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## **Center for Small Towns Receives Major Grant from Otto Bremer Foundation**

*Summary: The \$150,000 grant will assist in the Center for Small Towns operational and project costs.*

(March 15, 2013)-The University of Minnesota, Morris's Center for Small Towns (CST) was recently awarded a \$150,000 operating support grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation. CST intends to use the support to protect and expand its current portfolio of community services and projects as well as to promote and expand services in the areas of geographical information systems (GIS) mapping and survey design and analysis.

"I can't emphasize enough how rare it is to get operational support like this," says Arne Kildegaard, director of CST. "I think Bremer really trusted us with this grant, not only in terms of the work we've been doing, but also in terms of our evolving strategic plan."

"CST provides some valued services to the region and opportunities to our own students, but we're getting the message that a greater degree of self-sufficiency is the way forward. What this grant does is give us the breathing room to road-test strategies—strategies that service some unmet needs in the community and help defray some of the costs to the University. As we have for years, we'll be working closely with the Data Service Center (Statistics Discipline faculty and students) to provide the region with high-quality survey and data analysis capabilities, and to provide our students with applied learning opportunities. We'll also be building some new capacity in the area of GIS. Our goal is to continue to stand for the outreach and education missions of the University, even while we help put them on a more stable long-term financial footing," says Kildegaard.

The Otto Bremer Foundation owns Bremer bank and distributes the profits of the bank, largely through grants to non-profit organizations in rural areas. In 2011 the Foundation provided 715 grants and two program-related investments totaling around \$30.5 million. The average grant size was \$41,563 and program-related investments averaged \$425,000. On more than one occasion CST has received backing from Bremer in the past, in support of faculty research as well as in support of student projects and general CST operations.

CST is a community outreach program that serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, k-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize the Center's resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. Their mission is to focus the University's attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota's small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.

Pictured from left: Holly Witt, Bremer Bank nonprofit resource specialist, Jan Hagen, Bremer Bank Morris/Starbuck market manager, Kelly Asche, Center for Small Towns program coordinator, Arne Kildegaard, Center for Small Towns director, Barb Hesse, Center for Small Towns principal office and administrative assistant, and Jessica Beyer, Center for Small Towns community program assistant. Not pictured: Rose Murphy, Center for Small Towns associate administrator.

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