

## PRESS RELEASE

### Cultural Commons enriches the beautiful Wisconsin riverfront and offers opportunities for involvement and understanding

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Learning about the history of Stevens Point is fascinating for visitors as well as community members. A casual stroll along the Wisconsin River provides an opportunity to enjoy this precious natural resource while enriching understanding how this beautiful city of Stevens Point came to be. Similar to a river, as history progresses, so does the outreach of a community.

The Cultural Commons educational park to be nestled near the Riverfront Art Center will encompass examples of our rich heritage and the international relationships connecting the culture of Stevens Point to the wider world. This small-scale serene garden within Pfiffner Park will serve as an interactive and dynamic educational experience for all people to enjoy. The Cultural Commons space will honor our community's long-term international relationships with the people of Rostov Veliky, Russia, Gulcz, Poland, and Estelí, Nicaragua as well as recognizing the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rotary Club of Stevens Point. These civic groups bring people together to create positive and lasting changes to our community and around the world. Providing educational opportunities for youth and adults is a major component of Rotary and the local international groups, the park will be a physical place where people of all ages and incomes are welcome to learn about other cultures. Building cultural awareness among our youth is a worthy investment. For local students seeking to complement their education with international involvement, the park will provide a variety of avenues that can be further explored according to interest. The Cultural Commons garden incorporates experience and education across a broad spectrum bringing a fresh perspective to the emphasis of volunteering, taking action and being involved in one's community.

January, February and March of this year presented opportunities for citizens of Stevens Point, including students from Ben Franklin, PJ's Junior High and UWSP to experience first-hand the value of international friendships as they traveled to Nicaragua. With the State of Wisconsin partnered with Nicaragua for over 50 years combined with having the state office of Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners and the Stevens Point/Estelí Partner City in Stevens Point, there are oodles of opportunity for expanding global perspective and learning about another culture. Partners of the Americas began in the 1960's as a means to improve relations between the peoples of the Americas and based on a simple theory that holds true today. When the people of various nations learn about each other through direct contact, they soon become friends. More importantly, as friends they learn mutual respect and work together making their own lives more enriched, their own nations stronger and their hemisphere a better and safer place to live.

The Cultural Commons Park aims to incorporate features, sculptures, plantings and themes that are symbolic to the respective regions or relationship. Estelí Partner City member Dennis "Dino" Tlachac joined in bringing a flavor of Estelí, Nicaragua to the park by helping to haul a stone sculpture out of the mountains of Estelí. The artist of the stone was recently noted in the Top 10 "Must-Dos" in Nicaragua by Travel author Russell Maddicks, "Cliff Carver of Tisey: Alberto Gutiérrez Jirón, 76, is a hermit who has been carving figures into the cliffs of his family's coffee farm in the Tisey Natural Reserve for over 30 years, creating an open-air gallery of sculpted figures that range from snakes, jaguars and elephants to biblical characters and scenes from Nicaragua's history. Every morning he spends three hours carving the exposed rocks that look out across the valley towards the city of Estelí, famous for its revolutionary murals and cigar factories. The inspiration for this Herculean task came to Don Alberto when he was nine years old in a 3-hour dream that he says was so vivid it was like watching a movie in the cinema." – Russell Maddicks

Community support for the Cultural Commons has been fantastic and further information is available on the newly unveiled website: [www.spculturalcommons.com](http://www.spculturalcommons.com) Marg Simkowski, Old National Bank Stevens Point shared, "There are many reasons we decided to engage in this project. One is Diversity and Inclusion--which are cornerstones of our values at Old National Bank. We believe the unique contribution every member of the community has to offer builds a strong culture--so pledging our support to the Cultural Commons Project is a natural fit. We are thrilled to be a part of a project that focuses on revitalizing the downtown, providing spaces for reflection, education and community while adding to our scenic Wisconsin River and Green Circle Trail. Our CEO says that the role of a community bank means the community is better because we are there and we hope our engagement in this project will do just that."

All are invited to support this community project, contributions can be made to the Community Foundation, Cultural Commons fund and the website provides honorary or memorial options including custom engraved pavers and an assortment of benches. For additional project information, contact Sara Brish at 715-344-2556, [sara@stevenspointarea.com](mailto:sara@stevenspointarea.com)