

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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First Lady Sally Ganem honors Lincoln volunteers

(Lincoln, Neb.) Nebraska's First Lady Sally Ganem presented community service awards to Cornhusker Council-Boy Scouts of America for Outstanding Community Service Project, and Kari Rumbaugh for Professional Commitment to Service, on April 11, 2014 during the annual First Lady's Outstanding Community Service Awards luncheon ceremony at The Thompson Center on the University of Nebraska Omaha campus.

In the fall of 2013, the Cornhusker Council, Boy Scouts of America (BSA) served the community through the Big Idea Event. The Big Idea was all about two major areas Scouting stands for, Service & Leadership.

Through this event, the Cornhusker Council, BSA collaborated with City of Lincoln Parks and Recreation, the Lincoln Parks Foundation, and several other community partners to put on a large scale service project.

Through this project more than 750 Scouts and adult leaders came together on Saturday, October 12th and planted 300 trees at Pioneers Park in Lincoln. Project participants provided nearly 3,000 service hours in that one day. The trees that were planted will work to replace the large number of trees in the park that have died in recent years due to disease and drought.

Scout units within the Cornhusker Council provided more than 35,000 hours of community service in 2013. Service to Community has always been a key element of the scouting program, teaching youth to give back to their communities and provide service to others. The Big Idea was designed to build up a significant act of service and highlight the ongoing efforts of Scouting throughout the year.

Kari Rumbaugh started the Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE) program in 2007 through a grant provided by ServeNebraska when evidence demonstrated that poor engagement in educational and employment pursuits create a risk factor for ongoing criminal behavior by those on probation. This program, is unique to Nebraska and AmeriCorps. As the program director of RISE, Kari oversees RISE Specialists who currently serve probationers in 28 counties located in 10 rural probation districts in Nebraska. These RISE Specialists facilitate groups for adults and juveniles by teaching employment and educational skills, along with networking and building relationships with local businesses, community organizations, and schools. The goal is to increase the probationer's skills in regards to education and employment to keep the probationers from returning to the probation system, resulting in safer communities and individual success.

Through Kari's efforts, the RISE AmeriCorps program has served over 5,105 juvenile and adult probationers in need of employment and educational skills. Since its inception in 2007, RISE has successfully graduated 832 adult and juvenile probationers, with 603 of those probationers having not returned to the probation system one year after completion, accounting for a 73% success rate much greater than the success rate of probationers not in RISE. All successes the RISE program has achieved can be directly related to the commitment to service and belief in the program that Kari instills on a daily basis.

The RISE program is in its seventh year of existence, and in that time Kari has committed her time and efforts to countless hours of service, project coordination, and collaboration. In 2014, the RISE program was selected as one of the TOP 52 Most Innovative AmeriCorps Programs in the United States.

For more information about the First Lady's Outstanding Community Service Awards, visit ServeNebraska at, www.serve.nebraska.gov.

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