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For Immediate Release

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Citizen Diplomacy Celebration recognizes local efforts

(LA CROSSE, Wis.) — World Services of La Crosse will honor four Wisconsin residents at its annual Citizen Diplomacy Celebration this month.

The annual event, scheduled for Thursday, March 26, 2015, at the Cargill Room at Riverside Center South in La Crosse, Wisconsin, celebrates the work of area citizens in shaping international relations and honors outstanding efforts of individuals. This year, World Services will recognize

- Sondra LeGrand, community volunteer, as World Services Citizen Ambassador of the Year;
- Gary Kirking, Juneau County University of Wisconsin-Extension Community Resource Development Agent, as World Services Citizen Diplomat of the Year; and
- Matt Squire, Onalaska High School senior, as World Services Student Ambassador of the Year.

World Services will also present a special Legacy Award to Michael Garrity, MD, a retired family physician from Gundersen Health System in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

The celebration seeks to build awareness of the many global exchanges and partnerships occurring in the region and to celebrate the individual friendships that result, said World Services President and CEO Sandra McCormick. "As governments continue work to improve international relations, personal ties can move the work forward even when official channels falter."

Garrity will receive the special Legacy Award for his significant efforts to transform healthcare in Ukraine. Through helping create a family medicine education program, develop clinical guidelines and upgrade healthcare facilities, the rate of infectious diseases along with ambulance calls and the number of patients requiring hospitalization dropped in half. Additionally, more people visited clinics for healthcare, and illnesses were diagnosed earlier. As a direct result of the work by Garrity and other La Crosse area professionals, late-stage cancer

diagnoses decreased by 75 percent. In addition to his international work, Garrity has also worked to improve healthcare to people in the La Crosse area. For the past 15 years, he has traveled weekly from Prairie du Chien to La Crosse to serve the patients of St. Clare Health Mission.

LeGrand will be recognized as Citizen Ambassador of the Year for her work to bring hope and opportunity to people in India. Following the 2004 tsunami, she worked with her Rotary club to provide clothing, school material and other needed supplies to an orphanage in South India. After several visits to the orphanage, she subsequently wrote a book about her experience and used the proceeds to fund postsecondary education for the girls. She has also raised money to purchase computers for women with disabilities and to buy bread-making machines for a community to create a profitable business that employs local people.

Kirking will receive the Citizen Diplomat of the Year award for his work with World Services in hosting six Open World delegations from Kazakhstan. Kirking secured home hosts, created itineraries that helped visitors achieve professional goals of their visits and ensured authentic American experiences for the delegates. He has also organized a reciprocal visit by Wisconsin residents to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 2014. As a result of the Wisconsin – Kazakhstan connections, Gary will lead travel by 15 Leadership Wisconsin fellows to Central Asia in 2016 as part of a seminar entitled “Using an International Context to Understand Local Issues.” These Wisconsin leaders will be hosted by Kazakhstan Open World alumni

The Student Ambassador of the Year award will go to Squire for his exceptional work to engage and understand other cultures. He excels in world languages, actively hosts international students and shares his international interests with others. Squire frequently engages in lively, intelligent and respectful conversation with peers about national and international issues and how they interplay with each other, and he actively listens to other students’ perspectives to see how they fit with and can change his own views.

The Citizen Diplomacy Celebration begins at 5:30 p.m. and features an international dinner with complimentary, beer, wine and soda. Tickets are \$50 each, with all proceeds going to further the citizen diplomacy mission of World Services of La Crosse, a nonprofit organization. Reservations are requested by March 18.

The event is possible through the generosity of event sponsors Don and Roxanne Weber, media sponsor Midwest Family Radio and major sponsors Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare and Dick and Sandra McCormick. Table and event sponsorships are still available.

For more information or to register, visit World Services online at www.wslax.us or call 608-781-4194.

World Services of La Crosse, Inc., is a La Crosse-based nonprofit organization that develops and implements international partnerships designed to advance health, civil society, public administration and the environment and to promote peace and mutual understanding in countries throughout the world. ###