

ABC coordinator thanks those making the effort to win competition possible

As Chisago Lakes prepares to send emissaries to Denver, Colo., next week in the final leg of the America's Best Communities (ABC) competition, local ABC Coordinator Tangi Schaapveld shares this message of gratitude:

Our community has seen great success during the past two years of the ABC process. We created a community vision by cooperating, collaborating, and ultimately compromising. A huge thank you goes out to all of the residents, organizations, schools, businesses, cities, and to Chisago County for the tremendous amount of work and passion you shared.

More than 60 ABC team members have worked tirelessly to bring their shared ideas to life while balancing their commitment to ABC with their real jobs! The contributions are many, and the names too many to list here, but I want each and every one of you to please accept my heartfelt thanks and the gratitude of a community that has benefitted from your efforts in ways they may not even yet realize.

I think of a local business manager who brought competitors together to discuss shared manufacturing issues. Together, they discussed what could be done to fill the employment gap they realized they all were experiencing. This led to the first advanced manufacturing classes offered through the Chisago Lakes Higher Edu-

cation Hub.

And then there was the outdoor enthusiast who had a vision for a water trail. Bringing others to the table, together they were able to design and test a trail for canoes and kayaks that now connects our communities and our chain of lakes. Our "Boundary Waters Light" is now alive and well with campsites, portages and navigational signage that will showcase the Chisago Lakes Water Trail logo. The community is invited to celebrate the trail at the second annual Memorial Day Paddle.

Special thanks are extended to the members of the community who opened their homes and businesses to Clean Energy Audits, a project that far exceeded our expectations. Working together, we made a generation of change in just 18 months. Gratitude also goes to the Minneapolis Design company that initially developed a marketing plan for our ABC Team and then chose to stay with the initiative as passionate volunteers. These are but a few examples of how ABC inspired us.

The stories and the list go on and on. It took a multitude of ideas, different points of view and tons of commitment to bring these creative and ambitious projects to life in a short time frame. We had well over 150 community members directly engaged, all for the love of where we live. They shared



their energy, their enthusiasm and countless hours of their time, not simply to win a prize, but to build an even better Chisago Lakes. As a team, we began our journey by hearing the community's vision of the future as expressed through the Future Walk. We are immensely grateful to everyone who has shared their passion and their ideas throughout this process.

While we take pride in all that has been accomplished, we also eagerly look forward to what can be achieved in the future. No matter what the outcome of the ABC competition, we feel that we have already WON!

We will celebrate our efforts at WineHaven from 5 to 7 p.m. April 19, with a live feed of the America's Best Communities Awards Ceremony in Denver starting at 6 p.m.