The best at doing things differently: Humphrey School recognizes cities, counties, and schools for innovation and creativity

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (11/14/13)—The Humphrey School of Public Affairs today announced winners of its seventh annual Local Government Innovation Awards. The awards—organized in partnership with the Bush Foundation and co-sponsored by the League of Minnesota Cities, the Association of Minnesota Counties, and the Minnesota School Board Association—recognize government entities for their creativity and effectiveness in redesigning how they do business. Eighteen local government innovators will receive awards, with one overall winner chosen in each of three categories: cities, counties, and schools. All 18 winners will be formally recognized at an awards ceremony and reception Thursday, December 12, at 3 p.m. at the Humphrey School.

“Each year cities, counties, and schools are challenged to do more with less and these awards recognize those who are most creatively doing that,” says Jay Kiedrowski, senior fellow at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. “The award winners have done an exemplary job integrating innovative ideas and problem-solving techniques into their operations, redesigning how they do business and improving services they provide Minnesota communities.”

A panel of judges considered 94 submissions for their creativity, sustainability, and collaboration. The overall category winners will each receive a $10,000 grant from the Bush Foundation to continue their work and a professionally produced video to use to share the story of their work with others.

Overall category winners of the 2013 Local Government Innovation Awards include:

**School Category: Monroe Elementary, Brooklyn Park: GEARS Time**
Consistent with its magnet program in Mathematics, Science, and Children’s Engineering, Monroe Elementary developed GEARS (Getting Excellent Academic Results for all Students) Time. GEARS Time is a scheduled block that allows teachers at each grade level to collaborate on providing intervention, remediation, and enrichment support to all students, based on academic need. It helped develop creative, new ways to support students’ success that also increases one-on-one time between teachers and students. The school has experienced improved performance on students’ standardized test results and a smaller achievement gap between white students and students of color.

**City Category: City of Madelia**
To satisfy an order by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to decommission wastewater treatment ponds, the City of Madelia transformed them into a natural habitat for pheasants, water fowl, and deer that is also accessible to people with disabilities. The project saved the City $1.5 million dollars, employed local contractors, and distributed biosolids removed from the ponds to nearby farmers for use as fertilizer. After planting prairie forbs and grass seed in the old ponds, the City also installed handicap ramps along each pond’s perimeter, making the new recreation area accessible to everyone.

**County Category: Carlton County: TXT4Life Suicide Prevention**
The TXT4LIFE program reaches youth in ways they communicate most: Through text messaging, the Minnesota affiliate of the National Suicide Prevention Network Lifeline has experienced a tremendous increase in clients. The TXT4LIFE program covers northeast Minnesota including seven counties and four tribal nations—a geographic area that represents six percent of the state’s population but consistently
reports the highest suicide rates. Marketing and outreach are key components; prior to the text program, the suicide line received 25 calls each month from youth and it now receives more than 300.

The complete list of 2013 Local Government Innovation Award winners includes:

**School Category**
- Monroe Elementary, Brooklyn Park: GEARS Time (overall category winner)
- Hiawatha Academies, Minneapolis
- Hawthorne Education Center, Rochester: Transitions to College and Career Program
- Cannon River STEM School, Faribault: Supporting the Village to Raise Children
- Waconia Public Schools, Waconia: MLK—A Day On, Not a Day Off
- ACGC Schools, Grove City: Elementary Reimagined

**City Category**
- City of Madelia (overall category winner)
- City of Crookston: Crookston Homestead Act
- Cities Unlimited: A Partnership between the Cities of Coon Rapids and Brooklyn Park
- City of Albert Lea: Process Improvement Teams (PIT Crews)
- City of Minneapolis: Minneapolis Mattress Recycling
- City of Morris: Morris Rental Housing Commission

**County Category**
- Carlton County Public Health and Human Services: TXT4LIFE Suicide Prevention (overall category winner)
- Hennepin County: Hennepin Health
- Anoka County: Enhanced Treatment Program
- Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, and Lake of the Woods Counties Collaborative: Mental Health Crisis Transportation
- Ramsey, Dakota and Washington Counties: Mental Health Crisis Alliance
- Southwest Health and Human Services: Redesigning Local Public Health and Human Services

To learn more about the Local Government Innovation Awards as well as the individual award winners and their innovations, visit [www.lgia.umn.edu](http://www.lgia.umn.edu).

*The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota is widely recognized for its role in examining public issues and shaping policy and planning at the local, state, national, and international levels, as well as for providing leadership and management expertise to public and nonprofit organizations. The School offers five graduate degrees, including a master of development practice degree in international development. [www.hhh.umn.edu](http://www.hhh.umn.edu)*

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