



Press Release: for Immediate Issue

City of Rapid City Sustainability Committee recognizes **Lifeways, Inc.**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2015 12:30 PM

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

The Rapid City Sustainability Committee will be presenting the Lifeways Program with a Sustainability Award at the November 2, 2015 City Council Meeting. With this award, we recognize several leaders from the program: students, counselors, board members and Paula Wilkinson Smith, developer and founder of the Lifeways program.

SUSTAINABILITY AWARD FOR LIFEWAYS

Lifeways is an organization that works with youth to promote social, economic and environmental sustainability. Lifeways has developed a partnership with Rapid City and the Rapid City School District to provide healthy social and mental health skills to help youth cope with difficulties of today's society, related primarily to drug and alcohol use pressures. Scientific research based evidence shows that school-based skill building programs aimed at improving social and emotional outcomes can also improve academic outcomes. Substance abuse is not about will power; it is about coping with life and some of our youth have more to cope with than others.

The Lifeways staff consists of a director and staff of trained facilitators who work in the school and a board of directors made up of adults and youth who facilitate identification of drug and alcohol related problems and approval of proven strategies for helping youth. This is accomplished through alcohol and drug prevention, early intervention, and outpatient counseling services. As a result, there have been economic benefits resulting from reduced incarceration, reduced property damage, and reduced physical and mental health costs.

The Lifeways staff has created an exceptional training program for assisting its counselors and other community agencies to develop helping relationships with students and strategies for positive growth. Lifeways has hosted several community programs to help youth and their families in the Rapid City area, including Red Ribbon Week, public seminars on the danger of synthetic drugs and on the damage caused by drug and alcohol use on developing brain tissue.

Positive response from the community has included such things as appreciation for public information on the alarming statistics on youth drug and alcohol use in our area, suicide threats and attempts, teen driving under the influence, and youth homelessness problems, among others. This leads to recognition that mentally, socially, physically healthy youth are positive for our community. Youth who become knowledgeable about positive strategies for dealing positively with social stresses and negative influences can contribute to a more productive, healthier future for Rapid City.

