



Southwest Michigan Planning Commission honors Barbara Wood Cook

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The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission has selected Barbara Wood Cook of Niles to honor with the 2013 Welch-Lackey Leadership Award.

At the July 16, 2013 meeting of the SWMPC, held at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence, Chair Jeff Radtke presented Cook with the a plaque in recognition of the award.

In announcing the award, John Egelhaaf, SWMPC Executive Director, noted Cook's passions were consistent with the mission of the SWMPC: she has been Chair of the Cass County Planning Commission and is involved in Cass County Master Planning process. As Vice President of MEANDRS she has been part of an intergovernmental alliance that received the Commission's Graham Woodhouse Award for an impressive environmental achievement. The US 12 Scenic Byway has been administered by the SWMPC for over a decade and Cook has taken an active role in those committees and projects.

Egelhaaf recognized Cook as a SWMPC Cass County Citizen Representative since 2007, and an advocate for the Commission and its programs through her many area connections and involvement in cultural organizations: Cass County Historical Commission, Friends of St Joseph River; Dowagiac Area History Museum Advisory Council and Old Rugged Cross Foundation. Recently she was awarded the 2013 Governor's Awards for Historic Preservation for her work with towards the restoration of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Pokagon (Old Rugged Cross Church) in Pokagon Township, Cass County.

The noted author and world traveler remarked that in all her travels she has never found any place better than southwestern Michigan; its terrain, natural resources, culture, and people are special in so many ways. She is proud to be of service in any way she can.

The SWMPC is the regional planning agency for Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties and presents the Welch-Lackey Leadership Award each year in honor of former Commissioners George A. Welch and William

F. Lackey. These men served the Commission in times of great personal difficulties, yet continued throughout to represent the spirit of public service and to further the goals of intergovernmental cooperation. Their contribution to the communities they served embodies the leadership qualities essential to the preservation of our citizen form of government.

Board members vote by secret ballot from nominees submitted by the SWMPC staff as members currently exemplifying such qualities.

Story submitted by - Terri Moore, administrative assistant, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

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