



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
City of Duluth Communications Office

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DATE: 03/25/2013

SUBJECT: Duluth Mayor Don Ness Honored With The Minnesota Phoenix Award For Outstanding Contributions To Disaster Recovery
BY: Daniel Fanning, Mayor's Office

Duluth Mayor Don Ness Honored With The Minnesota Phoenix Award For Outstanding Contributions To Disaster Recovery

Duluth Mayor Don Ness has been honored with the Minnesota Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The Phoenix Award is presented to a private-citizen, volunteer, and a public official who have each made an outstanding contribution to a community's recovery following a natural disaster which occurred during the previous fiscal year. Elaine Hansen, Director of the Northeast Minnesota Small Business Development Center, nominated Mayor Ness for this award.

"This award recognizes the contributions of the entire region. It will be accepted on behalf of all of the elected officials, employees, volunteers, and neighbors who continue to undertake the tough, unglamorous work of flood recovery," said Mayor Don Ness. "We are rightfully proud of our community's efforts in response to the worst natural disaster in our city's history. However, there are still folks hurting and struggling to overcome the effects of the flood. While recognition of our accomplishments is nice, we continue to place our focus on helping our neighbors still in need."

Below is the release issued by the SBA earlier today:

Release Date: March 25, 2013
Release Number: 2013-18

Contact: Sherree Stratton (612) 370-2325
Internet Address: www.sba.gov/mn

SBA Names Minnesota Phoenix Award Winner

Duluth, Minn. – Mayor Don Ness, City of Duluth, has been honored with the Minnesota Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery is presented to a private-citizen volunteer and a public official who have each made an outstanding contribution to a community's recovery following a natural disaster which occurred during the previous fiscal year. Elaine Hansen, Director of the Northeast Minnesota Small Business Development Center, nominated Mayor Ness for this award.

Mayor Ness's lifelong compassion for his community and his experience in public service provided the background to provide great leadership during the "500 year storm" during June 17-20, 2012, that caused record flooding and well over \$100 million in damage throughout the City. Mayor Ness understood his role and represented the City of Duluth, and the surrounding communities, particularly well during a time of need.

Because of the topography, the 8- to 12-inch rainfall not only caused flooding, but swollen and overflowing lakes and ponds with normally trickling streams and creeks becoming raging rivers removing anything in the way. Roads and bridges were washed away leaving victims stranded in vehicles and their homes. Barnyard animals in the zoo drowned and the polar bear and seal were picked up and washed out of the exhibits – the seal to a roadway and the polar bear to another part of the zoo property. Along the St. Louis River, homes were flooded, destroyed, and washed away. Considerable damage was done to the streets, parks, sidewalks and other segments of the City's infrastructure.

Mayor Ness showed his leadership and took immediate charge of the situation declaring a state of emergency and encouraging people to stay in safe places off the uncertain roadways. Within days his leadership brought the community together to help those in need through fundraisers, public speeches, and presenting Duluth before lawmakers for financial assistance. Mayor Ness has raised millions of dollars to help rebuild Duluth and surrounding communities with confidence in addition to the FEMA and SBA assistance. Duluth, as it has in the past, will rebuild and succeed.

As the Mayor, Don Ness was expected to be a central figure in an emergency. However, in this situation, Mayor Ness became a prominent leader, organizer and collaborator not only for the community, but neighboring communities as well. He provided direction, comfort, and straightforward, clear communication to flood victims, the public and other political leaders which resulted in the City responding quickly and positively to the disaster clean-up efforts and the long-term repairs and replacements that will need to be made. His efforts resulted in organizations collaborating on flood relief efforts which has offered ongoing, coordinated assistance to those in need. Resources and volunteers from other areas of the county provided support. Mayor Ness brought the plight of the City to state and federal agencies to make sure that a clear picture of the destruction was presented and the damage assessments were documented so that all of the applicable resources could be provided and utilized.

Two days in June 2012 changed the landscape of the City, but with the leadership of Mayor Ness, the City responded quickly and the repairs were immediately started. This coming year, 2013, will bring an opportunity for long-term repairs and replacements to take place – such as the replacement of damaged and destroyed road-beds, infrastructure and bridges.

As the New Year begins, Mayor Ness has said, "If 2012 was the year of the flood, 2013 will be the year of flood recovery," which will remain his focus. There are still families hurting from the flood damage and plenty of infrastructure still suffering. Through the continued leadership of Mayor Ness, the City of Duluth and the surrounding communities will make a full recovery and become stronger.

Mayor Ness will be honored at the Minnesota Small Business Week Awards program on May 6, 2013, at the Depot Minneapolis.