



Association of Minnesota Counties

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ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA COUNTIES ANNOUNCES 2017 COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Winners include programs in Anoka, Blue Earth, Brown, Dodge, Goodhue, Kanabec, Morrison, Redwood Sibley, Steele, Todd, Wabasha, Wadena and Waseca Counties.

(St. Paul, MN)—Five outstanding programs from counties across Minnesota were recognized with Association of Minnesota Counties' (AMC) 2017 'County Achievement Awards' for exhibiting excellence and innovation in their counties. 2017 AMC President Gary Hendrickx, a Swift County commissioner, presented the awards at the association's annual conference December 4 in St. Cloud. The recipients were nominated by their counties and selected by a committee of county officials.

About the Award Winners:

Design/Build Collaboration Phase II Project - Anoka County and University of Minnesota

Anoka County received the benefit of "pro bono" design services, along with an economical approach to facility construction. Professor Jacob Mans and Professor John Comazzi, along with their team of graduate students at the School of Architecture designed, fabricated, and assembled the one-of-a-kind Learning Stations during the summers of 2016 and 2017. This investment will have a positive impact on the 5,000 day campers, cultural history students, and staff who use the site every year for programming. Perhaps most importantly, this project has provided the County and the University with an outstanding best practices model for combining human and economic resources to better serve both the needs of the public and the aspirations of students seeking relevant training in their academic field of endeavor.

The Yellow Line Project - Blue Earth County

The Yellow Line Project differs from other jail projects in Minnesota. Nationally, the majority of projects are focused on "in-house" jail services. The main priority is to consider all options before a person crosses "The Yellow Line" into jail. We focus intently on the time between an individual being detained and being booked into jail. YLP brings together Law Enforcement, Human Services and our regional Mobile Crisis Team to consider a more individualized solution. The project has received funding from the state of Minnesota to test the effectiveness of the model. We have in essence been successful in offering individuals the right service at the right time. In order to effect this change, it required a complete culture shift. The culture shift included Law Enforcement being more open in their planning options, Human Services aligning their skills and resources with law enforcement, and ultimately saving real dollars for taxpayers through efficiencies and by simply doing things that make sense. We have recorded direct savings in hospitalization and detox costs, reduced utilization of jail beds, and reduced reliance on corrections and court services. Conversely, we have seen higher utilization of mobile crisis services and direct treatment services.

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Healthy Pathways Program - Brown, Dodge, Goodhue, Kanabec, Morrison, Sibley, Steele, Todd, Wabasha, Wadena and Waseca Counties

Due to the shortage of rural mental health and chemical health providers, it can take several months for individuals to receive the help they need. The counties and South Country Health Alliance understand it is imperative that we offer immediate support to individuals suffering from a mental health crisis. Key county leadership in the areas of mental health and chemical health partnered with South Country to address this gap in care. From this partnership, the Healthy Pathways Program was born. Healthy Pathways was designed to be flexible so that counties can respond quickly and by doing so, help avert further issues that often come with untreated mental health symptoms such as homelessness, job loss, financial hardships, etc. Having the ability to offer immediate support to individuals in a mental health crisis provides county case managers the foundation to begin building a trusting relationship. As a result, case managers can help them navigate the complicated health care system ensuring care with a mental health professional is established. Healthy Pathways Program is also a transition service for those individuals who have received Mental Health Targeted Case Management (MHTCM) but no longer need that level of care.

Opioid Program - Morrison County

With the partnerships of CHI St. Gabriel's Health and Morrison County, a nationwide opioid epidemic has a solution in a small, rural county in Minnesota. That solution is being replicated by other communities in Minnesota and has even garnered national attention with an award from the American Hospital Association for an innovative, collaborative, community-engaged care model. The Morrison County Community-Based Care Coordination started in January of 2015 with concerns of hospital staff and county law enforcement observing excessive prescriptions of narcotics at crime scenes and patients visiting the emergency room of the hospital requesting pain medications. A grant was awarded to CHI St. Gabriel's Hospital requiring community partnerships which included Morrison County Public Health and Morrison County Social Services, Morrison County Sheriff's Office and the Morrison County Attorney's Office to focus on the patients using opioids for chronic pain. The main objective was to mitigate the need for prescription medications for chronic pain. One local pharmacy reported over 43,000 doses of opioids every month being filled in a county of 32,000 residents. A controlled substance care team was hired which consisted of a nurse, pharmacist, and a county social worker who was housed in the hospital's clinic. The social worker was essential to meet the needs of the Medical Assistance patients who were primarily filling the prescriptions. The interventions consist of face-to-face visits with the care team to offer a holistic approach ensuring optimal health and a safer community. The overall goals were to reduce overdoses and deaths from both opioid use disorder and heroin overdoses and prevent further addiction. The Morrison County Prescription Drug Task Force was also formed with all community stakeholders meeting monthly to collaborate on community efforts starting with processes to detect diversion. Many patients were selling their prescriptions for cash. Through the intervention of the county social worker, these patients were not jailed, but the "root" of the problem was discovered, such as needing income for housing costs and addressed so that the selling was stopped. By getting to the root cause, cost savings are seen in both incarceration costs and pharmaceutical costs to county medical assistance plans. Within two years, 324 patients had been completely tapered from the unnecessary taking of opioids resulting in a savings of \$2.6 million annually (using hospital billing rate) and averaging 370,428 units of opioids no longer prescribed (annually). By the end of 2016, that one local pharmacy reported a 23% reduction in opioid dosage units filled.

Children's Advocacy Center - Redwood County

Redwood County is developing the Redwood County Children's Advocacy Center which is located in Redwood Falls, Minnesota. This program provides a safe and child friendly environment for child abuse victims to tell their stories, receive support and additional services such as mental health or medical referrals. This program provides a platform for a multidisciplinary team response to child abuse allegations in Redwood County. The Redwood County Children's Advocacy Center is working towards regionalizing its' program and services to surrounding Southwest Minnesota counties to serve more children and families. The children's advocacy center works to bring awareness to the epidemic of child abuse and bring our community together through community partnerships, and will soon develop community education events in 2018.

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Editors: Photos attached.

Photo Caption: 2017 AMC President Gary Hendrickx, a Swift County commissioner, presented the Outstanding Service awards at the association's annual conference December 4 in St. Cloud. The recipients were nominated by their counties and selected by a committee of county officials.