



Clean Water. It starts with you.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Local Alliance Launches Innovative Public Education Effort

**"MAKE THE WATER CONNECTION" CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS
SIMPLE WAYS EVERYONE CAN PROTECT WATER QUALITY;**

**Stearns County High School Students Invited to Enter Ad Contest;
Three Winners Each to Receive \$1000 for Their School
and a \$400 Gander Mountain Gift Card.**

ST. CLOUD, MN — In a cooperative effort to help protect water throughout Stearns County, a number of local entities are working together to spread the word about simple ways everyone can make a difference in water quality.

The newly formed Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance (CMWEA) — a joint effort of Stearns County and the cities of St. Cloud, Sartell, St. Joseph and Waite Park — resulted from the realization among individual members that they would all benefit from the efficiencies of a pooled effort educating residents about their role in protecting water quality. "We recognized that since we share the same goals and mandates, we could accomplish much more together," said Pat Shea, Assistant Public Utilities Director for the City of St. Cloud. "It just makes the most strategic and financial sense."

CMWEA's *Make the Water Connection* campaign urges area residents to make simple changes in everyday activities that will have a positive impact on water quality. "What we do on the land affects the water — that's the 'water connection' we want people to make," said Sue McGuire, Stearns County Environmental Specialist. "Whether they live in town or a rural area of the county, everyone can make a difference." The campaign website, www.mnwaterconnection.com, features a top ten list of simple

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water-protection tips on its home page, with links to a variety of water protection resources. Augmenting CMWEA's funding, the campaign is also supported by in-kind support from newspaper, radio and outdoor advertising companies throughout the county.

To get out the word further and impress the importance of water protection on the next generation, CMWEA and Gander Mountain are inviting students from high schools throughout Stearns County to enter the *Make the Water Connection* Ad Contest. The contest, open to 9–12th grade students in any Stearns County high school, calls for the creation of 60-second TV ads showing how students would promote any one of CMWEA's top ten water protection tips found on the CMWEA website.

Three top prizes will be awarded, each consisting of a \$1000 award to the school's sponsoring department and a \$400 Gander Mountain gift card for the winning student or student group. The deadline for contest entries is Friday, May 4. Winners will be announced in mid-May, and their entries will be featured on the CMWEA website, the City of St. Cloud website, and cable public access channel 19. Contest details and entry forms are available online at www.mnwaterconnection.com.

For Darren Campbell, general manager of Gander Mountain's Waite Park store, sponsoring the contest represents an ideal way to demonstrate his company's concern for water quality and the Central Minnesota residents it serves. "It's an issue everyone cares about, and Gander Mountain is committed to doing all we can to get people thinking about water quality," said Campbell. "We're pleased to support an effort that engages young people in thinking about the role of clean water in the health of our families as well as for wildlife, fisheries and recreation."

The Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance (CMWEA) is funded by Stearns County, the cities of St. Cloud, Sartell, St. Joseph and Waite Park, and the Upper Mississippi Source Water Protection Project. CMWEA members seek to involve other Central Minnesota counties and cities, and welcome inquiries from governmental, civic and outdoors organizations interested in supporting the clean water effort. To learn more, visit the *Make the Water Connection* website at www.mnwaterconnection.com

— 30 —



Official sponsor of the *Make the Water Connection* TV ad contest.

Make the Water Connection is a program of CMWEA - Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance with support from: Stearns County, the cities of St. Cloud, Sartell, St. Joseph & Waite Park, and the Upper Mississippi River Source Water Protection Project. Thanks also to Sauk River Watershed District, Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District & MN Rural Water Association.

www.MNWaterConnection.com

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