

County hauls in awards

■ Macomb tops Michigan in honors.

By Chad Selweski

Macomb Daily Staff Writer

For the 26th consecutive year, Macomb County leads Michigan in the number of "good government" awards presented by the National Association of Counties.

Macomb County received 16 NACo awards for exemplary programs ranging in scope from environmental protection to

senior citizen services. The 16 citations were the most among Michigan's 83 counties, and tied Macomb for fourth in the nation.

"Our employees, department heads and elected officials deserve all the credit for identifying new ways to improve services and help people in need," said county board Chairman William Crouchman. "It is a truly remarkable achievement for our government to perform at this level for so many years."

Macomb finished behind only San Diego and Los Angeles counties in California, and Mecklenburg County in North Carolina, which includes the city of Charlotte. In the 26 years that Macomb has led the state, it has received 542 NACo awards.

The awards are bestowed on innovative programs, and information about them is placed in a NACo national database, where other counties can emulate them.

In Macomb County, the Department of Senior Citizen Services led the way with four awards, the Clerk's Office garnered three and the Health Department received two.

The winning programs and services are:

■ The senior citizens department's Victim Liaison program, which helps elderly crime victims navigate the justice system and cope with the aftermath of crime.

■ A law enforcement effort launched by the Sheriff's Department that uses volunteers to help nab sexual predators on the Internet.

■ An anti-fraud program created by the Clerk's Office that allows the Social Security Administration to verify a birth certificate's authenticity through a secure Internet service.

■ The Proud Equestrian program offered by Michigan State University-Extension, which matches volunteers with disabled horseback riders.

■ A collections effort by the county court administration that more aggressively recoups a variety of costs from criminal

defendants.

■ The Juvenile Court's Next Steps program, which provides rehabilitation for young sex offenders.

■ The "Imagine The Possibilities" contest held by the Public Works Commissioner's Office, which sought ideas from the public about recycling and waste reduction.

■ A program by the Clerk's Office that trains students to become election inspectors.

■ The discount program overseen by the senior citizens department, which provides dental care coverage to the uninsured for \$69 a year.

■ The Health Department's environmental enforcement program, which tracks illegal sewage discharges into waterways.

■ A service offered by the Health Department that allows for the safe disposal of unwanted medications, keeping them out of landfills, where they present a potential health hazard.

■ A senior citizens department effort, in conjunction with the Prescription Resource Network, that works with pharmaceutical companies to obtain free prescription drugs for the poor.

■ The "Community Connection Day" sponsored by the Community Services Agency, which offers free products and services to the homeless while simultaneously conducting a census of the homeless population.

■ The legal assistance services for seniors facing legal troubles or the need of an attorney's advice.

■ The Project Phoenix program initiated by the Community Mental Health Services Department, which provides support for those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

■ Campaign finance reports offered for public scrutiny on the Internet by the Clerk's Office.

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