



Press Release - For Immediate Release

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Local Project Selected for Wisconsin Top Rural Development Initiative Honors

The Green County Childcare Initiative has been selected to receive the 2021 Wisconsin Top Rural Development Initiative award. One of three awards presented in 2021 by Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc., the presentation will be made at a local ceremony in early fall.

The Initiative is actively addressing an issue that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Green County is considered a childcare desert, with one childcare spot for every three young children. Lack of quality daycare access negatively impacts parental employment and overall economic growth. A collaboration of many partners was formed, including the Green County Development Corporation, United Way of Green County, Southwest Community Action Program, Blackhawk Technical College, MultiCultural Outreach Program, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, Small Business Development Center, Extension Green County, Community Coordinated Childcare, Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation, Green County Childcare Network, Avenues Counseling, and Department of Children and Families. Several programs were initiated to strengthen existing childcare businesses and help entrepreneurs start their own daycare businesses.

A free eight-week virtual Childcare Boot Camp was developed to address all aspects of running a childcare business, and is provided in English and Spanish. Safety Saturday classes provide education needed for a worker in a childcare facility. A program was established that pairs mental health professionals with childcare providers to help meet the varied needs of children served. Monthly parent workshops provide opportunities for strengthening collaborative relationships and offer tools related to early childhood social, emotional and mental well-being.

“Wisconsin Rural Partners (WRP) applauds the Green County Childcare Initiative as an outstanding example of the many local efforts across the state that improve the lives of citizens in rural Wisconsin,” said Sandy Decker, WRP president. “This is an excellent collaborative model for small rural Wisconsin communities.”

A second project receiving recognition as a 2021 Top Rural Development Initiative is the Cuba City Presidential Plaza. New landscaping, seating, ADA-compliant walkways, free Wi-Fi, outdoor sound system, games, and a unique 3D interactive ground mural of the Mississippi River were included in the project, accomplished without the use of city funds. The Plaza engages residents of all ages. Future events and activities are planned to increase downtown business traffic and draw visitors to Main Street.

The Cheq Bay Renewables Community Solar Project is the third 2021 Top Rural Development Initiative receiving recognition. Five local government entities collaborated, leveraging combined funding to increase the scale of the solar project, with associated cost savings. These savings are used for other local municipal services. Project impacts include ongoing intergovernmental cooperation, stewardship of the environment through the use of renewable energy, and introduction of new technology to communities with installations throughout the county.

Wisconsin Rural Partners (WRP) is the state's federally-designated rural development council. Committed to improving the quality of life in rural Wisconsin, WRP is a non-partisan forum for identifying, discussing, and

addressing rural issues. Through collaborations with a wide array of partners, including local, county, state, tribal, and federal governments, as well as for-profit businesses, non-profit organizations, and rural citizens, WRP fosters and promotes locally-based solutions to rural needs and issues.

This is the twenty-first year that WRP has recognized Wisconsin's Top Rural Development Initiatives. "The program is designed to identify, highlight, and share innovative models, practices and programs that have a positive impact on rural Wisconsin communities," said Errin Welty, WRP past-president. "WRP created the program to provide a mechanism for rural communities to learn from each other and we are pleased to report that many of the award winners are still actively operating in their communities."

Additional information about Wisconsin Rural Partners and the Top Rural Development Initiatives can be found at www.wiruralpartners.org.