

Avon Hills Initiative

2009 Initiative Awards

“Recognizing extraordinary people in the Avon Hills”

Stearns County Board of Commissioners & staff *Public Service Initiative Award*

The Stearns County Board of Commissioners and staff have successfully concluded an extensive and painstaking process of revising the Comprehensive Plan for the county. The Commissioners have a rare visionary perspective in regards to the long-term planning for the future of the county. Through months of collaboration with county residents and hundreds of hours of committee meetings and public hearings they have crafted a well-balanced Comprehensive Plan that sets the parameters for both a continuation of the farming tradition and open space of the county while providing room for orderly growth and development.

Mark and Joan Strobel *Conservation & Land Stewardship Initiative Award*

No other people on Big Watab Lake have done more to preserve and protect the lake than Mark and Joan Strobel. Over the last 22 years they have worked tirelessly to implement programs to prevent pollution and improve water quality of the lake. They have attended conferences, written grants, studied and gathered information to help educate the community, and promoted many antipollution efforts, including septic system compliance, construction of a water retention structure to reduce agricultural runoff into the lake, monitoring water quality as part of the Citizens' Lake Monitoring Program for 22 years, completing a Lake Assessment Plan with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and developing a lakescaping award system with Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation to promote lakescaping and buffer zones. Mark and Joan Strobel's proactive and persistent work is helping to preserve water quality in Big Watab Lake and its watershed comparable to that of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, despite increased local development and heavy recreational use.

D.H. Blattner & Sons, Inc. *Business Initiative Award*

Founded in 1907, D.H. Blattner & Sons, Inc. now provides construction services to the electrical energy industry across the United States and Canada. To make room for its growing staff Blattner has completed a new corporate headquarters building in Avon incorporating dozens of techniques and technologies that improve the environment in and around the building while reducing utility and maintenance costs. Notably the Blattner headquarters is the second building in the U.S. to be heated and cooled by an innovative geothermal heat pump and ice storage system. The new Blattner headquarters meets the criteria, and an application has been submitted, for a Platinum Certificate, the highest rating offered by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ of the U.S. Green Building Council.

Francis and Karen Schellinger *Lifetime Initiative Award*

Over more than three decades as they raised their family on wooded acreage straddling Kalla Lake Road south of Avon, Francis and Karen Schellinger have treated their land as a legacy for future generations. They tapped sugar maples in the spring. They selectively harvested trees for lumber. They opened the woods to the public using the Torgertokle cross country ski trail. They kept the big woods intact. At the same time they were building community among area residents of all walks of life. They encouraged local artists and artisans. They built with local materials and methods. And through the sawmill they supplied local materials to other residents. Last year Karen and Francis secured the legacy of the big woods for future generations by selling 100 acres bordering Shuman Lake Road to the Minnesota DNR for a Scientific and Natural Area, permanently preserving a beautiful and ecologically important parcel of the Avon Hills.

The annual Initiative Awards were created to celebrate individuals or organizations who are developing or preserving jobs, preserving open land, or promoting the rural character, beauty and ecological health of the environment and livable communities within the Avon Hills. Nominees are evaluated on the significance of their contribution to the well being of residents, workers, and visitors.

Award Categories

Public Service Initiative

Individuals or civic leaders who have provided extraordinary community service to the Avon Hills.

Conservation and Land Stewardship Initiative

Individuals or organizations who have contributed in a significant way to conservation and preservation efforts in the Avon Hills.

Business Initiative

Individuals or companies whose actions reflect the mission and vision of the Avon Hills Initiative, especially creating or retaining high quality jobs and pursuing sustainable development.

Lifetime Initiative

Individuals or organizations whose contributions represent a lifetime of commitment to the well-being of citizens, communities, and rural environment of the Avon Hills.

The Avon Hills Executive committee accepts nominations for the annual Initiative Awards each year.

- Nominations may be submitted by any supporter of the Avon Hills Initiative.
- Nominations must be approved by the nominated individual, business, or organization.
- Award recipients are determined by a majority vote of the Avon Hills Initiative Executive Committee.

<http://www.csbsju.edu/arboretum/avonhills/InitiativeAward.htm>