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NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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CONTACTS:

Katie Ridgway

Marcelyn Love

Ashley Cross

312/814.3158

217/558.1542 (DCEO)

312/814.8193 (DCEO)

Blagojevich Administration Recognizes Volunteers for 27th Annual Governor's Home Town Awards

Village of Mundelein Wins 2008 Governor's Cup for Creation of Youth After School Program

SPRINGFIELD – Hundreds of volunteers whose hard work and dedication greatly improve their communities were recognized today during the 27th annual Governor's Home Town Awards ceremony held at the Hilton Hotel in Springfield. Officials with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) were joined by a host of other state and local leaders to recognize their outstanding achievements and to present one winner with the celebrated Governor's Cup award.

"The Governor's Home Town Awards recognizes those individuals who unselfishly give of themselves to make our communities better. Their actions help to instill pride in our neighborhoods, strengthen our communities and improve the overall quality of life. These individuals often don't get the recognition they deserve, but their efforts are critical in helping to make Illinois a better place to live and work," said Governor Blagojevich.

A total of 49 projects were chosen as Governor's Home Town Award winners following a rigorous judging process. Initially, volunteer judges reviewed and ranked applications based on local need, volunteer participation, project continuity and results. From those rankings, the applicants were narrowed down to 49 projects. Judges visited those communities and then selected one project from each population category to compete for the coveted Governor's Cup. The Governor's Cup is a traveling silver trophy presented to the community whose efforts were deemed most representative of the spirit of Illinois volunteerism.

The projects were judged within their population size as well as an assigned project category. Project categories include Parks & Recreation, Veteran's Involvement, Youth Involvement, Senior Citizen Involvement, and Clean-up/Beautification, among others. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers the Governor's Home Town Awards Program.

"By taking on these leadership roles, these volunteers are helping to create stronger, more vibrant communities that are more competitive and better equipped to support growth, attract investment, and

create new jobs. The Governor's Home Town Awards are just one way for us to say thank you," DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

The 2008 Governor's Cup winner is the **Village of Mundelein's After School Coalition**. In Mundelein, the After School Coalition is providing opportunities to help adolescents make positive choices. Mundelein Police Chief Raymond Rose worked with State Representative Kathleen Ryg to create a Lake County version of this effort first. The Chief then brought the idea home to his community as a way to assert a more direct impact on local kids. As with nearly all the projects awarded today, the Mundelein After School Coalition succeeds because of the collaboration of businesses, elected officials, schools and other organizations. Of course, the key contributions come from the kids themselves. Through surveys, they determined the type of events that would best get their friends and classmates involved. It is the enthusiasm, energy and ideas the students bring to the effort that continues to make it a success. The Coalition sponsors events that teach youth how to cope with stress, nurture positive friendships and build leadership skills.

Each of the award winning communities receives a road sign and plaque recognizing its efforts, and the Governor's Cup winner receives a unique road sign that proclaims its status as the overall winner.