



Green Ribbon Initiatives AWARD

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Green Ribbon Initiatives, a non-profit corporation founded in the spring of 2013 is pleased to announce recognition of its first award. Recognition is being given to a public private partnership between Oak Ridge Elementary School and Easter Lutheran Church for enhancing student success.

The partnership was initiated by Ms. Kris Scallon, Principal of Oak Ridge, to expand tutoring for a significant and growing elementary population. Oak Ridge is an elementary school less than two miles from Easter Lutheran Church. The school educates about 630 students in grades kindergarten through five. Oak Ridge has a tradition of high expectations for students and their learning, with a focus on building positive relationships with students and families. Approximately 43 percent of Oak Ridge students qualify for free or reduced lunch, which means that their families are living in poverty. Oak Ridge is a diverse school, and students speak more than 22 different languages. Oak Ridge's diversity is a source of pride for the school community.

The result of the partnership in the first year (2012-2013) was 34 adult volunteers from Easter Lutheran coming weekly to tutor and support identified children (sometimes one on one and sometimes in groups). Volunteers also assisted with after school classes and re-shelving books in the library. The church provided four community meals, which were offered during parent-teacher conferences and in conjunction with summer library check out events. In addition, Easter provided summer lunches for students at the Cinnamon Ridge Apartments, where a large number of Oak Ridge families reside.

At this time about 65 church members have expressed interest in volunteer work at Oak Ridge during the 2013-2014 school year. The focus remains on tutoring, assistance with after school classes, and community meals. New this year is the option for students taking after school classes to bring home a bag of non-perishable food in a program the church calls "Families Feeding Families." About 40 families are accepting these donations weekly, for six weeks.

Kris Capel, Lead Pastor of Easter Lutheran, notes *"Easter's partnership with Oak Ridge Elementary School has blessed us in many ways. First, it has engaged our members in the community around us – serving both our mission – To grow in faith and carry on the work of Jesus Christ. As well as our vision - Transforming Hearts and Lives for Christ."* Pastor Capel went on to say: *"This partnership has helped us to better understand the changing dynamics of Eagan, and motivated us to look to other places in our community that are facing similar challenges to Oak Ridge."*

Green Ribbon Initiatives desires to see community engagement awards that:

- Increase the sense of community in Eagan.
- Increase the ability to improve the community at all levels.
- Increase the utilization of volunteers, especially the aging in place.
- Increase awareness of community engagement by a wider circle of persons.
- Recognize community engagement by increasing volunteerism and voter turn out.

Green Ribbon Initiatives was formed for the purpose of identifying and celebrating significant community engagement initiatives and partnerships in Eagan. Awards will be presented to

exemplary initiatives in Eagan which build relationships and a collective sense of community in Eagan while promoting sustainable action that strengthens community engagement.

- The recognition process is meant to support and encourage the cultivation, motivation and coordination of multiple levels of community resources available to strengthen community.
- Community engagement is understood as individuals and organizations working together on common interests for mutual benefit and in the interest of the larger community.
- Green Ribbon Initiatives seeks to weave engagement into the community fabric and address barriers to engagement when they are identified.

This partnership is exemplary and significant and meets all selection criteria; we are pleased and excited to make this award.

Green Ribbon Leadership Team

Jim Borgschatz (president), Gene VanOverbeke, Tom Hedges, Arleen Sullivan, Dave Unmacht, Paula Forbes, Don Hoeft

2014 due dates for nominations: February 1, 2014 and August 1, 2014

More information about Green Ribbon Initiatives Awards, nomination forms, application forms, and ways to help can all be found at www.greenribbon.info.

