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FRENCH RECOGNIZED FOR REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY WORK

Uniontown, PA – There is a great deal of work involved in heading up a redevelopment authority, including managing projects, securing funding, and overseeing compliance with regulations. Fayette County Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Andrew French's ability to successfully juggle all those responsibilities was recognized recently at the state level, as he was honored with the C. Riley Stoy Community Development Award.

The award was bestowed on French at the Pennsylvania Community Development and Housing Practitioners Conference earlier this month in State College.

"Obviously, I'm pretty humbled and honored to receive it because it kind of recognizes my lifelong work in the community development field," French said. "I'm pretty proud of that."

The award takes its name from a former Uniontown Redevelopment Authority director whose career took him to Harrisburg in the 1980s. There, Stoy developed the State Small Cities Program and became well-known for the relationships he built with legislators and program grantees alike.

"At annual conferences, you would always find Riley chatting with administrators and looking for ways to assist them and strengthen the program," Lewisburg Borough Manager William Lowthert said in his introductory remarks at the conference.

One of those on whom Stoy made an impression was French himself. After moving from the Newport News area of Virginia to Fayette County in 1999, French quickly learned of Stoy's contributions to Uniontown and to the state.

"When I came here, I attended my first CD and H Practitioners Conference, and Riley was there as the head of the program," French remembered. "I kind of went up to him and introduced myself."

French said Stoy was gracious, offering both advice and encouragement, and wishing him luck in his career. Stoy passed away later that year, but French took his advice to heart and is now a recipient of the award named for him.

Lowthert noted the Stoy Award is given to someone who "has displayed commitment to improving communities through federal funding received from DCED. The individual is recognized as having made significant impact through promoting and participating in activities to improve community/economic development, housing and/or homelessness on a local, regional, and/or statewide basis."

French serves on the board of the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies and has been a member of the Pennsylvania DCED's Community Development and Housing Advisory Committee since 2005. He formerly served on the Board of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials and as president of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council of NAHRO

Fayette County Commissioners Scott Dunn and Vince Vicites praised French on his achievement.

"This award is a significant and well-deserved honor," said Commissioner Chairman Dunn. "Andrew's dedication and leadership have made a tremendous impact in our communities and throughout the state. He consistently raises the bar in his commitment to advancing Fayette County. Congratulations on reaching such a milestone achievement."

"Andrew is one of the hardest working directors we have in Fayette County, and he is well-respected all over Pennsylvania among redevelopment authorities," Vicites said. "Congratulations on this award for a job well done."

Lowthert said French received nominations from several of his colleagues, and French said the award is not only an honor, but also a surprise.

"I didn't know I was getting the award until I got to the event," he said.

He added that he is grateful to have had "a terrific staff, coworkers and colleagues over the years," as well as tremendous support from board members and municipal officials, "from township supervisors to the county commissioners, who have always worked with us and been supportive of our efforts."

French said one of the best things about his job is being part of a project from start to finish – watching it evolve from the idea and planning stage, through gaining approval and funding, and all the way to completion and implementation.

"It's been gratifying over the years to be involved in so much," he said. "I truly believe (the redevelopment authority) has had a positive impact on this place we all like to call home."

For more information about the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, visit www.racfpa.org. To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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