Dearborn Dearborn Heights resident and school board president honored
By John Zakolsky
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Dearborn Heights Mayor Shian Callahan and School Board President Dorothy Wilelmski present the Dearborn Heights School Board Recognition Award to Gary Woronchak, who was honored as the 2023 Wayne County Commissioner of the Year. Woronchak was honored for his efforts to improve the Rouge River and create jobs in the area. He was presented with a plaque and a check for $2,500 at the Dearborn Heights Board of Education meeting on April 9. The award was established in 2002 to recognize outstanding service to the community, and it is presented annually to a Wayne County commissioner who has made significant contributions to the county's growth and development.

Woronchak has served as a Wayne County Commissioner since 2012 and has been a vocal advocate for the Rouge River and the surrounding communities. He has worked tirelessly to improve the river, which is the area's main water source and a critical habitat for fish and other wildlife. Woronchak has been instrumental in securing funding for the Rouge River Oxbow project, which has restored over 100 acres of newly restored wetland, wet prairie, and riparian habitat. He has also been a strong advocate for the Dearborn Heights School Board, where he has served as president since 2019. His dedication to improving the lives of his constituents has earned him the respect and admiration of his fellow commissioners and residents alike.

While delivering his acceptance speech, Woronchak thanked everyone who supported him during his campaign and acknowledged the hard work of his fellow commissioners and staff. He also expressed his gratitude to his family and friends for their continued support.

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RICHFIELD — The Rouge River is a 90-mile-long waterway that begins in the southwest corner of Michigan and flows through the eastern part of Wayne County before emptying into Lake Erie. It is the sixth-longest river in the state and is home to an abundance of wildlife, including fish, birds, and other aquatic species. The river has been the subject of restoration efforts for many years, including a project led by the Rouge River Parkland Authority (RRPA) and funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The RRPA has been working to restore the river by removing barriers, improving water quality, and enhancing natural systems. The project has involved the removal of 36 dams, the construction of 162 miles of new stream, and the restoration of 25,000 acres of wetland and riparian habitat. These efforts have resulted in significant improvements to the river, including increased spawning success for fish and improved habitat for a variety of wildlife species. The project has also led to increased public access and recreational opportunities along the river. In addition to the restoration efforts, the RRPA has been working to improve water quality by implementing best management practices and reducing pollution from urban and agricultural sources. The river is an important resource for the local community, providing opportunities for fishing, boating, and other recreational activities. The RRPA continues to work to ensure the health and vitality of the Rouge River for future generations. Primary goals are to:

- Provide opportunities for educational engaged students on-hand, real-world science and STEM initiatives to study the different ecosystems.
- Improve awareness of the Rouge River by showing how they impact the river, and how local and global the project is.
- Engage participants to apply knowledge and awareness gained through the RRPA to identify and address environmental issues in the Rouge River watershed.

The RRPA is a non-profit organization that works to reduce pollution and improve water quality in the Rouge River watershed. The organization is supported by a combination of federal, state, and local funding sources, as well as private contributions. The RRPA has a board of directors that includes representatives from local governments, businesses, and environmental organizations. The organization is committed to working collaboratively to achieve its goals and is dedicated to improving the health and vitality of the Rouge River.