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**The Center for Small Town Student Employees Help Improve Local Newspapers**

*Summary: The Center for Small Towns (CST) assists the MN News Media Institute (MNMI) with its influential Editors & Publishers Community Leadership Program*

(September 6, 2012)-Newspapers play a big role in the civic life of rural communities, so organizations like the MN News Media Institute (MNMI) and its Editors & Publishers Leadership Program have been founded to help small town newspapers thrive. The Center for Small Towns (CST) at the University of Minnesota, Morris hires students each year to assist with this program. Through a content analysis of seven participating newspapers, CST's students helped members of the leadership program identify the need to have balanced, inclusive coverage.

The goal of MNMI's leadership program is to tailor newspapers to have balanced coverage of "8 Dimensions of a Healthy Community." These dimensions, developed by the Blandin Foundation, are as follows: economic development lifelong learning, valuing diversity spiritual, recreational, and cultural opportunities safety and security environmental stewardship community leadership and infrastructure and services. Articles from three months' newspapers were analyzed and sorted into these eight categories by students Samantha Bruno, '13, Foley Sarah Thiede, '14, Cottage Grove and Zachary Threadgill, '14, Anoka. These students followed a structured system of reading and coding the articles, created graphs of how articles were categorized, and analyzed trends that surfaced.

Bruno, Thiede, and Threadgill presented their findings to the participants of MNMI's leadership program via web conference. According to Program Director Sarah Bauer, "We count on them for this important piece of one of our most popular and prestigious training programs." Each participating newspaper received a report of the findings pertaining to their paper. Newspapers will be able to reference their reports to help determine if they are providing coverage for all of the eight dimensions.

MNMI's Editors and Publishers Leadership Program and the work of CST students will help local newspapers continue to be vital and valuable community resources.

The University of Minnesota, Morris Center for Small Towns 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 CST's resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. CST's mission is to focus the University's attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota's small towns with locally identified issues while creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.