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News Release

For more information, contact:

Tod Pritchard, WEM

608-242-3324 (work)

608-219-4008 (cell)

tod.pritchard@wisconsin.gov

Jessica Erickson, AT&T

608-282-7870 (work)

608-692-5340 (cell)

jessica.erickson@att.com

AT&T Announces \$15,000 Innovation Award to STEP Program; Program Teaches 5th Graders How to Prepare for Disasters, Emergencies

***Lt. Governor Encourages Schools to Begin Signing Up Now
For 2013-14 School Year at www.ReadyWisconsin.Wi.Gov/STEP***

VERONA, Monday, October 7, 2013 — During a visit to West Middleton Elementary School today, Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch announced the return of the STEP program to Wisconsin classrooms, thanks to a \$15,000 grant from AT&T. The Lt. Governor also encouraged schools to begin signing up now for this year's program, which teaches students how to prepare for disasters and react to emergencies.

"When disaster strikes, it's important that Wisconsin communities know how to respond and act quickly," said Lt. Governor Kleefisch. "The STEP program not only teaches students how to prepare for emergencies, but it also encourages them to share that information with their families. I encourage interested schools in the Madison area and throughout the state to sign up for this program and help prepare their students for emergencies."

STEP (*Student Tools for Emergency Planning*) is a turn-key classroom curriculum for teachers to prepare 5th graders for various emergencies and disasters, including tornadoes, flooding and storms. The program also shows students how to put together an emergency kit and develop an emergency plan with their families.

The program is being funded this year through a \$15,000 Innovation & Investment Award from AT&T Wisconsin. AT&T has a long-standing commitment to disaster preparedness and business continuity, and is the first company in the nation to earn U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) certification for disaster preparedness. AT&T also received an Honorable Mention Award for Outstanding Achievement in Youth Preparedness as part of the 2013 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards.

"We know how critical it is to be ready and prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency," said Scott T. VanderSanden, president of AT&T Wisconsin. "Not only are we proud that our network operations are state-of-the-art when it comes to performing during and after a disaster, but we are also proud to help prepare Wisconsin families to respond to emergencies through our support of the STEP program."

West Middleton Elementary in Verona is planning to teach the STEP program for the second year in a row.

“Emergencies and disasters can happen at any time to anyone, and that’s why we think it’s important to prepare our students,” said West Middleton Principal Todd Macklem. “We’re excited to once again teach the STEP curriculum and give our students the confidence and potentially life-saving tools they need to know what to do in an emergency situation.”

Interested schools must apply for the STEP program by visiting <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/STEP/default.asp>. Applications are due by December 2, and participants will be notified by December 6. Materials will be distributed to schools in early January, and instruction should be complete by the end of the 2013-2014 academic year.

Teachers are provided with all materials at no cost to the schools, including instructor guides, DVDs and copies of student handouts. All students participating in the program will also receive an emergency kit to take home, which includes a flashlight, first aid kit and emergency blanket. The basic lesson is only one hour of instruction, but teachers can expand the lessons to cover eight hours of materials.

Wisconsin became the first state in the Midwest to teach the STEP program during the 2010-2011 school year. Nearly 2,400 students from Wisconsin schools participated in the program during that first year. The number grew to 8,000 students by the 2012-13 school year, and the goal for this year is to reach 10,000 students.

For more information on the STEP program, please visit <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/STEP/default.asp> to view a STEP video and download a brochure, or contact Tod Pritchard at tod.pritchard@wisconsin.gov or 608-242-3324.

The AT&T Wisconsin Innovation & Investment Award program provides grant funding to organizations and programs that improve the community by: advancing education, enhancing the environment, promoting economic development and new technologies, or delivering other essential community services. This is the second \$15,000 AT&T Innovation Award given to support the STEP program.

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