

The Review

Fall 2017



SOUTHWEST WEST CENTRAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE

SWWC

Education & Administrative Resources



Camp Aspire



See more photos and videos at
www.swsc.org/campaspire



1420 E. College Drive
Marshall, MN 56258
www.swsc.org

CAMP ASPIRE

Camp Aspire registrations **doubled** in 2017, which means we provided a unique summer experience for 43 campers ages 5-12. Camp was held July 10-14 for children entering K-grade 2 and July 17-21 for children entering grades 3-6. Camp activities centered around daily themes and were highlighted by the pinnacle of the day ... the Mystery Field Trip. The focus of Camp Aspire is to provide a child-centered experience with hands-on learning, community, character, social-emotional development and academics - with these values woven through all of programming.



By Jessica Robinson
Speech-Language
Pathologist

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ACTIVITIES AT CAMP

BATS: We had Bat Myth-Busting, bat identification, exploration of bat skeletons, and bat detection using an ultrasonic bat detector.

AIR/ENERGY: We went on a wind tower tour with master electrician Dan Wildermuth who described the massive parts of the wind towers and how electrical circuits work. The kids also dressed up in Dan's helmet and safety suit to handle the safety gear.

ANIMALS: Campers created 3D meltable crayon art with animal silhouettes and got to observe a small animal exam performed by Dr. Weber from the Pipestone Veterinary Clinic.

TECHNOLOGY: Back by popular demand - robots and drones! Campers crafted an obstacle course for the Doubles, Sheldon and Leonard. They worked in teams to get the robots through a series of jump ropes, buckets, boxes, cones and blocks. We also piloted technology in the air! Tim Rhodes and Jeremy Morgan from SWWC provided aviation lessons using drones and a model airplane.

PRAIRIE: We celebrated our local prairie through puppet theater (including a prairie dog, black footed ferret, rattlesnake, and burrowing owl). Campers learned that grassfires are an important part of the prairie life cycle. A prairie plant and animal identification kit prepared us for a scavenger hunt on the Casey Jones Trail. Local history was explored through Native American children's games, a Nooks and Crannies Tour at the Pipestone County Courthouse, and outdoor Dutch Oven cooking with pioneer pizza and dump cake.

FINAL CELEBRATION: We ended each week of camp at Splitrock State Park with canoeing, kayaking, and an exploding watermelon competition!



By Cliff Carmody
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SWWC FACILITY PLANNING

The SWWC Facility Plan is moving to the next phase! Last year, we worked on the development of a strategic facility plan that would address the needs, goals, action plans and implementation timeline for SWWC facility consideration for the next three to five years.

As a part of this initial process we developed three guiding principles to this work:

- Create equitable access to student programs by strategically locating educational learning centers (ELCs) throughout the region. *(Minimize travel distance, transportation cost and allow for flexible space for program expansion).*
- Control long-term real estate and facility costs. *(Create operational efficiencies, consolidate office and ELC sites whenever possible, reduce overall lease costs, and create lease term consistency).*
- Take a proactive vs. reactive approach to facility planning. *(SWWC facility planning will be based on the needs of programs and students, including the safety and security of staff and students).*

In addition, the SWWC Facility Planning Committee identified several criteria to consider during the planning process. These include: partnering with school districts whenever possible; creating flexible space for expansion opportunities; prioritizing access to food service, law enforcement, green space and park/playground equipment; whenever possible, combine office and ELC space; and adhere to a strict planning calendar to better make facility and program decisions. All of this work has established a very good foundation for the coming work.

This year, the SWWC Facility Planning Committee will create a detailed planning document with goals, action items, timelines and accountabilities; engage a real estate attorney to represent SWWC in real estate transactions; engage a commercial real estate group to assist in brokerage activities; develop a prototype for ELCs, office space and data centers; and, develop a financial pro forma around managing all real estate costs.

Supporting and enhancing the work of our members is key to the work we do at SWWC! The strategic facility planning we are doing will help our agency to continue to offer affordable solutions to our members and better able to meet their needs.

SHARE YOUR GOOD NEWS!

The Review is published three times a year. We welcome submissions from schools -- so if you have good news to share, send it to us! If you have suggestions, comments or items for submission, contact Shelly Maes at shelly.maes@swsc.org.



