

News

City News

Pastor Brice Eichlersmith wins annual outstanding citizen award

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Richfield, Minnesota is full of great people. People that help their neighbors and look out for one another. However, when you have been spreading kindness, compassion and a sympathetic ear for listening, it puts someone in a class of their own. It is for those reasons and many others that Oak Grove Lutheran Church Pastor Brice Eichlersmith was selected as the recipient of the 2019 Gene and Mary Jacobsen Outstanding Citizen Award.

“Throughout his career, Pastor Eichlersmith has shown his commitment to building healthy families in Richfield,” explained Human Rights Commission chair Brett Stursa. “His work to create the Richfield Police Chaplain program and his involvement in the department's Officer Wellness program has strengthened our community and we deeply appreciate his work.”

Annually, the Richfield Human Rights Commission presents the Gene and Mary Jacobsen Outstanding Citizen Award to an individual, family or organization that demonstrates outstanding community service, a commitment to human rights, or efforts to improve our community and make it a better place for all.

In their selection, the Human Rights Commission believes that Pastor Eichlersmith personifies all of the traits the award is founded on.



Pastor Eichlersmith has been an ordained minister in the Lutheran Church for more than 34 years and a pastor in the Richfield community since 1994. As the pastor of Oak Grove Lutheran Church, he is involved in youth ministries, family counseling and community outreach.

As a youth pastor, Eichlersmith participates in faith formation programs and confirmation, but he is also an active participant in youth summer camps, youth engagement activities and youth organizations, such as Young Life. Through his leadership, authentic relationships and mere presence he helps facilitate the healthy development of the youth in the Richfield community.

“When I was in high school, more than 25 years ago, Pastor Brice was always available to students that needed his help. It did not matter if they were struggling with a personal problem or just needed some advice. He was always there,” said Ward 1 Councilmember Simon Trautmann. “He wakes up every single morning and thinks how he can let people in Richfield know that they are loved.”

Pastor Eichlersmith is committed to building healthy families through his family coaching work, helping Richfield families through difficult times. He has dedicated his career to helping families process challenging and dramatic events. He strives to turn these dramatic events into healthy experiences that help families grow into more stable healthy units.

More than 15 years ago, Pastor Eichlersmith turned his attention to Richfield’s first responders and helped create the police officer and firefighter chaplain program. The chaplain program has become an integral component of both departments’ community response.

Police and fire chaplains, led by Pastor Eichlersmith, provide community members with spiritual support in times of tragedy. Chaplains respond to incidents to assist family members with a loss or when tragedy occurs such as a death investigation, suicide or other traumatic events. The chaplains are experts at consoling, counseling and guiding citizens in despair. They are the first step in the healing process and the services they provide to these community members are essential.

Pastor Eichlersmith has also become an important component of the Police and Fire Departments’ wellness program. It is well documented that police officers and firefighters who are physically, emotionally and psychologically healthy have a greater capacity to perform their jobs and are more effective in their service to the community.

“Brice has been an indispensable asset to both the chaplain and wellness program,” said Police Chief Jay Henthorne. “Pastor Eichlersmith dramatically improves our officers and firefighters’ wellness through trust-based relationships he has developed over the years.”

The Richfield Human Rights Commission has selected a Citizen of the Year award recipient since 1971.

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