

**2011 Minnesota Alliance With Youth**  
**Red Wagon Awards**  
**Star Partner Award to the Otto Bremer Foundation**

---

We are pleased to recognize the Otto Bremer Foundation for their commitment to young people and communities across Minnesota. The Otto Bremer Foundation was founded to support and assist people and communities in Minnesota and the upper Midwest in achieving full economic, civic, and social participation in and for the betterment of their communities. The Foundation invests in communities that are homes and neighbors to Bremer banks in the form of grants and program-related investments.

Over the past few years, the Bremer Foundation has been a key partner with the Alliance by generously providing financial support for several of our partner communities to host AmeriCorps Promise Fellows, convene community gatherings to address youth issues, and to engage young people in civic life both at the local level and through the Minnesota Youth Council. In particular, the Alliance and the communities of Brainerd, Fergus Falls, Marshall, and St. Cloud were supported for their efforts to expand programming for youth and to engage more adults and youth in service. Last year alone, these four communities were able to serve 620 youth; mobilize 425 youth and adult volunteers to serve 7,035 hours to support their communities. Because of these reasons, the Minnesota Alliance With Youth is pleased to honor and recognize the commitment and leadership of the Otto Bremer Foundation with its Star Partner Award.

## **2011 Minnesota Alliance With Youth**

### **Red Wagon Awards**

#### **GROUP AWARD WINNERS**

---

#### ***Crosby Youth Center, Crosby***

The Alliance is honored to present the Crosby Youth Center with a Red Wagon Award. The Crosby Youth Center is being recognized, in particular, for the efforts of four young men Harley Christenson, Steve Hansen, Mitchell D'Ambrogio, and Keith Corey who became involved with the Youth Wellness Initiative and its Youth Council. Together these youth are helping to build the youth council and finding new ways to connect other young people to their community, including through a Peer Study Group. At a first meeting of the Council, they were asked two questions: "What problems do you see or experience in your community?" and "How can we fix it?". Their honest response inspired them to take the lead on the council and they are planning a Youth Rally for November. As their nominator said: "*These kids really showed that they wanted to see change happen. They are always ready to go and have really taken ownership of the Youth Center in Crosby.*" We are honored to present a Red Wagon Award to this group of outstanding young leaders.

#### ***East Metro Integration District Youth Executive Board, St. Paul***

This year the East Metro Integration District Youth Executive Board chose advocating for educational policy issues as their service learning project. They researched and learned about three main areas: integration & equity, The Dream Act and the reality of Minnesota's achievement gap. They decided to focus on speaking about their perspective in relation to the MN Education Omnibus bill. In particular, the students addressed the negative impact that eliminating Integration Revenue and freezing compensatory aid and special education funding would have on the quality of education. The students did a variety of things to share their perspective including writing letters to representatives, meeting with different policymakers, and starting an online petition which received over 1500 signatures in support of the Bill. Youth Executive Board members talked to peers and teachers within their high schools to spread awareness and educate individuals about the MN Education Omnibus bill and encourage people to contact their representatives. As result, students

experienced profound transformations in their leadership development and confidence in writing and speaking skills which have led us to honor them with this Red Wagon Award.

***Make A Difference Club, Fergus Falls***

Throughout the past three years, Fergus Falls' Kennedy Secondary School youth in grades 6th - 8th have brought service into our school and community like never before! In addition to bi-weekly gatherings during school hours, students have served in a variety of ways including a litter pick up for the local River Walk, helping with Delta Dental Hygiene Kit Assembly (with over 800 kits being delivered to the Food Shelf in 2011) and the 2010 & 2011 Students Today, Leaders Forever Trips. The group is unique within the Fergus Falls community because it is not a selected group of students; rather it harnesses the energy of varied students at different points throughout the year to come at their own will. By connecting youth to their community through service and recognition in the local media, they are building successful skills and a strong perception of their abilities to become members of the whole inter-woven community. This has led to multiple outcomes including cohesiveness among students, optimism amongst group members to participate in other activities and willingness to support all members of the group passionately. All in all, Make A Difference is performing small wonders on a consistent basis by building school community and for the community at large by creating thoughtful, kind and empathetic individuals. They are our next generation of leaders! Congratulations on receiving a Red Wagon Award!

***Olmsted County/Rochester Youth Commission, Rochester***

The Olmsted County/Rochester Youth Commission is being recognized for outstanding leadership and service to their community. Since Fall 2010, the Commission has:

- Joined the Olmsted County Homeless Response Team for Youth
- Solicited donations of 3,400 tickets for cultural/recreational events for low income, academically challenged students
- Tutored low income/high risk children
- Served on the Rochester Citizens Advisory for Public Safety , the Human Rights and Environmental Commissions
- Sponsored of Teens on Tour at the State Capitol where 100 middle & high school students participated, accompanied by community leaders to learn and advocate
- Recruited over 350 youth to help plant over 1200 trees in Rochester

Please join us in honoring their outstanding service to Olmsted County & the City of Rochester with this Red Wagon Award!