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/company/sw-wc-service-cooperative



/swwc_sc

COSMOS LEARNING CENTER - OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE

Why not? What's the worst that could happen? What could possibly go wrong? These are a few of the things we asked ourselves (somewhat tongue in cheek) before we went outside of our comfort zone.

Hay ride? Why? Because most of our kids have never been on a hay ride since not everyone grows up on a farm. School is a place of new experiences and exploration for kids to learn and grow from. Not only did our kids basically throw themselves into the wagon, they giggled and shouted "go faster!" Something that most people take for granted is often something that many never get to experience.

With the success of the hayride, we decided to try for something else ... a **talent show**. At first we figured that there wouldn't be many kids interested ... but were we ever wrong. We had 13 kids from three different classes sign up immediately. We cobbled together a sound system with a working "Rock Band" microphone to put on the show, and managed to hook up some computer speakers to one of our laptops. The kids practiced their songs in class and on the stage before we gathered the entire school for the show. Word went out to all classes that the show was going on and those interested could come down and watch. Again we were concerned because we never really had a gathering of all our kids in one spot before. However, the show went off without a hitch! The kids who performed had a blast and everyone who attended it thoroughly enjoyed it. Many of the kids wanted their parents/guardians to attend but we were too concerned about whether or not the show would work ... and we didn't know if a student would have a melt-down either on- or off-stage that could jeopardize anyone's safety. But, there wasn't a hint of behaviors during the show! It seemed that the kids really took pride and ownership in putting on the show.

What was our next step? How about a **holiday show** where we invite parents/guardians? This raised several concerns - the main one being that they wouldn't show up and the kids would be devastated. However, over 70 parents/guardians attended the show - far more than we could have hoped for. Something of this magnitude had never happened before, but our large group of students (over 70% of them participating or helping with set-up) came together and put on one heck of a show. Many of the parents who attended had never seen their child in any type of school event and we were approached by tearful parents thanking us for the show and for inviting them. It was great to meet so many and put names to faces - both on their end and ours! Normally we interact with parents/guardians via email, text, phone call or scheduled IEP meeting (or sadly, to discuss a problem that happened that day). The holiday show allowed us to have very different conversations about their children - all revolving around a very positive event. Almost every parent mentioned a desire to have more events they could attend so they could see a different side of their child and the school. And we decided "Why Not!"

We put on two more events that year - parents were invited and the turnout was impressive. Students and parents experienced fun, bond-building activities that many previously thought would not be possible due to the disabilities of our students. We quickly learned that our kids are really not that much different from "regular" kids. Give them a stage to show off and have fun ... and then stand back and enjoy!



By Bailey Rettmann
Principal
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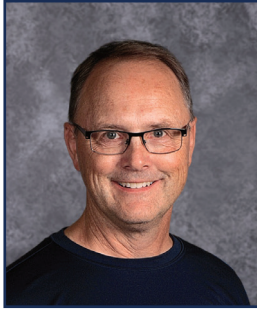
and



Jason Northrup
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SWWC
EDUCATIONAL
LEARNING CENTERS
www.swsc.org/elc



By Tom Hoff
Career and Technical
Project Coordinator
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RURAL CAREER & TECH ED CONSORTIUM GRANT

SWWC, along with post-secondary partners Minnesota West, Southwest Minnesota State University and Ridgewater College, were named the recipient of a \$3 million Rural Career and Technical Education Consortium Grant - spanning the next two years - as a result of the 2017 Legislative session. Senators Bill Weber and Gary Dahms were instrumental in advocating for collaborative Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities for the students in our region. This funding will allow our region to develop new, and enhance existing, courses and programs that focus on areas of employment need in our region, while giving students the skills needed in the workplace.

A Rural CTE Advisory Committee has been established and includes leadership from our college partners, along with Adult Basic Education, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training, DEED, Carl Perkins Consortiums, Southwest Initiative Foundation, Private Industry Council, and our member school districts. The advisory committee was assembled to assist in the development of a sustainable high school CTE system that is based on a collaborative delivery model. Once the advisory committee has determined priorities for the expenditure of fund, more information will be shared with high schools in our 18 county service region.

We are already seeing the growth of this new, rural, and collaborative CTE model and are excited about what it can mean to students, families, schools and businesses in our region.



