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LOCAL WOMEN HONORED FOR HELPING TO INSPIRE A NEW VISION FOR THE BADGER LANDS

By Heidi Royal

Retired U.S. Army Colonels Virginia Metcalf and Mary Yeakel were presented the Retired Army Medical Specialist Corps Association's (RAMSCA) Distinguished Service Award during a ceremony at the RAMSCA Biennial Meeting in Seattle, WA on June 27. Metcalf and Yeakel have been instrumental in bringing continuity to a diverse partnership of organizations in an effort to develop a clear vision of what the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant near Baraboo might become, and are deeply involved in what has become known as the Badger Reuse Plan. Virginia Metcalf and Mary Yeakel served their country as part of the Army Medical Specialist Corps. After long careers as a Physical Therapist for Metcalf and an Occupational Therapist for Yeakel, the two women retired in Wisconsin Dells. Their commitment to serve, however, did not end there.

Both women have contributed countless hours to the decommissioning process for the Badger Plant. As founding members of The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance, the nonprofit organization dedicated to actively involving the community in the restoration of the Badger lands, they are helping to ensure that all 7,354 acres are managed as one cohesive unit, part of the greater Sauk Prairie landscape.

With the transfer of Badger to its new owners, the WI Department of Natural Resources, the Ho Chunk Nation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nearly complete, Metcalf and Yeakel continue to serve in various capacities on the Badger Interim Oversight Management Commission, a diverse group of stakeholders charged with overseeing Badger's future. Perhaps most importantly, however, Metcalf and Yeakel understood from the beginning that the restoration of Badger needed to be a shared community vision, and they needed to bring that vision to the public. In 1998, they commissioned local artist Victor Bakhtin to create Sauk Prairie Remembered: A Vision for the Future, a painting depicting the expansive Sauk Prairie as it once appeared, and as it may appear again. Metcalf and Yeakel became ambassadors for the prairie, toting the painting to venues across Wisconsin. The painting has become the signature piece for The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance, inspiring a camaraderie of volunteers to work together to begin restoring the prairie at Badger.

Through their commitment to community service, Metcalf and Yeakel are succeeding in bringing the vision of a restored Badger to life, a shared future on the greater Sauk Prairie that acknowledges a long and enduring human history on a remarkable and unique piece of land stretching from the foot of the Baraboo hills to the shores of the Wisconsin River.

To learn more about the decommissioning of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant and the vision for its restoration that so inspires Metcalf and Yeakel, please visit The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance website at www.saukprairievision.org, and find out how you can become involved!