



## Press Release

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## Students at Meadowview Intermediate School in Sparta Learn How to Be Prepared for Disasters & Emergencies

### *STEP Program Teaches Kids How to Assemble Emergency Kits and Develop an Emergency Plan with Their Families*

**SPARTA, Tuesday, March 21, 2017** – With severe weather season this spring fast approaching, nearly 200 students at Meadowview Intermediate School learned today how to be prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency.

The students are participating in the STEP, or Student Tools for Emergency Planning, program for the first time. The statewide program teaches 5<sup>th</sup> graders how to be prepared for various emergencies and disasters, including blizzards, tornadoes, flooding and storms. The program also shows students how to put together an emergency kit and develop an emergency plan with their families.

“Emergencies and disasters can happen at any time to anyone with little to no warning, and that’s why we think it is so important to prepare our students,” said Joanne Hagen, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Meadowview Intermediate. “We’re excited to bring the STEP program to our school and give our students the tools and knowledge they need to have confidence and respond appropriately in an emergency situation.”

Students heard from officials from Wisconsin Emergency Management and AT&T, as well as State Representative Nancy VanderMeer, about actions they can take to be prepared in an emergency or disaster situation.

“Young people also need to know how to respond and act quickly when an emergency happens,” said Rep. VanderMeer. “The STEP program is a great way to educate students, get them excited about emergency preparedness, and encourage them to share disaster preparedness information with their families.”

The 2017 STEP program is supported by a \$10,000 donation from AT&T and a \$10,000 donation from the Wisconsin Wireless Association. AT&T has a long-standing commitment to disaster preparedness and business continuity, and is the first company in the nation to earn U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) certification for disaster preparedness. Since 2012, AT&T has provided \$68,000 total to support the STEP program in Wisconsin.

“We know how critical it is to be ready and prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency,” said Scott T. VanderSanden, president of AT&T Wisconsin. “Not only are we proud that our network operations are state-of-the-art when it comes to performing during and after a disaster, but we are also proud to help prepare Wisconsin families to respond to emergencies through our support of the STEP program.”

Teachers are provided with all STEP materials at no cost to the schools, including instructor guides, DVDs and copies of student handouts. All students participating in the program also receive an emergency kit to take home, which includes a flashlight. The basic lesson is only one hour of instruction, but teachers can expand the lessons to cover eight hours of materials.

Wisconsin became the first state in the Midwest to teach the STEP program. Over 40,000 students have participated in STEP since the program began during the 2010-11 school year. Another 12,000 students are expected to participate in the 2016-17 school year in 160 schools around the state.

For more information on the STEP program, please visit <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/STEP/default.asp> to view a STEP video and download a brochure, or contact Tod Pritchard at [tod.pritchard@wisconsin.gov](mailto:tod.pritchard@wisconsin.gov) or 608-242-3324.

The AT&T Wisconsin Innovation & Investment Award program provides funding to organizations and programs that improve the community by advancing education, enhancing the environment, promoting economic development, or delivering other community services.

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