



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SWIPCO holds 50th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Meeting in Atlantic

SWIPCO celebrates 50 years of work in Southwest Iowa, Johansen named Inaugural Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award Winner

ATLANTIC- Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) hosted members, staff, and supporters for their 50th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Meeting on Thursday, September 25th at the C.G. Cass County Community Center in Atlantic. The gathering included dinner, annual report presentation, partnership awards, and the Inaugural Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award presentation.

SWIPCO celebrated 50 years of impact on Southwest Iowa, moving from an initial budget of \$45,000 and 2 employees in 1975 to a budget of \$8 million dollars and 108 employees in fiscal year 2025. Some highlights include \$300 million in total grants to the region, over 262 plans written for communities and counties, \$90 million in grant funds for water and wastewater projects, 1,706 homes rehabilitated, over 384 homeowners assisted with down-payment funds, and 9,235,700 rides provided by Southwest Iowa Transit Agency. The return on investment for SWIPCO member communities has been over \$150 for every dollar invested in the agency..

Eight individuals were nominated for the Inaugural Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award. The award was created to honor the legacy of the late Ron Kohn who was a Glenwood educator, Mayor, and Mills County Supervisor. Ron showed tremendous selfless leadership throughout his life, and the award shines a light on those that go above and beyond to serve the region, often without fanfare. The nominee class was Ryan Campbell, Mayor of Hastings; Carol Vinton, Former Mills County Supervisor; Kattie Lewis, SWITCH Tech Career Hub Director; Grace Garrett, Mayor of Atlantic; Steve Herrington, SWITA Driver; Kevin Cabbage, FMTC CEO; Angela Winther, Logan City Clerk; and Eric Johansen, Police Chief of Glenwood.

Each nominee was recognized for their work and ultimately Chief Eric Johansen was named the winner of the Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award for 2025. Chief Johansen has served the Glenwood Police force as an Officer and Chief for over 30 years and has created many community-centric events and programs to bring residents together. He started a Cultivate Community event that is very popular, recently launched a junior cadet program, driver safety courses for youth, and serves on the Mills County Chamber Foundation Board. Chief Johansen



was nominated by former Mills County Chamber Director and current realtor Jennie Davis. Davis introduced Chief Johansen and Ron's widow Joanne Kohn was there to present the award and congratulate all the nominees.

Eighth partnership awards were presented in recognition of individuals, organizations, and businesses that help SWIPCO achieve their goals of serving the residents of Southwest Iowa.

Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit for their continued support of SWITA's operations and working to make public transit the best it can be in the State of Iowa.

Nishna Valley YMCA for their many project partnerships with SWIPCO for facilities and youth transportation for preschool and other care programs.

Snyder & Associates, Inc. for their collaboration on over 100 projects with SWIPCO over the years. Helping make ideas come to life with plans for execution.

Atlantic Media- KJAN Radio, Atlantic News-Telegraph, and KSOM/KS 95.7 Radio for their continued support of informing the region of SWIPCO and SWITA's projects and services. We are blessed to be so well represented by willing information providers.

Sherry Kuntz, Senator Charles Grassley's Office for being a tireless advocate for our needs in Washington, D.C. Sherry is always very informed on our issue topics and is a strong advocate for the services SWIPCO and SWITA provides.

Iowa West Foundation for their continued funding support of many projects throughout the region. SWIPCO works often with projects that involve Iowa West Foundation funds and has been blessed to receive grants in the past three years for housing rehabilitation from Iowa West.

Danelle Bruce, Disability Access Point for partnership and advocacy for SWITA transportation to assist those with mental health service needs. She has long supported our work and helped coordinate services where needed to help the people of Southwest Iowa.

Tru Pro Construction for contract work helping make SWIPCO's Lead Hazard Reduction grant work a success. They have been a major player in completing lead remediation in our lead projects over the past two years.

Also, during the meeting four SWIPCO employees were recognized for milestone work anniversaries. Awards were presented to Mike Ballinger, Safety Coordinator, for 5 years of service; Phil Richter, Building Inspector I, for 5 years of service; and Nicole Rhodes, Grants Specialist II, for 5 years of service. SWITA Driver of the Year Mike Ames was also recognized.



SWIPCO is proud of the accomplishments of the past 50 years and looks forward to helping the region continue to thrive moving forward. SWIPCO, founded in 1975, is a council of governments serving eight counties in Southwest Iowa with public transportation, community development, and housing assistance. Counties served are Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby.

SWIPCO is an equal opportunity employer, provider, and lender.

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Photo Captions:

Image #1 Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award Nominees (L-R): Kevin Cabbage, Steve Herrington, Grace Garrett, Carol Vinton, Angela Winther, Joanne Kohn (Ron's Widow), Eric Johansen (Winner), Ryan Campbell, Kattie Lewis, John McCurdy (SWIPCO Executive Director).

Image #2: (L-R): Joanne Kohn, Widow of Ron Kohn; Eric Johansen, Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award Winner; John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director.

Image #3 (L-R): Tim Galligan, Iowa West Foundation; John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director.

Image #4 (L-R): Mark Lander, SWITA Transit Director; Jonathan Bladt, Senator Charles Grassley Regional Director (Accepting for Sherry Kuntz); John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director.

Image #5 (L-R): Bill Saluk, KSOM; Mandy Billings, KSOM; Tom Robinson, KSOM; Brian Rathjen, Atlantic News Telegraph; John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director; Christian Adams, KJAN; Jack McGonigal, KJAN; Jim Field, KJAN.

Image #6 (L-R): Dave Sturm, Snyder & Associates, Inc.; John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director.

Image #7 (L-R): Mark Lander, SWITA Transit Director; Bob Sharp Nishna Valley Family YMCA; Christina Bateman, Nishna Valley YMCA; Dan Haynes, Nishna Valley YMCA; John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director.

Image #8 (L-R): Matt Oetker, Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit; Brent Paulsen, Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit; John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director; Kristin Haar, Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit; Jeremy Johnson-Miller, Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit; Mark Lander,



SWITA Transit Director; Laura Lutz-Zimmerman, Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit; Jamie Wingert, Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit; Amy Colwell, Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit.