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## Forum announces Salute to Local Government award winners

**MILWAUKEE AND MADISON** –The Wisconsin Policy Forum is proud to announce its **2021 Salute to Local Government** award winners, including for new awards that recognize responses to the COVID-19 crisis and efforts to advance racial equity.

“As the impacts of the pandemic have continued to create challenges for local governments and school districts across Wisconsin and new sources of federal funds have created both new responsibilities and opportunities, it is particularly important to honor this outstanding group of governments and public sector leaders for their innovation, collaboration, and effectiveness,” Forum President Rob Henken said.

The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Salute celebrates the benefits that public sector ingenuity and excellence bring to taxpayers and communities throughout Wisconsin. Award categories recognize local governments and school districts for innovative problem-solving and intergovernmental and public-private cooperation, as well as individuals in the public sector for excellence and lifetime achievement.

For this year’s awards, a new “advancing racial equity” category recognizes the important role local governments and school districts play in that important societal objective. The 2021 Salute also recognizes a “Pandemic Hero” group winner for response to issues and challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eligibility for all awards generally is for local government or school district accomplishments or individual performance between our last Salute nomination deadline (September 2020) and the present. The Pandemic Hero award is intended for outstanding performance dating back to any time since the onset of the pandemic in the U.S. in early 2020.

“This has been a very difficult year-and-a-half for public sector leaders and workers, many of whom have logged increased hours and been subjected to increased risks to ensure citizens receive the services they need,” Henken said. “We are thrilled to be able to honor several examples of local governments and individuals who have stepped up when needed most.”

Previously the Salute has been an in-person event. Due to COVID-19, this event will be held in a hybrid in-person/virtual format on **Wednesday, November 17**. [Click here to learn more about the event and how to participate.](#)

Award recipients are:

### **Innovative Approach to Problem-Solving**

City of Middleton Sustainability Committee and Initiatives  
City of Middleton

The City of Middleton Sustainability Committee, established over a decade ago, is responsible for advancing sustainability opportunities for the city. In that time and over the past year, the committee has worked with the city and community to address and leverage support for sustainability initiatives in areas such as community gardens, waste and recycling, renewable and clean energy use, conservation and environmental stewardship, and water usage.

### **Effort to Advance Racial Equity**

Milwaukee Water Equity Taskforce

Milwaukee Water Works and Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

In 2017, Milwaukee Water Works (MWW) and Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) convened community groups, nonprofits, and educational institutions to form the Milwaukee Water Equity Taskforce, which created a roadmap toward workforce equity in this sector. It focused on recommendations for increasing collaboration, developing awareness, and reimagining work culture and procurement. Resulting efforts that were undertaken include holding jobs fairs and other career outreach, including to high school students and formerly incarcerated individuals; analyzing workforce demographics; revising rules and regulations to ensure cultural competence; and “banning the box” on job applications.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation**

Addressing Homelessness & Reimagining Area Under Marquette Interchange

City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, State of Wisconsin

In 2019, conditions became unsustainable at an encampment of people experiencing homelessness beneath the Marquette Interchange in downtown Milwaukee. Seeking creative solutions, Milwaukee city and county and state officials formed a work group comprised of urban planners, civil engineers, lawyers, police officers, homeless services experts, academics, nonprofit leaders, and more. Using a model that moves individuals to immediate shelter, then housing placement, and connects them to wraparound services, housing was obtained for all who were living there. By 2021, the site had been redeveloped into a stormwater management site with opportunities for future recreational uses.

### **Public-Private Cooperation**

Dine Out Program

Milwaukee County DHHS Division on Aging

When many Milwaukee County services were shut down or scaled back amid the pandemic, thousands of older adults were at risk of losing meals because of the closure of congregate meal sites. The Milwaukee County Division on Aging coordinated a response that included a new “Dine Out” program, in partnership with four local restaurants. Each of the restaurants made healthy, delicious food with a unique cultural flair and provided it to dining sites to be picked up by older adults or delivered to their homes. All four restaurants are minority-owned and in low-income neighborhoods. The program has helped hundreds of vulnerable seniors and advances Milwaukee County’s goal of becoming the healthiest county in Wisconsin by achieving racial equity.

### **Pandemic Hero Award**

Milwaukee County COVID-19 Dashboard EVE Model

Milwaukee County (Office of Emergency Management)

In March 2020, the Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management created a COVID-19 dashboard to visualize the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic. Information included totals for confirmed cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, as well as daily case data, new hospitalizations, new reported deaths, and a breakdown of all by race and ethnicity. It has been a vital source for monitoring the pandemic and was often used to evaluate the effectiveness of response policies,

particularly relating to communities of color. In March 2021, an Evaluating Vulnerability and Equity (EVE) Model was added to drive prioritization in distributing vaccine doses to vulnerable residents.

#### **Jean B. Tyler Leader of the Future Award**

Jim Healy

Village of Richfield Administrator

After starting with the Village of Richfield in Washington County as an intern in 2010, Jim Healy has been Village Administrator and Planning & Zoning Administrator the last seven years. Under Healy's leadership, Richfield was the first community in Wisconsin to offer drive-through absentee voting in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018, Healy oversaw passage of a voter referendum that essentially doubled what Richfield will be able to levy for road construction and maintenance. Healy also helped forge a public-private partnership to build a new volunteer fire company headquarters. In each of the last six years, the village won the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, the highest award in public budgeting.

#### **Norman N. Gill Award for Individual Excellence**

Steve O'Malley

La Crosse County Administrator

As La Crosse County Administrator since 2003, Steve O'Malley's tenure has been marked by strong fiscal stewardship – La Crosse County has a per-capita tax levy rate that is among the lowest of any Wisconsin county, and a credit rating that is among the highest. O'Malley also has shown a willingness to seek out creative partnerships to provide services including road projects or nursing home care at a regional level through the Mississippi Valley Health Service Commission. O'Malley's colleagues also credit him for taking a proactive approach on issues of equity in the workplace, a collaborative approach to labor relations, and a prominent role in community involvement.

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

Maria Monteagudo

Former Director of the Department of Employee Relations, City of Milwaukee

Maria Monteagudo retired from her position as director of the city of Milwaukee's Department of Employee Relations in 2020 after 16 years in the position. Among her many accomplishments was her leadership in developing a successful risk management program that resulted in significant reductions to workplace injuries, incidence rate, and overall claims. She helped facilitate the city's transition after the passage of Act 10, and most recently, employee policies and protocols for COVID-19. She was a recipient of the 2015 Public Sector Leader of the Year Award from Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee, among other honors.

The Forum would like to thank this year's Salute award judges: Abby Attoun, Amy Turim, Claire Silverman, Sarah Diedrick-Kasdorf, Joan Prince, Michelle Naples, Robert Whitaker, Sheri Krause, and Kenneth Munson.

The 29<sup>TH</sup> Annual Salute to Local Government is sponsored by Baker Tilly, Bader Philanthropies, Ehlers, Herb Kohl Philanthropies, Kapur, Inc., League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Northwestern Mutual, Potawatomi Hotel & Casino, Quarles & Brady LLP, Veolia, and We Energies. Our media sponsor is Mueller Communications.

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