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For Immediate Release
January 30, 2017

STEP Returns to Wisconsin Students at Waubesa Intermediate School in McFarland Learn How to Be Prepared for Disasters & Emergencies

(McFarland) - During a visit to Waubesa Intermediate School in McFarland today, Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and Major General Don Dunbar, Adjutant General and Wisconsin's Homeland Security Advisor, announced the return of the STEP program to Wisconsin classrooms, thanks to \$20,000 in donations from AT&T and the Wisconsin Wireless Association.

The STEP Program stands for Student Tools for Emergency Planning, and teaches students how to prepare for disasters and react to emergencies.

"When disaster strikes, it's important that Wisconsin communities know how to respond and act quickly," said Lt. Governor Kleefisch. "The STEP program not only teaches students how to prepare for emergencies, but it also encourages them to share that information with their families. We are excited to kickoff this program to help schools like Waubesa Intermediate and others across the state prepare their students for emergencies and disasters."

STEP is a turn-key classroom curriculum for teachers to prepare 5th graders for various emergencies and disasters, including blizzards, tornadoes, flooding and storms. The program also shows students how to put together an emergency kit and develop an emergency plan.

"Getting students excited about emergency preparedness is the goal of the STEP program," said Maj. Gen. Dunbar. "Students bring emergency preparedness information that they learned in the classroom back home. They are able to encourage their parents, siblings and friends to put together their own family disaster plan and disaster kits to help them be better prepared for emergencies."

The program is being funded this year through a \$10,000 Innovation & Investment Award from AT&T Wisconsin and a \$10,000 donation from the Wisconsin Wireless Association. Since 2012, AT&T has provided \$68,000 (including today's donation) to support the STEP program in Wisconsin.

"We know how critical it is to be ready and prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency," said Scott T. VanderSanden, president of AT&T Wisconsin. "Not only are we proud that our network operations are state-of-the-art when it comes to performing during and after a disaster, but we are also proud to help prepare Wisconsin families to respond to emergencies through our support of the STEP program."

During today's event, students at Waubesa Intermediate School in McFarland learned how they can be prepared in the event of a disaster or emergency situation.

"Emergencies and disasters can happen at any time to anyone, and that's why we think it's important to prepare our students," said Principal Sue Murphy. "We're excited to participate in the STEP program and help give our students the confidence and potentially life-saving tools they need to respond in an emergency situation."

Teachers are provided with all materials at no cost to the schools, including instructor guides, DVDs and copies of student handouts. All students participating in the program will also receive an emergency kit to take home, which includes a flashlight. The basic lesson is only one hour of instruction, but teachers can expand the lessons to cover eight hours of materials.

Wisconsin became the first state in the Midwest to teach the STEP program. Over 40,000 students have participated in STEP since the program began during the 2010-11 school year. Another 12,000 students are expected to participate in the 2016-17 school year in 160 schools around the state.

For more information on the assembly and distribution of the STEP starter emergency kits, visit: <http://dma.wi.gov/DMA/news/2017news/17003>

For more information on the STEP program, please visit <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/STEP/default.asp> to view a STEP video and download a brochure, or contact Tod Pritchard at tod.pritchard@wisconsin.gov or 608-242-3324.

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