



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA COUNTIES ANNOUNCES 2016 COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Winners include programs in Carlton, Cook, Crow Wing, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, McLeod, Olmsted and St. Louis Counties

(St. Paul, MN)—Four outstanding programs from counties across Minnesota were recognized with Association of Minnesota Counties' (AMC) 2016 'County Achievement Awards' for exhibiting excellence and innovation in their counties. 2016 AMC President Jack Swanson, a Roseau County commissioner, presented the awards at the association's annual conference December 5 in Minneapolis. The recipients were nominated by their counties and selected by a committee of county officials, chaired by 2016 AMC First Vice President Gary Hendrickx, a Swift County commissioner.

About the Award Winners:

Arrowhead Region's Telehealth Initiative

Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake & St. Louis Counties; Bois Forte, Fond du Lac & Grand Portage Bands of the Lake Superior Chippewa

The Arrowhead Region consists of 23% of Minnesota's geography and is home to 6% of the population. Arrowhead Health Alliance (AHA) Joint Powers counties of Carlton, Cook, Lake, Koochiching, and St. Louis partnered with Fond du Lac, Bois Forte, and Grand Portage Bands of the Lake Superior Chippewa, Aitkin & Itasca Counties, MN Dept. of Human Services and MN Dept. of IT (MNITs) to develop a Telepresence Initiative. Various entities throughout the region did not have access to the health services they needed, especially for mental health & chemical dependency, nor the resources to obtain these services. Due to the geography, limited resources, and demand for services, telepresence became the most viable option. The partners worked with other public and private agencies to provide care and access to services throughout the region by creating a network of users that have increased access to otherwise unobtainable services. Psychiatrists/therapists connect to area schools, jails/correctional facilities, and mental health agencies. Rule 25 chemical dependency assessments are being completed via telepresence, while hospitals and regional law enforcement are in the process of connecting to mobile crisis teams to better manage the rising number of mental health patients in regional emergency departments.

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Classroom to Community

Crow Wing County

To date, Crow Wing Community Services staff have mentored over 23 students pursuing their degree in Social Work through the College of St. Scholastica program's Central Lakes College campus. What began eight years ago as an opportunity for experience-based learning, has grown into a strong public-private partnership that is driving innovation in the field of social work to help better serve the residents of Crow Wing County and surrounding communities. The collaboration with St. Scholastica has also served as a hiring pipeline for new social workers in the department, with 11 new hires coming directly out of the program. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that social work is one of the fastest growing occupations in the U.S., making the partnership even more valuable in helping attract and retain new talent in the field.

Agricultural Plastic Recycling

McLeod County

McLeod County has operated a Solid Waste Department since 1999, recently made the transition to single sort recycling and has continued to be progressive and creative in recycling items that otherwise would go into landfills. In 2014 in response to environmental concerns with some farmers burning, burying and landfilling the agricultural wrap and bags used to store silage, hay and feed, staff at Solid Waste saw the need to explore an option for recycling this material. Solid Waste staff's ability to identify a need, propose a solution and through research and networking create a Program that is successful and serves as an example for other local governments in and outside of Minnesota is a significant achievement. Working with the Counties of Sibley, Nicollet, LeSueur, Pope and Douglas to collect agricultural wrap and bags, McLeod County will have processed in 2016 enough plastic to save 12,425 cubic yards of landfill space and provided farmers with a better alternative to dispose of agricultural plastic. This is an achievement that all residents from participating communities can be proud of and a Program which other local governments nation- wide are interested in duplicating and/or shipping their agricultural plastics to.

Gage East Project

Olmsted County

Gage East is a unique supportive housing project that not only impacts the individuals receiving housing, but the neighborhood around the new housing. The funding streams from adult services, children services, probation and the HRA will impact the lives of the 25 homeless youth that will receive housing and the 30 homeless families who get housed. In addition, these youth and families and their neighbors will have access to high quality early childhood programs and supportive services. This multi-generational approach is well-researched and showing results throughout the country.

AMC is a voluntary statewide organization that assists the state's 87 counties in providing effective county governance to the people of Minnesota. The association works closely with the legislative and administrative branches of government in seeing that legislation and policies favorable to counties are enacted. In addition, the Association provides educational programs, training, research and communications for county officials.

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Editors: Photo available upon request.

Photo Caption: 2017 AMC President Gary Hendrickx, a Swift County commissioner, presented the Outstanding Service awards at the association's annual conference December 5 in Minneapolis. The recipients were nominated by their counties and selected by a committee of county officials.

