



Association of Minnesota Counties

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 5, 2018

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ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA COUNTIES ANNOUNCES 2018 COUNTY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Winners include programs in Anoka, Dodge, Steele, Waseca and Wright Counties.

(St. Paul, MN)—Four outstanding programs from counties across Minnesota were recognized with Association of Minnesota Counties' (AMC) 2018 'County Achievement Awards' for exhibiting excellence and innovation in their counties. 2018 AMC President Susan Morris, an Isanti County commissioner, presented the 'County Achievement Awards' at the association's annual conference December 3 in Bloomington. The recipients were nominated by their counties and selected by a committee of county officials.

About the Award Winners:

Library VolunTeen Program

Anoka County

Beginning in 2016, Anoka County Library staff reimagined our longstanding teen volunteer program from the ground up, using best practices from the youth development and afterschool fields to infuse quality into our program. As a result, the new VolunTeen program is youth-focused and youth-centered, empowering teen volunteers to create their best summer learning experience and give service in ways that best utilize their interests and skills. Succeeding summers at the library have seen continued improvements, with the introduction of curriculum and activities supporting Social and Emotional Learning outcomes and integration of a personal project component into the program in 2018.

Chemical Health and Heroin Initiative

Anoka County

In Anoka County in 2016, six separate heroin overdoses occurred within a 12-hour period. Two of the six ended in death. Anoka County authorities hosted three forums to educate on the dangers of heroin, opiates and prescription pain killers. Through discussion, the groups recognized there is a lack of understanding around the consequences of substance abuse, and a concern regarding prescribing practices and the ability to control supply. In addition, parents are unsure about the signs and symptoms of their children engaging in substance abuse, and they may lack the knowledge necessary to address their children about this issue. From the recognized problems, the Chemical Health and Heroin Initiative was created. Three workgroups were established. These workgroups include the Top Secret Project workgroup, the Resource and Marketing workgroup, and the Drop-Off Site workgroup. All three workgroups engaged with community partners to provide education, support and prevention around the current drug crisis. The Top Secret Project workgroup was responsible for coordinating with Anoka County schools and Hazelden to offer four Top Secret events that encompass seven school districts. The Top Secret Project created a unique exhibit designed to help parents recognize unfamiliar hazards that are often in plain sight. Using a simulated teenager's bedroom, the interactive exhibit included hundreds of items seen through an educated lens.

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Minnesota Prairie County Alliance ***Dodge, Steele, and Waseca Counties***

As one of four multi-county human services agencies across Minnesota, the merger undertaken by Dodge, Steele and Waseca counties to form Minnesota Prairie County Alliance is unique in several respects:

- Customer service has been improved with the provision of evening office hours –at no additional cost-- to enable people with jobs to access services.
- Efficiencies have been achieved in many ways, but uniquely by combining caseloads across sites in the state computer systems so that staff use their MNPrairie identification number once, rather than having to sign out using one county identification number and sign in using another each time they work on a case from a different site.
- Increasing management and strategic agency direction-setting by redeploying two director roles to establish managers who are subject-matter experts who pay attention to externalities, systemic matters, and best and emerging practices in their program area, as well as internal work; enabling supervisors to focus on supporting the work of their individual team members' work with clients.
- Obtaining state certification as a human services delivery authority, enabling the agency to seek waivers of state and federal program requirements to get better outcomes; setting the stage for greater innovation in this next stage.

IPS Collaboration ***Wright County***

Functional Industries, Central MN Mental Health Center, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Wright County advocate for the use of Individual Placement and Support (IPS). IPS is an evidence-based approach that helps people with serious mental illness to work in the community in all jobs, not just those set aside for people with disabilities. The IPS approach helps people find jobs that minimize or avoid problems. The collaborative has successfully assisted people with mental illness to become contributing members of their community and family. It is clear that all four partners (Functional Industries, Central MN Mental Health Center, Wright County Health & Human Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services) have sustained a cohesive partnership with good interagency collaboration and a shared commitment to competitive employment for persons with serious mental illness.

AMC is a voluntary statewide organization that assists the state's 87 counties in providing effective county governance to the people of Minnesota. It is the mission of the Association to assist in the provision of effective county governance for 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: Photos attached for each group.

Photo Caption: 2018 AMC President Susan Morris, an Isanti County commissioner, presented the County Achievement awards at the association's annual conference December 3 in Bloomington. The recipients were nominated by their counties and selected by a committee of county officials.