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Max Schochenmaier, Executive Director of Impact Schools of South Dakota, Honored for Impact Aid Leadership

Washington, D.C. – April 14, 2026 – The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) is pleased to announce that Maxine “Max” Schochenmaier, Executive Director of Impact Schools of South Dakota (ISSD), has received the Hilary Goldmann Women in Leadership Award. Presented at the 2026 NAFIS Spring Conference, the award honors women who demonstrate exceptional leadership and outstanding contributions to the Impact Aid Program and the school districts it serves. Schochenmaier is the second recipient.

Impact Aid reimburses school districts for lost local revenue caused by the presence of nontaxable federal property, including military installations; Indian trust, restricted, and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act lands; federal low-income housing facilities; and national parks, laboratories, and other federal buildings and property. The program helps ensure students in these communities have access to a high-quality education.

This year marks Schochenmaier’s 50th year of service to Impact Aid. She began her work in 1976 at the South Dakota Department of Education and joined Impact Schools of South Dakota in 1982, which she continues to serve as Executive Director. Over five decades, she has become a prominent expert and advocate with influence far beyond South Dakota. Schochenmaier provides technical assistance, supports the application process, and represents Impact Aid communities in Washington, D.C., using her deep knowledge and strong relationships with policymakers to ensure these districts’ voices are heard at the highest tiers of government.

“Max’s leadership is defined not only by her expertise, but by her integrity, humility, and unwavering dedication to others,” said NAFIS Executive Director Cherise Imai. “For 50 years, she has worked quietly and effectively to support the Impact Aid Program, the districts it serves, and the students at its heart. This award honors leaders who lift others, and no one embodies that more fully than Max.”

Schochenmaier’s contributions have previously been recognized at the national level. In 1994, Senator Larry Pressler honored her in the Congressional Record for her exemplary work in education. More than three decades later, she remains a respected leader, mentor, and partner to districts and policymakers nationwide, offering both historical perspective and practical insight. Her career is a testament to service-driven leadership, and she continues to strengthen Impact Aid and support schools across South Dakota and beyond.

In recognition of her extraordinary service and lasting impact, NAFIS proudly celebrates Max Schochenmaier with the Hilary Goldmann Women in Leadership Award.

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The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) represents approximately 1,100 federally impacted public school districts that together educate nearly eight million students across the nation. Federally impacted school districts are those located on or near nontaxable federal property, including military installations; Indian trust, restricted, and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act lands; federal low-income housing facilities; and national parks, national laboratories, and other federal buildings and property. These school districts receive Impact Aid, a federal education program that reimburses school districts for the lost local revenue and additional costs associated with the presence of federal property. To learn more, visit www.nafisd.org.