



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 22, 2017

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Heather Bandeen, Education Director
651-789-4341, hbandeen@mncounties.org

4-H CLUBS FROM BIG STONE, DAKOTA, AND POPE COUNTIES RECEIVE 2017 COMMUNITY YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARDS

(ST. PAUL, MN) -- The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) honored three Minnesota 4-H projects for their contributions and service to communities. These projects, driven by youth across Minnesota, truly make a big difference and respond to real community needs in the state.

The Big Stone County 4-H AIS Team's project, entitled: "Aquatic Robotics/Aquatic Invasive Species Education" is led by ten youth and three volunteers. They wanted to help others to learn more about the county's local lakes and how to prevent aquatic invasive species. In 2016, they presented to approximately 527 youth and 65 adults across the county and distributed informational packets to over 100 fishermen. Then, they built an underwater robot with motors and a camera to help detect any changes in the lake's ecosystem.

The Pope County's Lakeview 4-H Club "Welcome to the Community Baskets" was started to welcome new families with children to the community. Their goal is to help children to feel excited to join a new school and make new friends. This nine-member club shopped for the gift baskets, put everything together, and hosted Open House events at the elementary and high schools. It was a fun way to encourage new friends while also providing leadership in the community.

The Dakota County's *Youth Teaching Youth* Teachers and *Peers for Peers* Group wanted to make a difference through mentoring so they created the "Youth Teaching Youth Mentorship Program." In this program, youth shaped the direction of activities, communicated with school staff to better understand their mentees, and provided support to mentees beyond program meetings. This year, they found that these efforts impacted entire classrooms as more students developed positive relationships – making a difference by helping others to stay engaged in school and also graduate.

Each year, AMC in partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension, awards Community Leadership Awards at the annual AMC Legislative Conference. Each project is recognized based on responding to real community needs and demonstrating broad participation by youth in the design and implementation.

Projects are reviewed by members of the AMC Extension Committee Judging Panel. Winners are then invited to a luncheon with County Commissioners to be recognized with a trophy and check. If your 4-H program is interested in applying in 2018, please contact Heather Bandeen, AMC Education Director, at hbandeen@mncounties.org.

AMC is a voluntary statewide organization of Minnesota's 87 counties that helps provide effective county governance to the people of Minnesota. Through intergovernmental relations, communications and education, AMC seeks to improve the operation of Minnesota's county governments and the services that counties provide to their citizens.

###

Editors: Photos attached for each club.

Caption: Members of the winning 4-H Club with AMC President Gary Hendrickx, a Swift County Commissioner.