

Gothenburg chosen second time for highest NCIP award

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Community recognized for overall community development.

For the second time since Gothenburg has participated in the Nebraska Community Improvement Program, the community has won the highest award.

As recipient of the Otto Hoiberg Award, the city was recognized at the NCIP banquet Friday night in Kearney for top overall community development.

The first time the city received the Hoiberg award was in 2000.

Gothenburg received other awards as did area towns Farnam and Cozad.

Dawson County was also recognized.

Anne Anderson, Community Development Office director and Community Improvement Program co-chair, said she was thrilled with the Hoiberg and other awards.

“It’s a small but mighty committee,” Anderson said about the four-person CIP committee, “but it’s the volunteers in all of the projects who step up and work and help us get the awards.”

CIP co-chair Sue Williams described the awards, especially the Hoiberg, as incredible.

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“We are a progressive community and volunteerism makes all the difference,” Williams said. “Hats off to the people of Gothenburg.”

Because Gothenburg won the Governor’s Spirit Award in the Class III category (population 1,700-5,000), Anderson said the city was eligible to compete for the Hoiberg award as was Farnam.

Local projects submitted were the Gothenburg Historical Museum, city parks and recreation, economic development highlighting the Monsanto Learning Center, the Sun Theatre and Eagle Scouts and their projects.

The city received the Hoiberg award because of what judges described as its solid planning process which involves city surveys.

“Gothenburg has identified the strategic issues revolving around the downtown, economic opportunity, housing, quality of life and municipal systems,” they said. “Economic opportunity was realized in a big way through the recruitment of the Monsanto Learning Center and an expanded breeding station.



In winning a Governor’s Community Spirit Award, judges wrote that four local Boy Scouts earned the highest Eagle Scout ranking by completing a number of projects throughout the community.

The scouts and their projects included Anthony Reinhard who installed a sidewalk at the Gothenburg Historical Museum, Cody Larson and Tommy France who installed playground equipment at the school and Trevor Franzen who repaired a stone railing at Lake Helen.

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“City officials also encouraged the Monsanto Company to place a learning center there to study drought-resistant crops,” the judges said. “The Gothenburg Historical Museum was established and improvements were made to the park and to the Sun Theatre.”

Second place in the category went to Ainsworth with third place awarded to Imperial.

Gothenburg’s Eagle Scouts garnered another award in the Class III youth involvement and leadership development category.

Named the badge of honor, the award recognizes the efforts of the four Eagle scouts in completing community projects.

Other first-place communities in their respective divisions were Alexandria, Class I; Pawnee City, Class II; and Seward, Class IV.

Farnam also earned a Governor’s Community Spirit Award in Class I (population 1-500).

“For the second year in a row, Farnam earned the top prize in its class,” judges wrote. “This year, residents of all ages got involved in community planning and goal setting through NCIP’s Leadership Development Challenge.”

Local businesses also worked to update facades and clean up lots in the downtown district.

The town of Steinauer received second with Alexandria placing third.

Farnam’s Muriel Kotschwar was a winner when she received the Marilyn Ristine leadership award.

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Since 1978, Kotschwar has served in NCIP. She organized the area Welcome Wagon program where she visits all new residents, organizes a yearly "newcomer" supper and volunteers for many clubs and organizations including serving as secretary/treasurer for the North Union Aid Society.

The award is named in memory of Ristine who was an outstanding community leader in Gothenburg. It was created in 1993 to recognize a long-time, community volunteer who exhibits exemplary leadership qualities.

The village also won a technology, infrastructure and planning award in Class I for a welcome sign.

Both Dawson County and Cozad received special youth involvement and leadership awards.

Dawson and Gosper counties were recognized in Class IV (population 5,001 plus) for fund-raising efforts to send World War II veterans to Washington D.C. while Cozad won in Class III for Farm Exposure Day 2008.

The yearly banquet is when community volunteers and leaders celebrate their efforts at promoting and encouraging economic and community development.

The event capped the Second Annual Governor's Conference on Rural Development.

A program of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, NCIP is sponsored by Northern Natural Gas, Glenwood Telephone, SourceGas, Northwestern Energy and Black Hills Energy which help support the program year-round and provided plaques and cash prizes for the 2009 award winners.