By Kari Bailey
Regional Wellness
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LIVE WELL

Learn more about the
Live Well initiative!

www.swsc.org/livewell

INTRODUCING LIVE WELL

If you're like me, you've probably used the words "wellness" and "wellbeing" interchangeably without thinking much about whether there is a distinction between the two. Roughly 18 months ago, I attended a conference on Employee Health and Wellbeing, and at that point really started to understand the distinct difference between those two words. Wellness tends to be associated with health and prevention, and wellbeing becomes more about overall happiness. Gallup-Healthways is one of the reasons for this shift. In 2008, Gallup-Healthways began looking at overall wellbeing and developed a series of questionnaires aimed to determine population wellbeing. This concept captures the important aspects of how people feel about and experience their daily lives – encompassing more than just physical health. Wellbeing includes five essential elements: career/purpose, social, financial, physical, and community.

At SWWC, we know that employees spend a majority of their time at work. That's why we strive to help members of our insurance pools lay the groundwork in creating a culture of health in the workplace that supports overall wellbeing. We want to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Our initiatives are designed with the employer and employee in mind which is why we offer programmatic activities, incentive campaigns, on-site biometric screenings, and built-environment sustainability. At the end of the day, we know that employers desire healthy, happy and productive employees. If you're a member of our pool and interested in improving the culture in your organization through focusing on employee wellbeing, I'd love to help!

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPTIONS: VEBAs and HSAs

Any school district, regardless if you are a member of the SWWC insurance pool or not, can select from two spending accounts that work with your health plan. Choose the type of account that fits your current health care spending AND your retirement planning needs. Below is some information explaining the difference between the two types of spending accounts.



By Doug Deragisch
Sr. Director of Risk Management
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Step 1: Understanding your options

Currently your employer offers two account types:

VEBA: A VEBA account is funded by the employer. Funds in a VEBA account are held in a trust on your behalf and can be used to pay for current and future medical expenses and medical premiums post-employment. Left untouched to grow, a VEBA can be used as a great tax-free retirement savings vehicle, as the account has no contribution limit, and funds rollover year after year.

HSA: An HSA account can be funded by both you and your employer, and works as a tax-free account when used to pay for your current and future medical expenses. On average, an HSA will save it's users 30% on their taxes, and funds grow tax-free through interest and investment options while in the account. Since an HSA belongs to you, all funds rollover year after year.

Step 2: What is the best option for me?

As an employee, you have the opportunity to tell your employer where you would like their contribution to go, so how do you choose? A VEBA is a great place to save money for current medical expenses, or save to pay for medical premium costs in retirement. An HSA is the perfect solution for your health care expenses, both now and in the future, and allows you to save or spend up to the IRS maximum for immediate tax savings.



Did you know?



A 65 year old couple who retired in 2016 needs nearly \$288,000 to cover medical premiums alone in retirement?

Step 3: Make your choice



100% VEBA

100% of your employer contribution will be placed inside a VEBA trust on your behalf. Funds in the account can be used to pay for current and future medical expenses, and medical premiums post-employment.



100% HSA

100% of your employer contribution will be go into an HSA. Funds in the account can be used to pay for current and future medical expenses, completely tax-free. The funds inside an HSA account belong to you, even if you switch employers. Both you and your employer may contribute to an HSA. HSA funds rollover year after year, and grow tax-free through interest and investment options while in the account.

(2017 HSA limits : Single \$3,400 / Family \$6,750).



50% VEBA / 50% HSA



Select Account
Recommended

If offered, when you select your medical plan, your employer contributions will go into each account evenly. Your VEBA will then become "limited purpose" until you reach age 65, at which point you can use those funds to cover medical premiums in retirement. During this period your HSA will take over as your main medical spending account, and both you and your employer are allowed to contribute up to the maximum each year to cover any possible expenses.

(2017 HSA limits : Single \$3,400 / Family \$6,750).



By Nicole Lydick
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By Mary Mortier
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To view photos and see the list
of exhibitors, visit
www.swsc.org/careerexpo

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE NEWS

As of July 1, the Southwest Prairie Regional Center of Excellence (RCE) has expanded! The team, at full capacity, will consist of a Director, District Support Specialist, Principal Support Specialist, Graduation Support Specialist, Reading Specialist, and a Math/English Language Learner Specialist.

The goal of the RCEs is to support Minnesota schools that become eligible for support through ESSA. The conditions on being eligible for support will be changing for the 2018-19 school year. Districts will now be eligible through World's Best Work Force, as well as high schools based on academics and graduation rate, along with the previously eligible middle and elementary schools. A couple of the biggest changes with the new plan is that high schools will now be eligible for support, whether they are a Title I school or not, as well as districts being eligible for support.

