger, technology education teacher at Frederic High School.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2013_17.pdf. A photo gallery from the awards program will be available on the Department of Public Instruction website at http://statesupt.dpi.wi.gov/supt_photos.