2011 Initiative Awards

“Recognizing extraordinary people in the Avon Hills”

Allan Davisson
Public Service Initiative Award

For building consensus in land use planning in Collegeville Township and Stearns County.

Allan Davisson began working with Collegeville Township in the mid 1970’s on developing a land use planning ordinance. Since the adoption of the ordinance in 1979 he has chaired the Collegeville Township Planning Board. The Collegeville ordinance was one of the first planning ordinances in Minnesota to require that land be set aside for any development. The ordinance has been instrumental in preserving the open space of the Avon Hills. He was a member of the original Avon Hills Initiative Team back in 2003. Allan was involved in bringing nationally known speaker Randall Arendt for two conferences here that helped us learn about the possibilities of Conservation Design. He most recently represented the Avon Hills and Collegeville Township in helping draft the Stearns County Comprehensive Plan and the new ordinances which are among the most innovative land use planning documents for rural land in the entire country.

Steve Plantenberg
Public Service Initiative Award

For building consensus in land use planning in Collegeville Township and Stearns County.

Steve Plantenberg started his public service work volunteering on the Avon Township Planning Board. He has served as planning board chairman and over a seven year period has participated with other Township officials on the following: the completion of a section by section inventory of the Township, identifying geological, natural resource, historic structures and land use designations; community informational meetings to formulate revisions to land use zoning designations that were subsequently adopted by Stearns County; the development of Townships first growth plan based on community input, which was also adopted by Stearns County; the drafting the Townships memorandum of understanding with Stearns County and the Townships language of a more restrictive land use and zoning ordinance; the drafting of the Townships first sub division ordinance; the drafting of an orderly growth annexation agreement between the Township and City of Avon; construction of the Townships first Township Hall and Vehicle Storage Facility completed fall 2010. Steve most recently was a representative of the Avon Hills Initiative in helping draft the Stearns County Comprehensive Plan and the new ordinances.

Art Pierskalla
Conservation & Land Stewardship Initiative Award

For community leadership in the establishment of permanent conservation easements.

Art Pierskalla has lived in Stearns County all his life. As an ardent conservationist and deer hunter, he bought 40 acres in St. Wendell Township with much of it in the St. Wendell Bog. This 40 acres is bordered by township land to the west and by over 400 acres of state land to the east and southwest. This parcel connects and expands the habitat of one of Minnesota’s most southern tamarack stands. Art’s goal was to protect the habitat that he has cared for from possible development while also keeping the land in the family for recreational and hunting opportunities. By donating a conservation easement to the MN Land Trust, Art has assured that the ecological legacy of the entire landscape is greatly enhanced.

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Kampa Family
Conservation & Land Stewardship Initiative Award

For community leadership in the establishment of permanent conservation easements.

The Kampa Family has a strong environmental heritage which was fostered by their parents. The four children inherited 79 acres which has rolling topography, nice timber, and has ½ mile boundary with the Avon Hills South Scientific and Natural Area in Collegeville Township. Like many families, they wanted to see some economic gain and still preserve the environmentally sensitive land. The Kampa family land was the first development to be subject to the new ordinances covering the Avon Hills which require the developer to preserve 80% of the land in permanent easements. After many meetings with the Collegeville township Planning Board and Stearns County Environmental Services, the family chose to cluster four building sites and set aside the steep slopes and lands adjacent to the Scientific and Natural Area. All parties are pleased with the outcome and 80% of this natural area is now permanently preserved. The Kampa family has demonstrated that a high level of conservation and economic development can go hand-in-hand.

Vince Schaefer
Lifetime Initiative Award

For years of dedication to conservation practices and public service.

Vince Schaefer served on the group that formed the Avon Hills Initiative in 2003. As County Commissioner, Vince supported and took to heart the goals of the Avon Hills Initiative, to protect the unspoiled beauty of the area. Vince served as the liaison between the Avon Hills Committee and the Stearns County Board of Commissioners where he received the full support of the Commissioners Board. Vince’s leadership and willingness to work with such an innovative approach to preserving the beauty and open space of undeveloped land was instrumental in getting the County Ordinance changed to include the Avon Hills as a Conservation Overlay Zoning District, one of the most protective in the state. Vince has always been an out of the box thinker, looking 50-100 or more years to the future. In December 2010, Stearns County received an Association of MN Counties and Board of Soil and Water Award for the innovation of the Natural Resources Conservation Overlay District.

The annual Initiative Awards were created to celebrate individuals or organizations who are developing or preserving jobs, preserving open land, or promoting the rural character, beauty and ecological health of the environment and livable communities within the Avon Hills. Nominees are evaluated on the significance of their contribution to the well being of residents, workers, and visitors.

Award Categories

Public Service Initiative
Individuals or civic leaders who have provided extraordinary community service to the Avon Hills.

Conservation and Land Stewardship Initiative
Individuals or organizations who have contributed in a significant way to conservation and preservation efforts in the Avon Hills.

Business Initiative
Individuals or companies whose actions reflect the mission and vision of the Avon Hills Initiative, especially creating or retaining high quality jobs and pursuing sustainable development.

Lifetime Initiative
Individuals or organizations whose contributions represent a lifetime of commitment to the well-being of citizens, communities, and rural environment of the Avon Hills.

The Avon Hills Executive committee accepts nominations for the annual Initiative Awards each year.

- Nominations may be submitted by any supporter of the Avon Hills Initiative.
- Nominations must be approved by the nominated individual, business, or organization.
- Award recipients are determined by a majority vote of the Avon Hills Initiative Executive Committee.

www.csbsju.edu/arboretum/education/community/AvonHillsInitiative.htm