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Deon Haider '14 assists Stevens FORWARD! reach goals

Summary: Haider '14 serves as a writer educating the public on climate change and carbon neutrality.

(March 30, 2011)-Stevens FORWARD! is working hard to make Stevens County a better place to live. Stevens FORWARD! is a local community development initiative striving to make Stevens County a model rural Minnesota community. The organization identified 14 “destiny drivers” to accomplish this goal, and since 2008 the [Center for Small Towns](#) (CST) at the University of Minnesota, Morris has been providing STEVENS FORWARD! with student assistance, such as the writing contributions of University of Minnesota, Morris student Deon Haider '14, Northfield.

Haider has been serving [Stevens FORWARD!](#) for the past several months by writing articles relating specifically to Destiny Driver #8, which states that “By 2015, Stevens County will be the first carbon neutral county in the world, demonstrating viable models for green housing, neighborhoods, and public buildings.”

Recently Haider wrote an article about the dangers of greenhouse gases, likening their heat trapping properties to those of a car on a warm, sunny day. She warns that “human activity has increased greenhouse gas emissions and is speeding up the warming of Earth’s surface and atmosphere at an unnatural and unhealthy rate.” Stevens FORWARD! is hoping that Stevens County citizens will work to become more energy efficient, saving money in the process. Two helpful websites Haider recommends are otpc.com/SaveEnergyMoney/Tips4SavingEnergy.asp and epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html.

Haider says that she’s “really enjoyed the chance to work with Stevens FORWARD! I think they are a great group of realistically visionary people and that the initiative is really going to benefit the future of Stevens County.” She also hopes that the Stevens FORWARD! model can “inspire other counties around the country to take some of the same steps” as Stevens County has done. She feels that she personally has benefited simply by writing the articles. For example, the writing process for the greenhouse gas article required her to thoroughly research the greenhouse effect, something she already had some knowledge about, but which became even clearer to her in the process.

Stevens FORWARD! is an effort to create a brighter future for all residents of the county community: Alberta, Chokio, Donnelly, Hancock, and Morris. The group believes the best days of our community are ahead of us, and the best way to get there is to get on the same page regarding what we want and how to best work together. Funded through a variety of public and private sources including the county, the five cities, the townships, the University of Minnesota, Morris, financial institutions, and local businesses, this initiative represents a genuine spirit of partnership and collaboration. Their destiny statement reads: “Stevens County will be the model community in rural Minnesota, recognized for our progressive development and our innovations in renewable energy, agriculture, business, and education. We will achieve this by building upon the intellectual and social capital already present within the county, and by attracting new and diverse talent that will drive our economy and increase our population.”

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 of Minnesota. 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.

Photo: Deon Haider

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.