

NEWS RELEASE

Board earns two national awards for innovative healthy water programs *Oakland County School Drinking Water and Healthy Lakes initiatives recognized by NACo*

May 15, 2019, Pontiac, Mich. – The Oakland County Board of Commissioners has been honored with two 2019 Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo). Both programs selected by NACo focus on the importance of clean, healthy water: the Oakland County School Drinking Water Station Program and the Oakland County Healthy Lakes Initiative. The School Drinking Water Station Program was selected as a winner in the “Health” category and the Healthy Lakes Initiative was selected as a winner in the “Volunteers” category.

“National recognition for success in protecting our water is a great honor,” said Board Chairman **David T. Woodward** (D-Royal Oak). “We invite other counties and local communities across the country to join us in making schools’ drinking water safer, and increasing lake testing to improve public health and protect our environment.”

NACo President Greg Cox said, “Counties implement innovative programs that enhance residents’ quality of life every day. This year’s Achievement Award-winning programs demonstrate how counties build healthy, safe and vibrant communities across America.”

The **Oakland County School Drinking Water Station Program** replaced more than 650 old drinking water fountains in Oakland County schools with state of the art drinking water and water bottle refilling stations. Older drinking fountains are a major source of lead contamination in school water because they were built with lead components that break down over time and can end up in the water kids drink. These new hydration stations include an additional filtration system to protect against lead and other toxic chemicals. In addition, they provide students with quick and easy access to fresh drinking water, which is particularly important for young children who – according to public health officials – should be offered water regularly throughout the school day. Lastly, the new drinking water stations help teach students eco-friendly methods of water consumption and reduce disposable plastic water bottles. Twenty-nine (29)

public school districts and seven (7) charter schools in the county took advantage of this innovative program.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners (BOC), in partnership with the Oakland County Health Division and Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC)/Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps), launched the **Oakland County Healthy Lakes Initiative**. The program collects important scientific data that can be used to preserve and protect Oakland County lakes. The program relied on volunteers to gather water samples that are tested by Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The BOC provided volunteers with free training and equipment to monitor lake water quality, and staff support. The BOC also created a webpage to serve as a hub for information about the Healthy Lakes Initiative for those looking to learn more www.oakgov.com/healthylakes. For some lakes, this was a first baseline of testing to monitor lake health. The program resulted in 77 Oakland County lakes participating last year, a more than fivefold increase from the previous year. Oakland County is home to more lakes than any other county in Michigan.

Started in 1970, NACo's annual Achievement Awards program is designed to recognize county government innovations. Nationally, awards are given in 18 different categories that reflect the vast, comprehensive services counties provide. These include Children & Youth, Criminal Justice, County Administration, Information Technology, Health and many more. NACo will recognize award-winning counties at its 2019 Annual Conference and Exposition July 12-15 in Clark County, Nevada.

For more information about NACo and their annual Achievement Awards, please go to www.naco.org. For more about the Board of Commissioners and its programs, please visit www.oakgov.com/boc.

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