

## News Release

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### Eight projects to receive ‘Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin’ awards

*Projects that strengthen schools and communities to be recognized Nov. 9 in Stevens Point*

MADISON — Eight projects will receive the 2016 Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin Schools, Libraries, and Communities Award during a program and reception Nov. 9 in Stevens Point.

Presented each year to nominated projects that “demonstrate the great potential and collaborative spirit of rural Wisconsin,” this year’s recipients join [97 exemplary programs recognized since 2005](#).

“Wisconsin’s rural heritage is held together by the people who work to support children through strong schools, libraries, and communities,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “The individuals and organizations that we recognize for Rural Awards demonstrate the great potential and collaborative spirit of our state’s rural communities.”

Nominated by education and library professionals, the 2016 award winning programs will be recognized during the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance conference (Nov. 9-10). The programs are:

- Career Education Cooperative
- New Richmond High School Agriscience Program and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Prairie Plug Project
- M.E.C.C.A. Trail Revitalization
- Northern Waters Environmental School Watershed Initiative
- Camp Pocatonia
- Denmark Rural Fiber Bandwidth Initiative
- Project SEARCH
- Centennial Celebration

The awards program begins at 11:15 a.m. Wednesday at the Holiday Inn and Convention Center in Stevens Point. Additional information about each project follows.

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**NOTE:** This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016\\_111.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016_111.pdf).

# 2016 Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin Schools, Libraries, and Communities Awards

*November 9, 2016 — Stevens Point*

The **Career Education Cooperative** develops educational programs with college credit courses and apprenticeships in conjunction with local businesses for high school seniors. The partnership among schools, businesses, and community members is currently concentrating on areas of health care, manufacturing, and lab science and strives to support college and career readiness, giving young people explicit training in the hope that they will see the rural way of life as a possibility after postsecondary training. The cooperative is made up of the Hillsboro, Ithaca, Kickapoo, Richland, and Riverdale school districts, Eagle Christian School, Cooperative Educational Service Agency 3, Southwestern Wisconsin Technical College, and the University of Wisconsin Richland along with 15 regional business and industry partners.

For the last six years, the New Richmond High School Agriscience Program has been partnering with Chris Trosen, Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to grow and plant native prairie seeds through the **NRHS/USFWS Prairie Plug Project**. Students learn about the scarification, stratification, and germination needs of various prairie plants, working in the high school greenhouse to grow plants such as sideoats grama, lupine, and Dotted Blazing Star in individual plug trays to establish healthy root systems. During the schoolwide Service Learning Day in mid-May, students plant the plugs into prairie beds, thus learning concepts from earth and environmental science, along with greenhouse and wildlife management, and landscaping. During the first year of the program, students planted 2,000 plants. Now, 40 to 50 students are involved growing 10,000 plus seedlings in the greenhouse and planting another 5,000 plus seeds directly in the ground. The collaborative effort involves three high school staff volunteers, five U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees, and volunteers from the community and organizations, including Star Prairie Fish and Game, Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District, Bosch, and Willow River Rod and Gun Club.

Since 2015, a Mishicot team has been working to revitalize the underused and overgrown 31 acre school forest. The **M.E.C.C.A. Trail Revitalization** has brought together the rural school and community for a common goal. During quarterly cleanup days, volunteers from across the community partner with students. Projects include removing invasive species, clearing unsafe forest areas, managing the forest stand, adding natural habitat areas for wildlife, widening and adding trails, monitoring water quality, and adding seating, labs, and activities to the outdoor classroom. The projects are teaching all generations about environmental management and conservation. Additionally, Mishicot students have an opportunity to network with community members and develop leadership skills. Partners in the project include Rebecca Armbruster, Justin Gerlach, Mishicot School District Administration, Mishicot FFA & FFA Alumni, Mishicot Lions, Mishicot Eco Club, Wisconsin DNR, Boy Scouts, Fish and Wildlife Service, Izaak Walton League, and FCCLA.

