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Center for Small Towns receives Otto Bremer Foundation grant

Summary: More than \$91,000 in grant funding will allow CST to sponsor more faculty research, strengthen statistics and data resources, and enhance student involvement initiatives.

(May 27, 2011)-The Center for Small Towns (CST) at the University of Minnesota, Morris has been awarded \$91, 877 through the Otto Bremer Foundation to assist with numerous activities and projects. To date, CST has collaborated on more than 200 community-initiated projects engaged more than 1,500 University students with real life experience, community service, and hands-on training opportunities in rural communities provided opportunities for dozens of University of Minnesota, Morris faculty from across academic disciplines to participate in CST outreach programs and leveraged more than \$2 million to assist small Minnesota communities.

This award will allow CST to sponsor more faculty research projects, strengthen the CST as a statistics and data resource, enhance the CST's student involvement initiatives, and in some cases, help communities defray the costs of hiring a student through one of CST's numerous programs, such as the AmeriCorps Students In Service program.

Says Bart Finzel, CST interim director, "This grant will strengthen all of our functional areas and allow us to provide better service and have a bigger impact on the communities of west central Minnesota."

The grant will also allow CST to hire more student workers. Each year CST breaks its previous record for number of students hired and is one of the best sources for student on-campus jobs in Morris. Says Melinda Kawalek '13, Inver Grove Heights, who is working on the Students Using Natural Energy (SUN-E) project, "CST has the best and most engaging jobs on campus. You get to do things that are more closely related to the things you'll do in the real world." CST is very excited to be given this opportunity by the Otto Bremer Foundation to do even more for the community.

Created in 1944, the Otto Bremer Foundation assists people in achieving full economic, civic and social participation in and for the betterment of their communities. The Foundation's work to help build and maintain vibrant communities is based on the vision and legacy of Otto Bremer, whose commitment to Bremer Bank communities and to those working to make their lives better, continues to guide the Foundation. The Otto Bremer Foundation owns the majority share of Bremer Bank, and a portion of the bank's profits comes to the Foundation as dividends, enabling the Foundation to invest back in the bank communities in the form of grants and program-related investments. In 2010, more than \$24 million in charitable donations were given across the Bremer footprint. Organizations whose beneficiaries are residents of Minnesota, North Dakota, or Wisconsin are eligible to apply for Foundation grants, with priority given to communities served by Bremer Bank.

The [Center for Small Towns](#) is a community outreach program housed at the University of Minnesota, Morris and serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University. Small towns, local units of government, K-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize the CST'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.

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 or call 888-866-3382.