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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 17, 2009

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**WAUKESHA COUNTY AMERICORPS PARTICIPANT AWARDED
2009 GOVERNOR'S SERVICE AWARD**

Stephanie Sutton honored as AmeriCorps Member of the Year

WAUKESHA, Wis. – AmeriCorps volunteer Stephanie Sutton was honored last week in Madison for her outstanding leadership and service while developing two significant programs with Waukesha County's UW-Extension. Sutton was presented the award on February 12th at the Concourse Hotel in front of a crowd which included colleagues from UW-Extension, AmeriCorps representatives and Sutton's family. The annual award recognizes outstanding national service participants and programs that help solve serious social problems and meet their community's needs. Sutton was one of five award winners.

Sutton, who joined UW-Extension in 2007, was charged with and successfully completed developing a volunteer system for two low-income neighborhood after school programs. In addition, the following year, Sutton was instrumental in creating a diversion program for first-time juvenile offenders.

In 2007, UW-Extension identified the need for leadership within their after school programs. The program, which operated with limited grant funding, barebones staff and negligible parental support, lacked leadership to make it work. Through a grant, UW-Extension applied for assistance through the State AmeriCorps Vista Program and Sutton was assigned to work with the Department.

Sutton developed a recruiting method to attract much-needed tutors, mentors and other volunteers to facilitate after school programs in the City of Waukesha. In total, Sutton was able to attract 116 volunteers and, in turn, developed a retention method to keep volunteers involved beyond her tenure with the program. Due to her efforts, Sutton was able to create a sustainable program that will continue to strengthen the schools and the community.

In the fall of 2008, UW-Extension was encouraged to restart a juvenile diversion program. Sutton, who has a degree in Criminal Justice, was given the task of developing a new program. Sutton focused on creating a critically needed diversion program for juveniles aimed at alleviating court caseloads and helping youth avoid a criminal record and the stigma of being labeled a delinquent. The program, 180° Juvenile Diversion, which will take its first case next month, will address the challenges of participants on an individual basis with the goal of preventing repeat offenses.

"The work that she did on the program is exemplary," said Marcia Jante, Director of UW-Extension. "If it were not for Stephanie's leadership we would not be launching the Juvenile Diversion Program."

“I’m looking forward to getting this program off the ground,” Sutton said of the Juvenile Diversion program. “It has a lot of potential.”

Sutton, who did not know she had been nominated for the award until she was notified she had won, said she is honored to receive the award and looks forward to the continued success of the programs which were created through her leadership.

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