



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Heart of New Ulm to Serve as Minnesota GreenCorps Host Site

The Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation® has been chosen by the Minnesota GreenCorps program to have Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project® (HONU) serve as a host site for the 2015-2016 program year.

Launched in 2009, Minnesota GreenCorps is a statewide program to help preserve and protect Minnesota's environment while training a new generation of environmental professionals. This program places AmeriCorps members with local governments, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations around Minnesota, where they serve for 11 months on focused environmental projects. The program is coordinated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

In New Ulm, the corps member will work on coordinating New Ulm's Safe Routes to School Program, improving the city's built environment and promoting active transportation as part of the GreenCorps' Air Quality and Green Transportation focus.

Cindy Winters, manager for The Heart of New Ulm Project, said, "The timing couldn't be better, as the Region Nine Development Commission just completed the Safe Routes to School planning process. The GreenCorps member will enable us to dedicate more resources to help educate and engage everyone in the community as we begin to implement the plan."

Winters said the Safe Routes to School Plan is being presented to the New Ulm City Council on July 21 and will be presented to the District 88 school board very soon as well. The Region Nine Development Commission conducted a parent survey about Safe Routes to School in 2014 and subsequently developed the plan with the City of New Ulm, the Heart of New Ulm, Brown County Public Health and all the schools in New Ulm as partners.

The goals of the Safe Routes to School program in New Ulm are to:

- Promote walking and biking to and from school with students, parents, and the community.
- Improve the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure around schools and in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Create safe and adequate routes to and from school.
- Encourage and educate proper habits, behaviors, and roadway skills for all users.
- Decrease traffic amount and speeds around the schools.
- Reduce conflicts between pedestrians/bicyclists and motorists.

Winters explained that creating a safe environment that promotes physical activity and green transportation methods (i.e., walking and biking) is an important strategy for the Heart of New Ulm as it works to help people stay healthy and prevent heart attacks. By making the areas around the schools safer as well as various routes safer, both children and adults can benefit. The project should in turn reduce traffic and improve the city's air quality, in particular around the public schools.

The GreenCorps member will office out of the New Ulm Medical Center (NUMC) and work under the guidance of Winters. The corps member will work collaboratively with the school district and NUMC, as well as four community-based volunteer groups: the Heart of New Ulm Leadership Team, the Coalition for Active Safe and Healthy Streets, the New Ulm Bike Group and the Safe Routes to School Action Team.

More information on the GreenCorps program is available on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's website at www.pca.state.mn.us.