Students from Northern Waters Environmental School in Hayward are gaining a detailed understanding of land use and water quality through the **NWES Watershed Initiative**. Through the Namekagon Flow Study students record width to bank, depth, water velocity, and water level observations under a wide range of flow conditions, using a state-of-the-art Marsh-McBierny flow meter, purchased for the school with Wisconsin DNR education grant money by local lake and river groups. Students also observed the impact of two 100-year storms in quick succession. Hayward did not experience the dire consequences that occurred in adjacent watersheds from the same rain events. The forested land, limited agriculture and residential development, wetland and upland conservancy, and limiting and mitigating impervious surfaces in the watershed contributed to a more positive outcome. Through the NWES Watershed Initiative and flow study, students will help gather and assemble enough data on the Namekagon River at various sites to construct a predictive mathematical model that will be useful for recreational users, public safety, land use zoning and planning, and most importantly for educational outreach. More than 20 government and civic organizations are partners in the initiative.

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A need was identified for daycare options, particularly in the summer, for Pecatonica Area School District students. **Camp Pecatonica**, a summer camp, provides a childcare option for parents that is affordable, safe, and educational for their children ages 4 through 11. Children are in a structured play environment that includes field trips and learning experiences through local organizations and local expertise. The camp starts the week after school lets out for the summer and continues until the end of August. Community collaboration is instrumental to the affordability and viability of the school district run camp that is headquartered at New Hope Lutheran Church. The Village of Blanchardville opens group membership for campers to swim in the McKellar Park pool; Circle M Farm Market provides healthy snacks, field trips, and educational programs at their local farm; and the Village of Blanchardville's Public Library and Women's Club offer different programming to the campers that is supervised by the Women's Club volunteers.

The **Denmark Rural Fiber Bandwidth Initiative** is the product of cooperation among the Brown County Library, Denmark School District, and the community. Tapping into Category 2 E-rate reimbursements, both the school district and library now have 1 GBPS service. Additionally, the school was able to run a separate dark fiber line from the district office to the Early Childhood Center, all of which provides significantly faster speeds at a cheaper price than the previous service. Immediate beneficiaries are the district's 1,500 students and their teachers, who now have entirely new educational options for providing instruction. The initiative has also made a deep impact on library patrons searching and applying for jobs, connecting with grandchildren, or taking online courses. The success of this project, impacting the rural edges of Brown, Kewaunee, and Manitowoc counties, is only the first step as rural government agencies, law enforcement, and medical providers are possible network users.

The **Project SEARCH** team, headquartered in the Marshfield School District, works together with 13 surrounding school districts and several adult service agencies to provide an alternative vocational training program for adults with disabilities between the ages of 18-24. This Project SEARCH program is a business led, school-to-work program that takes place at Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through three unpaid internships. Interns are on-site at the hospital or 16 local businesses for nine months between September and May, learning employability skills that will help them gain future employment in the community. Contributing to the program's success are the supportive interns and families involved in Project SEARCH. During each new school year, previous graduates flock back to welcome the new interns, developing friendships, providing support, sharing in successes, and staying connected.

As White Lake was nearing its 100th birthday, the village and school district partnered to facilitate the planning of 100 events that included several organizations throughout the community. Students had an opportunity to be involved in this once in a lifetime celebration as they continued to grow in their connectedness with the community. The **Centennial Celebration** included a 100 Hours of Fitness Challenge that leveraged the support of the Community Fitness Center, located in the school. The Bicycle Rodeo partnered with the local fire department, as well as the Optimist Club from Antigo and volunteers from throughout the community. The Community Garden is led by a member of the village board and engages students with the processes of planting, weeding, and harvesting crops. The Centennial Plaques were designed by a former teacher, using wood donated by a local landowner, completed by the students in school district Tech Ed classes, and displayed in the pavilion by the lake during the 4th of July Celebration. The Tree Planting took place in May. With the assistance of local Department of Natural Resources officers, students and community members worked together to increase the variety of flora in the school forest by adding dogwood, butternut, plum and cherry trees. Finally, our Spring and Fall Lake Days connect the school to the Lake Association to teach students about caring for local waterways, natural resources, and safety on the water.