### ***Waconia Community Youth Action Crew, Waconia***

Beginning in September, the Carver County Health Partnership started a project to map out youth-friendly locations in Carver County. Each school district in the county was charged with surveying the youth, businesses, and youth programs in their community. Mynyanna, Madison, Kylie, and Kindra stepped up to the plate for the Waconia Community Youth Action Crew and worked very hard to accomplish all that was set out for them. These four girls were able to survey nearly 200 youth in the community, approximately 50 businesses, and many more youth programs in the Waconia area. This information was then utilized to create a map for youth to use to find places to hang-out, find jobs, do homework, attend programs for youth, or meet new youth in the community. This program ended up lasting all school year and these four girls stuck with it all year. Please join us in congratulating them on their hard work and on receiving this award!

### ***24 – Sevens Transitions Project, Minneapolis***

The youth of the 24-Seven Transitions Project are a youth advocacy group comprised of current and former foster youth. This group of young people is committed to improving the child welfare system by lending their voice to advocate for change within the foster care system by speaking with public officials, professionals working on behalf of youth in foster care, and the community about their experiences and ways to improve the system for the future. Over the last two years, they have conducted numerous community-based, regional, and state-wide presentations in the State of Minnesota. These youth use their personal stories and perform dramatic self-written vignettes in order to inspire others to new levels of understanding. The overarching goal is to help youth make a smoother transition from foster care to a life of independence. We are thrilled to honor this outstanding group of youth with this Red Wagon Award!

## **2011 Minnesota Alliance With Youth**

### **Red Wagon Awards**

#### **Individual Awards**

---

#### ***Sagal Ali, Minneapolis***

Sagal Ali has been involved in the Minnesota Youth Council for two years. Throughout her time with the youth council she has demonstrated leadership skills that have been influential to council. Sagal has the ability to light up a room with her smile alone. She has an approachable personality and is a hard worker & team player. With her drive for school and her compassion towards others, Sagal has illustrated exemplary leadership not only through MYC, but also in her school. Sagal has chosen to pursue a career in the science field. With that desire, she obtained an internship throughout this year with the Minnesota Dental School. Sagal Ali deserves the Red Wagon Award for her commitment to the council and her dedication as a youth member. Congratulations on your Red Wagon Award!

#### ***TreVon Alread, Minneapolis***

Tre recently completed his third year with the Wilder Foundation's Youth Leadership Initiative (YLI) and was nominated by his peers and the staff to be a youth mentor in the program. As a mentor, he was asked to serve as a role model for the participants as well as plan and facilitate a large part of YLI's curriculum. Tre consistently rises above and beyond the expectations of the position, taking work home, volunteering for outside events and additional responsibilities within the program. Behind the scenes, he is a hard worker, planning down to the last detail with his fellow mentors to perfect his curriculum; in front of the participants, he is incredibly charismatic and often the comic relief at retreats. He met the challenge of facilitating a large group of his peers with a healthy balance of confidence followed by critical self-reflection and desire for feedback. As a leader, Tre is thoughtful, engaged and confident. He has set the bar very high for future generations of mentors and YLI is lucky to have him come back for another year (or two!). Congratulations on your Red Wagon Award!

***Ananaya Alwal, Worthington***

We are honored to recognize Ananaya Alwal for the Red Wagon Award for civic engagement and exemplary leadership. Ananaya participates in various student led programs through the Nobles County Integration Collaborative and Minnesota Alliance With Youth. These groups include Dynamic 507, Youth Diversity Council, CIRCLE Mentoring, and Minnesota Youth Council. Ananaya has been civically engaged and has emerged among her peers as being a great leader not just this year but in past years. Not only does her voice shine but her actions prove that she is passionate about making a change in her community. Ananaya is always willing to lend a hand and be a role model for her peers. She continues to show this by her involvement in CIRCLE mentoring and also as a high school leader during middle school Courage Retreats. Watching Ananaya work with younger students is a joy because she is such a happy person and really works hard at being an inspiration in someone else's life. Ananaya is humble in her accomplishments and she is a true image of what a positive youth leader is. Congratulations on your award!

***Nicole Ektnitphong, Worthington***

Nicole Ektnitphong embodies what it means to be an exemplary youth leader. Not only was she the senior class president, student council president, captain of her soccer team and a 2011 graduate with a 3.8+ GPA, Nicole has gone outside of school to generate positive change in Worthington and in the world. When Nicole was part of the Youth Diversity Council she coordinated an eight person team to start a project called Worthington For Water. After finding out that nearly half the world does not have access to clean water, these students decided to do something about it. The vision of the project was to raise \$5,000 in order to bring fresh, clean drinking water for a community in a developing nation. Events were coordinated and the community came together for change. At the center of it all were youth-students who had never gone a day without water, but felt compelled to help. At the front of those students, was Nicole who has an open mind, and the courage to tackle problems and stand up for what she believes in. We are pleased to honor you with this Red Wagon Award!