If your district or school becomes eligible, the RCEs are here to support you! An advocate will be there to help you both on-site and through professional development. Contact me at the SWWC Marshall office if you have any questions about ESSA or the Southwest Prairie RCE at 507-537-2291 or via email.

CAREER EXPO CELEBRATES 15 YEARS

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Council's 15th Annual Career Expo was held October 3 and October 4 at the college campuses of Southwest Minnesota State University - Marshall and Minnesota West - Worthington. The event provided valuable career and education information to high school students, and highlighted regional businesses and the type of jobs they provide in our communities.

The two expos were attended by 1,832 students from 33 schools. Over 300 volunteers from these partner organizations contributed to the expos' success:

- Minnesota West Carl Perkins Consortium
- Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College
- Southwest Minnesota State University
- SWWC Service Cooperative
- Job Service
- Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce
- Marshall Area Chambers of Commerce
- Marshall, Montevideo and Worthington Workforce Centers
- Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Southwest Regional Development Commission
- Regional businesses and service agencies

A total of 121 exhibitors from a large variety of career fields were on hand and we heard from several teachers, students, and exhibitors that it was the most interactive expo to date and a valuable opportunity to expose students to what Southwest Minnesota has to offer.

SPELLING BEE 2017-18



Spelling bees help promote literacy, build confidence and give students a goal to work towards ... but it also does more than that. Bees help children learn concepts, improve comprehension and develop study skills. Register your school today to give your students in grades 5-8 a challenge on spelling words.

Spelling Bee Timeline

- Schools hold local/district bees in January.
- Local bee winners compete in the Regional Spelling Bee held in Redwood Falls on February 6, 2018.
- The top four regional bee winners advance to the Multi-Region State Spelling Bee in Fergus Falls on February 20, 2018.
- The winner of the multi-region state bee advances to the National Spelling Bee (May 27 - June 2, 2018) in Washington, D.C.

Enroll with Scripps by **October 16** AND with SWWC by **October 31**.

Go to www.swsc.org/bee for registration forms and fees.

GET STUDENTS EXCITED TO WRITE & DRAW

Your school can host an author and/or illustrator through the 2018 Children's Author & Illustrator Program. SWWC has lined up two great presenters: Gordon Fredrickson and Douglas Wood. Presenters walk through the journey of how they create ideas for books and illustrations; explain what it takes to be an author or an illustrator; and show students the end result. **Register your school by November 2** and give your K-grade 6 students an opportunity to use their imaginations to start creating their own book.



By Andrea Anderson
Student Activities Coordinator
andrea.anderson@swsc.org



Fredrickson



Wood

Full brochure and registration form at www.swsc.org/caip

CALLING ALL YOUNG WRITERS

SWWC's 26th Annual Conference for Young Writers (for students grades 3-8) will feature keynote speaker Lisa M. Bolt Simons. She will share her knowledge and experiences, focusing on skill, teamwork and persistence. Throughout the conference, students will be encouraged to write fiction, fantasy, truth, personal adventures, poetry, building characters and much more. Bring your students so they can learn inspiring ways to write about monsters, how to hook an audience, create a villain and more.



Full brochure at www.swsc.org/yw

Event Date/Location: January 3, 2018, at SMSU

Early Registration Deadline: November 14

Final Registration Deadline: November 21



Student Activities Questions?

Contact Andrea Anderson
Student Activities Coordinator
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By Abby Polzine
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CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

Get your talented story tellers involved in the 14th Annual Creative Writing Contest. The contest, open to students in grades 3-12, is a wonderful opportunity for students to use their imaginations to generate creative fiction and nonfiction stories and poems.

Use the contest as a classroom project or encourage students to enter on their own. With a **submission deadline of January 19**, students have plenty of time over holiday breaks to create incredible stories.

Geoff Herbach, author of several young adult novels, will be the guest speaker at the Awards Ceremony in April 2018.

Contest rules and guidelines can be found at www.swsc.org/cw.

SCIENCE & NATURE CONFERENCE

Join us on May 9, 2018, for SWWC's Science & Nature Conference. The conference will be held at SMSU and will feature Mike Billington and his birds from the U of M Raptor Center. Students in grades K-8 will get to experience a variety of science related topics such as rocket building, science magic, crime scene investigation, STEM and much more. Watch for more details in January at www.swsc.org/sn.

