



**For more information:**

Rob Henken  
President  
Public Policy Forum  
414-276-8240 (w) or 414-708-4392 (c)  
[rhenken@publicpolicyforum.org](mailto:rhenken@publicpolicyforum.org)

**For immediate release**

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

## **Public Policy Forum announces 23<sup>rd</sup> annual “Salute to Local Government” award winners**

**MILWAUKEE**, Wisconsin – *Tuesday, June 2, 2015* – The Milwaukee-based Public Policy Forum, a nonpartisan public policy research organization, has announced its 2015 *Salute to Local Government* award winners.

“Many citizens are unaware of the outstanding work that goes on every day in the halls of local government and in school administration buildings across southeast Wisconsin,” says Forum President Rob Henken. “The Salute reflects the Forum’s strong belief that good government is *worth* celebrating, and that the public needs to hear about innovative public sector leaders who are working diligently to provide good value for taxpayers.”

This year’s *Salute* includes awards categories that recognize governments and school districts for strong financial management, innovation, partnership, and cooperation, as well as individuals in the public sector for excellence and lifetime achievement.

The awards will be presented at the Public Policy Forum’s 23<sup>rd</sup> annual *Salute to Local Government* breakfast on **Tuesday, June 23, 7:30 – 9:00 a.m. at the Italian Conference Center, 631 East Chicago Street, in Milwaukee’s Historic Third Ward.**

The *Salute* breakfast is sponsored this year by Baker Tilly; BMO Harris Bank; Ehlers & Associates, Inc.; Helen Bader Foundation; Milwaukee Public Television; Northwestern Mutual Foundation; Potawatomi Bingo Casino; Quarles & Brady, LLP; Veolia Water; and We Energies.

The 2015 recipients are:

**“Innovation in Financial Management”**

*City of Oak Creek*

The City of Oak Creek used a variety of financing strategies and successful grant applications to remediate and redevelop the former Delphi Manufacturing site and create Drexel Town Square. These included tax incremental financing, direct investment in land purchases, and grant funding from the State of Wisconsin's Idle Industrial Site Redevelopment Grant Program. The project is estimated to generate 797 new jobs and \$210 million of assessed value when fully developed.

**“Effective Use of Technology or Data”**

*Town of Cedarburg*

The Town of Cedarburg used resident surveys and a pilot program with a private recycler to facilitate a data-driven decision on curbside recycling. Instead of using anecdotal evidence of dissatisfaction with the Town's drop-off recycling center to drive this decision, the Town instead developed a pilot program with 50 households to gauge the impact of curbside recycling, and followed that up with a resident survey that received nearly 1,000 responses. Curbside recycling was implemented in January 2015, and during its initial three months residents recycled 47% more than in the first three months of 2014.

**“Intergovernmental Cooperation”**

*Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission, City of Milwaukee (City Attorney's Office and Milwaukee Police Department), Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, U.S. Attorney's Office*

Representatives from the Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission (MADACC), City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, and U.S. Attorney's Office have partnered on several strategies to address the issue of dog fighting in the City of Milwaukee. Those strategies have included new legal mechanisms to ensure that dogs removed from homes during dog fighting sweeps could swiftly be placed in new homes; public education campaigns to deter dog fighting; and outreach programs designed to promote citizen involvement in improving the care of dogs. Results include a reduction in animal crimes and better collaboration between MADACC and law enforcement.

## **“Public-Private Cooperation”**

*Milwaukee City Attorney's Office, Marquette University, MillerCoors, Responsible Retailing Forum*

After Marquette University identified concentrated nuisance activity near its campus related to underage alcohol sales and over-service, the university partnered with MillerCoors and the City of Milwaukee to initiate a joint action plan. As a result, the Milwaukee Respect 21 program was developed with the Responsible Retailing Forum. Originally based in and around the Marquette neighborhood, the program has now been expanded to the entire City of Milwaukee. Respect 21 links alcohol licensees with regulators, law enforcement, and community groups. Licensees that enroll in Respect 21 conduct a self-assessment of their current practices, receive information on best practices, and receive feedback on actual staff performance as observed by Mystery Shoppers. Program results show significant improvement in compliance with participating retailers compared to the non-participant baseline.

## **“Leader of the Future Award”**

Kristi Johnson

Community Development Supervisor, City of West Allis

Kristi Johnson joined the City of West Allis as a planner in 2003 and was promoted to Community Development Supervisor in 2011. In that role, she works on economic development initiatives, manages state and federal grant funds, and oversees the City's Section 8 voucher program. Her many accomplishments include a lead role in the management of a \$6.8 million State grant that led to the development of a new hotel across from State Fair Park; management of a \$6 million low-income housing tax credit project that preserved and updated 104 units and constructed a new community center at the Beloit Road Senior Housing complex; management of the nearly \$2 million renovation of the Towne Center Shopping Center; and implementation of new technology that made the West Allis Housing Authority the State's first “paperless” housing authority. Mayor Dan Devine cites Kristi's "vision and ability to take a project to fruition efficiently, within budget, and with guiding principle to make West Allis a great place for all of our residents."

## **“James R. Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award”**

Ed Henschel

Former Manager/Administrator in Clio, MI, Elm Grove, Whitefish Bay, and City of Waukesha

Ed Henschel worked in public sector administration in Wisconsin for 30 years, including 16 years as the Village Manager in Elm Grove, seven years as Village Manager in Whitefish Bay, and nearly three years as City Administrator in the City of Waukesha, a post from which he retired earlier this year. Ed took the job in Waukesha after officials lured him out of retirement following a failed search for a new administrator. Among his many accomplishments, Ed served as one of three negotiators representing the FLOW communities during the “Sewer Wars” between Milwaukee and the suburban communities, which resulted in a settlement of more than \$150 million; he was involved in the creation of the North Shore Fire Department consolidation involving seven municipalities; and he was selected by his municipal colleagues as President

(and later Executive Director) of the Wisconsin City/County Management Association, President of the Milwaukee Municipal Employers Association, Chair of the North Shore Public Safety Dispatch Center, and Chair of Southeast Urban Data Systems.

**“Norman N. Gill Award”**

B. Thomas Wanta

Administrator, Milwaukee County Delinquency and Court Services Division

Tom Wanta joined Milwaukee County's social services department in 1976. He has spent most of his career working with delinquent youth, serving as Superintendent of the Milwaukee County Juvenile Detention Center for more than two decades before becoming the top official at the County's Delinquency and Court Services Division and Chief Juvenile Probation Officer. Tom has helped launch some of the County's most innovative and effective juvenile delinquency programs, including one that allows qualified youth to stay close to home instead of being sent to a Juvenile Correction Institution four hours away from Milwaukee. He is a Wisconsin Cares about Kids Award recipient and in 2011 he became the first superintendent to pass a Wisconsin State Jail Inspection with zero violations. According to Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele, Tom's "passion for juvenile justice in Milwaukee is unmatched...In seeking to empower the kids and families we work with, he refuses to ever accept that we can't always do better. Through his competence and drive, he regularly demonstrates that we can."

The substantial number of outstanding nominations also prompted the Forum to award an Honorable Mention in the “Public-Private Cooperation” category:

- The Village of Fox Point and Footbridge Friends for their partnership to construct a replacement pedestrian bridge over the Bridge Lane Ravine.

Milwaukee-based Public Policy Forum ([www.publicpolicyforum.org](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org)) – which was established in 1913 as a local government watchdog – is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the effectiveness of government and the development of southeastern Wisconsin through objective research of regional public policy issues.

#####