

Civility initiative earns national honor

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PHILADELPHIA — The Times Media Co. was named the 2016 Associated Press Managing Editors Innovator of the Year, pulling ahead of two Pulitzer Prize-winning newspapers, which were finalists for the honor.

Editors attending the American Society Newspaper Editors-APME News Leadership Conference decided among the three finalists on Tuesday, and civility won out.

“This is great recognition for something that started right here in the Region,” Editor Bob Heisse said Wednesday. “The Gary Chamber of Commerce and The Times Media Co. partnered and rolled out Community Civility Counts, its ‘Together we Win’ slogan and #CivilityCounts hashtag. It has grown into an awareness campaign that’s gaining national and international attention for simply doing the right thing.

“I think we’re all tired of the name calling and bullying, and it was great to share our campaign with others,” Heisse said. A video covering campaign highlights was shown to the audience at the conference, and is attached to this story.

The Times and Gary chamber and other partners have worked over the last year on various initiatives to bring civility to the community. The Times refuses to publish vitriolic speech and does not host anonymous online comments.

“This is something any of you can do in your communities,” Heisse told news leaders. “It’s a concept that our community has embraced.”

Chuck Hughes, executive director of the Gary Chamber of Commerce, said the campaign “has absolutely blossomed more than I could have hoped.”

The APME award, he said, only enhances the partnership’s efforts to spread the campaign throughout the country.

Hughes recalled how what was to become a campaign that was to eventually cross continents began with a discussion during a Gary Chamber Public Policy Committee meeting before being enthusiastically embraced by The Times.

The first World Civility Day on April 14 celebrated the movement’s initial successes. A second World Civility Day is in the works, too. Hughes noted how the first speaker at the World Civility Day, United Nations Ambassador Clyde Rivers, has even brought the campaign to countries in Africa. Rivers serves as ambassador at large for the Republic of Burundi, Africa, and is founder and president of iChange Nations and the Human Rights Global Congress.

A Civility in the Classroom initiative is expanding this fall. Follow activities of the campaign on the Civility Counts Facebook page or at nwi.com/civilitycounts.