CAREER PLACEMENT SERVICES

Tired of waiting around for candidates to apply for your open positions? Or posting a position and praying you get at least one applicant ... or more if you're lucky?

SWWC's Career Placement service is a user friendly site that allows organizations to find great qualified candidates by posting solely on this site. Unlike similar services, SWWC's Career Placement site gives users easy access to job openings that are tailored to meet their needs.

If a job is posted by a district that a candidate is interested in, they merely click on the link provided and will be brought to that district or organization's posting to apply.

This site is ideal for both passive and active job seekers. Another perk? It's 100% FREE!

New users simply create an account by entering their basic information and credentials - a process that takes no more than five minutes. Once that is complete, they will begin to receive notifications any time a job is posted that matches the credentials they provided. They also receive a weekly digest that summarizes the open positions they might be interested in and are qualified for.

Need more convincing? We offer affordable pricing packages for school districts to post unlimited positions for the entire year. Want to have your first year free? Simply purchase a 3-year annual subscription!

Contact us today with questions or to purchase an annual subscription. We can't wait to save you time and make your applicant seeking lives a little bit easier.

BUILDING IDENTITY 2017

Hearing loss is known as a “low incidence disability”. In our 18 county region, there are 175 deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students. They are located few and far between. Often there is one student in a school or entire district, and he/she has not met another person with hearing loss.

For over 25 years, the teachers of deaf and hard of hearing have organized overnight camps, day camps, day excursions and field trips so our students can socialize with and learn from each other and young adult role models who also have hearing loss. This year, SWWC is partnering with Lions Clubs throughout the region to provide a Building Identity Event for all DHH students in the region. On **November 30**, students with hearing loss will meet at the Redwood Area Community Center to ice skate, eat, create and learn. While having fun, students interact with adults and peers like them, communicate with no boundaries, and experience the wonder of technology specific to hearing loss.

History tells us that following these events, student acceptance of and pride in their hearing loss increases tremendously. Those who have been reluctant to use their hearing aids or other amplification have increased their use. Students who have experienced Building Identity Events continue to connect with those that they have met (via Facetime, social media, email, video phone, or pen pal letters). Within days after, students are asking when they get to meet more new friends like them.



By Jill Rohman
Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing
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TRACY AREA ADDS NEW PROGRAMS

By Alex Greenway and Stacy Schuh, Teachers

Tracy Area High School is launching the Close Up program. Close Up is a 6-day/5-night trip for students to Washington D.C. Using the city as a living classroom, students get a “close up” view of government and democracy. The Close Up organization educates and inspires young people to become informed, engaged citizens who make a difference in their communities. Social Studies teacher/asst varsity football coach, Alex Greenway, believes “what sets Close Up apart is that students are taught about their country and its history while standing right in the middle of that history. Students stand in front of the Jefferson Memorial and discuss his view of democracy. They stand by Martin Luther King, Jr’s memorial and are inspired by how this ordinary citizen could influence the world. Students visit the Smithsonian, Arlington National Cemetery and everywhere on Capitol Hill. Students even get to meet their home state congressional representatives! Close Up is a once in a lifetime experience and we are very excited about our students attending.”

Tracy Area High School is also reintroducing the Business Professionals of America (BPA) program. BPA is not a new co-curricular student organization, but it is new to us this year. BPA has over 80 career based skill competitions that align to National Standards. BPA is designed for students interested in careers in the fields of: Administrative Support, Information Technology, Financial Services, Business Management, Marketing and Human Resources. Scheduling of classes often makes it difficult for students to take elective classes that align with their interests- BPA allows them the opportunity to study, showcase talents and network in their prospective career areas. We will be “Dreaming Bigger” and working towards earning trips to the National Convention in Texas this spring. BPA will be advised by Business Teacher, Stacy Schuh.



LOOKING FOR MORE NEWS?

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Visit www.swsc.org/newsarchive to read past issues of the Review, the Member Newsletter and our Annual Reports!



MARSHALL MS KIDSFIT EVENT

By Scott Monson, Superintendent

On September 17, 2017, nearly 600 Marshall Public School staff and students in grades 3-5 participated in a Hy-Vee “KidsFit” Event. SMSU Athletics teamed up with the Hy-Vee Food Store of Marshall to host the inaugural KidsFit program at Mattke Field at Southwest Minnesota State University’s Schwan Regional Event Center.

