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NACo honors three county officials with County Courthouse Awards for innovative governance

PORTLAND, ORE. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) has recognized three county officials with the association’s prestigious 2011 County Courthouse Award for Innovative Governance.

Established in 2001, County Courthouse Awards recognize elected county officials who demonstrate innovative and effective leadership to improve the quality of life of their residents. One County Courthouse Award is presented each year in three categories: Rural County, Suburban County, and Urban County. Each winner, selected by an independent panel of judges, receives a $5,000 college scholarship to present to a local student.

This year’s winners are:

- **Rural Category:** Waldo County, Maine Sheriff Scott Story
- **Suburban Category:** Yavapai County, Ariz. Sheriff Steve Waugh
- **Urban Category:** Oklahoma County, Okla. Commissioner Ray Vaughn

Sheriff Story was recognized for his leadership to transform the county jail into a successful reentry center which includes a volunteer mentoring program and other support services. The new center has exponentially increased job placement and community service by residents of the facility and lowered recidivism rates to 15 percent.

Sheriff Waugh was recognized for his leadership in implementing the county’s in-house Restoration to Competency (RTC) program to more efficiently determine a criminal defendant’s competence to stand trial. The RTC program, through its innovative partnership with Wexford Health Sources, has saved county taxpayers significant amounts of money while protecting the Constitutional rights of defendants.

Commissioner Vaughn was recognized for his leadership in the county’s acquisition of a shuttered General Motors manufacturing plant. The county leased the facility to the area’s largest single-site employer, Tinker Air Force Base. By doing this, nearly all of the 2,400 jobs lost as a result of the plant closure are on track to be replaced.

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“On behalf of the nation’s counties, I commend Sheriff Story, Sheriff Waugh and Commissioner Vaughn for their outstanding leadership in improving the lives of residents in their counties and finding innovative ways to improve county government efficiency,” said NACo President Glen Whitley, county judge, Tarrant County, Texas.

This year’s winners were honored at NACo’s 76th Annual Conference and Exposition, July 15-19, in Portland/Multnomah County, Ore.

The County Courthouse Awards are sponsored by Siemens and presented by NACo’s Large Urban County Caucus and Rural Action Caucus. More information is available at www.naco.org.

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The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.