***Mohamed Gafaa, St. Paul***

Mohamed Gafaa has shown outstanding academic achievement this year at Como High. He raised his GPA by 2.583 points over the course of three quarters! He now has a 3.75 GPA,

and has shown incredible dedication to his studies. Whereas before he was quiet and unproductive, he now asks questions in class, seeks out tutoring help, does his homework and reviews and studies his material in his spare time. He very much deserves recognition and we are pleased to honor him with this Red Wagon Award.

***Safia Hirsi, Robbinsdale***

Safia Hirsi is a junior at Augsburg Fairview Academy. This is her first year being involved with the Minnesota Youth Council. Safia has a tendency to take a leadership role in school and did so during the MYC program. Her drive in school has enabled her to become one of the few PSEO students to attend college courses at North Hennepin. In her courses at college she excelled beyond her professors expectations. Safia utilizes her powerful voice to make sure her point gets across, but in a respectful manner. Through her time at school and on the Youth Council, she has had the opportunity to speak with legislators and make sure her opinion is heard in order to make change in her community and school setting. As an older sister to a student who attends the same school she illustrates a "sisterly role" to not only her own sister but to the other girls around her. She is a positive encourager and strives for success. We are pleased to award Safia Hirsi this Red Wagon Award for her dedication to her school and community.

***Hsa Hser Moo, St. Paul***

Hsa Hser is a recent immigrant to the United States. She is Ka Ren and was born in Thailand. She came into the G-GAL or Girls Getting Ahead in Leadership, a program of the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment, as an 11th grader. Over the course of two years she has grown into a leader among her peers. As a mother of two, she is a hard working high school student who takes her studies seriously. On many occasions she stays up late practicing math problems in order to pass her MCA math tests. Though she is not required to pass this test for graduation, she continues to study hard, knowing that she will one day need these skills in college and beyond. Hsa Hser is a role model to all in GGAL, asking questions for information that she does not understand and helping others when she does understand. Congratulations on your award!

***Aamina Muhammad, Minneapolis***

Aamina Muhammad is a remarkable young lady; she is a talented dancer, volunteer, role model, academic achiever, and an exceptional young leader. Aamina is a valued member of the dance program at the Perpich Center for Arts Education High School and is sought after for her leadership skills. A strong academic student, this year Aamina split her time between classes at the Arts High School and MCTC, where she was a full-time PSEO student. Aamina is involved in student government at PCAE and is an active member of the Minneapolis Youth Congress. She volunteered countless hours in her community and works at the North Community YMCA, where she teaches ballet to children. Aamina emceed the City of Minneapolis Blueprint Youth Violence Prevention Conference in May 2011, where she shared the same stage as Mayor RT Rybak, Senator Al Franken, Senator Amy Klobuchar, and the Attorney General of the United States, Eric Holder. Join us in recognizing Aamina for her outstanding leadership with our Red Wagon Award!

***Mariah Snead, Crystal***

I am very excited to nominate Mariah Snead for the Red Wagon Award. Several months ago Mariah helped to begin planning for the first after-school program that the Minnesota Internship Center has had on the north side. Mariah expressed the need for high school youth to have activities to do after their classes were finished. She recognized that there are not enough positive after-school events in the community and that youth could create some themselves. She worked with her peers to recruit students and plan meaningful service projects. A few of the service projects include making 100 paper cranes for the One Million Cranes project for relief in Japan, as well as sewing fabric baby blocks for children in the community. It has been awesome to see her leadership and how her peers respect her and the mission she has with after-school programming. She will also be writing a grant with an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow to get pottery supplies for the fall school year. Please join us in recognizing the leadership and service of Mariah Snead with this award!

***Cheng Leng Xiong, St. Paul***

Over the past year, Cheng Leng Xiong has grown and developed into an engaged and outstanding student leader. When the National Youth Leadership Council staff first met Cheng, he appeared to be shy and less than confident of his public speaking skills. During

the year Cheng went from being a shy leader at the National Youth Leadership Training to a confident facilitator and advocate for service-learning as a part of NYLC's Youth Advisory Council. He helped to lead and facilitate at the national Service Learning conference and was part of the PeaceJam conference as well. Cheng Leng Xiong is and will continue to be a community leader, encouraging others from all backgrounds to follow their dreams. His positivity is infectious, his willingness to give is breathtaking, and his leadership skills are inspiring. We are excited to present him with this Red Wagon Award to recognize his growth and leadership over this past year!