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CHICAGO, Jan. 16, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- Eight regional winners have been selected for recognition by the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA) for helping Midwestern businesses and consumers save energy and money in new and innovative ways. The recipients of MEEA's 2014 Inspiring Efficiency Awards include:

- An education program that has increased energy literacy among more than 3 million K-12 students and inspired similar programs in other states and even other nations, including Japan and Taiwan.
- An initiative that has helped low-income customers in Ohio pay their natural gas bills while saving an estimated 32 million Mcf of natural gas over the lifetime of energy conservation measures implemented to date.
- A program that has allowed more than 7,000 Wisconsin small businesses to save over \$12 million in energy costs in the last 14 months.
- A marketing campaign that used QR codes, YouTube videos and a custom mobile app to engage and encourage Illinois business owners to learn more about energy efficiency.

"These programs showcase the many benefits of energy efficiency, from saving money and energy to creating economic opportunity and ensuring a healthier and more sustainable environment for tomorrow," said MEEA Executive Director Doug Newman. "MEEA is pleased to recognize this group of winners as part of the Inspiring Efficiency Awards' tenth anniversary."

The winners were honored at the Inspiring Efficiency Awards dinner and gala on Wednesday, January 15,

during MEEA's 12th annual Midwest Energy Solutions Conference (www.meeaconference.org)

). The three-day conference, which runs through Thursday at the Fairmont Hotel in Chicago

, is the largest regional energy efficiency conference in the nation. The event brings together a broad range of private- and public-sector thought leaders in energy strategy, policy, technology and program design and implementation.

The Inspiring Efficiency Awards competition recognizes Midwest energy efficiency leaders in five categories: Leadership, Education, Impact, Innovation and Marketing. The Inspiring Efficiency Chairman's Award is also bestowed each year to an individual or organization that has exhibited exemplary leadership for energy efficiency in the Midwest and support of MEEA.

Award recipients for 2014 include:

- **Education Awards:**
 - **AEP Ohio**, for its program that helped waste and wastewater treatment plants across Ohio cut energy use and save money for taxpayers.
 - **The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's Center for Environmental Education**, for its Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP) that has brought educators and energy professionals together for the last two decades to promote energy literacy in Wisconsin.
- **Impact Award:**
 - **ComEd and Nicor Gas**, for a New Construction Service program that provides a combination of education, financial incentives and technical assistance to building owners and design teams.
 - **Columbia Gas of Ohio**, for WarmChoice®, a program that, for the last 26 years, has helped low-income customers who struggle to pay their gas bills.
- **Innovation Award: Focus on Energy**, for a program that uses a statewide network of specially trained contractors to conduct free energy use assessments and install energy efficiency products that help small business owners reduce their energy costs.
- **Marketing Award: Ameren Illinois**, for its ActOnEnergy Business Symposium series that educates business owners on the value of energy efficiency and connects them with financial incentives, resources and project partners.
- **Leadership Award: Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle**, whose administration has implemented several highly effective projects to reduce energy costs of county government operations while creating jobs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and saving money for local taxpayers.
- **Chairman's Award: MEEA's three previous executive directors, Alecia Ward, Wendy Jaehn and Jay Wrobel**, for their outstanding commitment to the advancement of MEEA initiatives and energy

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efficiency in the Midwest.

More information about the Inspiring Efficiency Awards and this year's recipients can be found at www.meeaconference.org.

About Midwest Energy Solutions Conference The Midwest Energy Solutions Conference is the largest event of its kind in the region. Each year it brings together a broad range of private- and public-sector thought leaders from around the nation who share a vested interest in energy efficiency. Now in its 12th year, the conference continues to grow as energy efficiency investment increases in states across the Midwest.

The conference is presented by the **Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA)**, the region's source on energy efficiency. Formed in 2000, MEEA is committed to advancing sound energy efficiency programs, policies and priorities in the Midwest. MEEA's membership represents a broad consortium of energy stakeholders from across a 13-state area.

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