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## News Release

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## Students at Royal Oaks Elementary in Sun Prairie Learn How to be Prepared for Disasters & Emergencies;

### *AT&T Announces \$15,000 Innovation Award to Help Continue STEP Program in Wisconsin*

**SUN PRAIRIE, Friday, December 18, 2015** — During a visit to Royal Oaks Elementary School 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 a \$15,000 donation from AT&T. 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 kick off this program to help schools like Royal Oaks Elementary and others across the state prepare their students for emergencies and disasters."

STEP is a turn-key classroom curriculum for teachers to prepare 5<sup>th</sup> graders for various emergencies and disasters, including 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 \$15,000 Innovation & Investment Award from AT&T Wisconsin. AT&T has a long-standing commitment to disaster preparedness and business continuity, and is the first company in the nation to earn U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) certification for disaster preparedness. Since 2012, AT&T has provided \$58,000 (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 Royal Oaks Elementary in Sun Prairie 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 James Ackley. "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 during the 2010-2011 school year. Over 28,000 students have participated in the program over the past five years. 11,000 students will participate in the STEP program during the 2015-16 school year.

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](mailto:tod.pritchard@wisconsin.gov) or 608-242-3324.

The AT&T Wisconsin Innovation & Investment Award program provides funding to local organizations that enhance and give back to their communities. The program is focused on awarding grants to organizations and programs that improve the community by advancing education, enhancing the environment, promoting economic development or delivering other community services.

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## About Philanthropy & Social Innovation at AT&T

AT&T Inc. is committed to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. Through its community initiatives, AT&T has a long history of investing in projects that create learning opportunities; promote academic and economic achievement; or address community needs. In 2013, more than \$130 million was contributed or directed through corporate-, employee-, social investment- and AT&T Foundation-giving programs. AT&T Aspire is AT&T's signature education initiative that drives innovation in education by bringing diverse resources to bear on the issue including funding, technology, employee volunteerism, and mentoring.

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