



Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA) 2014 Rural School Board of Education Member of the Year

Joseph Simonich | [Hurley School District](#)



Joseph Simonich of the Hurley School District was honored by the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA), a non-profit organization that is dedicated to helping address challenges faced by rural school

districts, at the annual Rural Schools Conference on Nov. 13, 2014.

Mr. Simonich has been the Board President at Hurley for almost 21 years. His “Student Comes First” philosophy has become very apparent as he has spearheaded many programs that set Hurley apart from many districts. Years ago, he pushed for more Advanced Placement Classes in the district resulting in four AP classes available to high school students. Distance Learning was his next target and now Hurley has two distance learning labs so students can be offered more. His goal is to have students ahead of the curve as they entered their post-secondary careers. Five years ago he boldly supported the Hurley School District becoming one of the first high schools in the state to put a one-to-one laptop computer program in place for high school students. Today, this program has grown to a full, one-to-one program from the high school down through the middle school and includes five laptop carts in the elementary.

Most recently, Mr. Simonich rallied around an idea to bring Hurley’s technology education to a different level. He urged and supported partnering with area manufacturing businesses. Today, Hurley has a student-run business



called Northwoods Manufacturing. Money was raised through business partners and alumni to purchase up-to-date, state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment resulting in students getting real training on many skills needed for the manufacturing field. Throughout the years he has helped Hurley forge wonderful relationships with many community organizations, the city, law enforcement and businesses. “It’s all about relationships,” is Mr. Simonich’s motto.

In November 2003, when the entire elementary wing was gutted by fire and smoke damage had affected the remainder of the school, Mr. Simonich stepped forward and led Hurley through the worst time in its history. He was definitely the glue that held everyone together.

The Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance was formed to help rural school districts address the unique issues that affect rural schools as they seek to achieve the highest quality education for every student. Members include a cross-section of administrators, educators, school board members, post-secondary representatives, rural community members, business leaders, and other concerned individuals who want a strong voice for rural education.