According to Marshall Public Schools’ physical education teacher, Deanna Suby, “The event engaged and energized our students and helped them become aware of lifelong fitness and healthy choices for their bodies. The Hy-Vee fitness coach made each workout event meaningful for the students, and it was wonderful having SMSU student athletes there, as our kids look up to them so much”.

Hy-Vee KidsFit is a fun program designed for kids and families to help promote health, exercise and nutrition as a priority in their daily lives. This program is designed to be done without workout equipment to make it accessible for everyone.

“The KidsFit Event was an excellent example of our students benefitting from partnerships in our community – where our students were able to learn about various health-related skills with help from SMSU student athletes and our local Hy-Vee”, stated Marshall Superintendent Scott Monson.

During the event, activities helped provide kids the tools to learn why it is important to make their personal health a priority and how they can benefit from healthy snack choices. These life skills are then incorporated into a 5-Week Challenge for kids. In addition to Hy-Vee staff and KidsFit specialists, SMSU student-athletes were also on the field to help coach and interact with the kids.

Mark Your Calendar!



KAT PERKINS AT DAWSON-BOYD

By Amy Hiedeman, Principal

Dawson-Boyd Schools had the great opportunity to host speaker, Kat Perkins, to kick-off the school year with an Our School Rocks theme! Kat, a former contestant on NBC’s – The Voice shared a great message with students about being FEARLESS. She had 3 overarching messages – Be Brave – don’t be afraid to try new things; Dream It, Do It – you can be whatever you want to be with hard work and persistence; and



Be Kind – reach out and help others and if you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.



It was great opportunity for students to hear about an artist who grew up in rural North Dakota and has gone on to do great things and give back.

BENSON SCHOOLS ADD DAYCARE

By Dennis Laumeyer, Superintendent

As with other areas of the state, Swift County was experiencing a lack of daycare. As a result, a community daycare committee was formed to discuss this matter. The committee consisted of representative from various organizations in Benson.

The committee met numerous times starting in November, 2016. The committee analyzed data and research that was collected. Decisions were made on where a daycare center would be located, how many slots for infants, toddlers, preschool, and school aged children, financing (both start up and ongoing operational costs), employee compensation, rates, an oversight structure, among other items.

Once financing was secured, the daycare license application was submitted in April. The application was approved July, 2017. In August the state licensor gave final approval and the Discovery Kids Childcare Center opened on September 5th with 16 infant slots, 28 toddler slots, and rooms for preschool and school children.

With multiple financial partners, the Discovery Kids Childcare Center is truly a collaborative effort that will be an economic development benefit to the Benson area and Benson Public Schools. This is an example of the extraordinary spirit of a rural community and school working together.



MCC ADDS FOUR MOBILE LABS

By Jake Scandrett, High School Principal

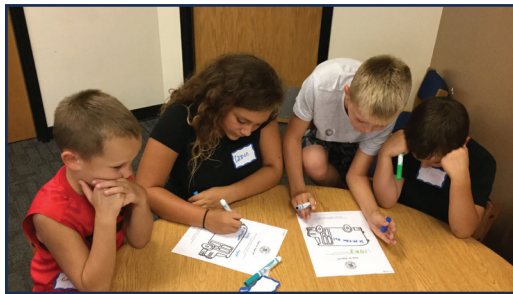
Through a generous grant from MinnWest Bank, Murray County Central (MCC)

High School was able to add four mobile Chromebook labs this fall. The purpose of this project was to increase the number of devices available to students and teachers in order to provide regular access to internet based programming, research, and electronic collaboration. As we continue promoting

21st Century Skills and the 4Cs (communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking) to prepare students for the world beyond high school, we recognize that technology is playing a larger role. More and more, it is a medium through which education happens, a tool, interwoven into the content of everyday lessons to help develop understanding. It enhances the educational experiences of our students and builds relevance to their lives. As digital natives, our students are given a home field advantage when teachers incorporate technology into their lessons. The rationale for this purchase was as much about access as it was equity. As our district utilizes the educational benefits of cell phones in the classrooms as a tool for research, it becomes even more imperative that we provide equal access for all students through the use of school sponsored devices.



Bank President Neal Everson
pictured with
Principal Jake Scandrett



PEACEFUL BUS AT LAKEVIEW

By Melissa Wilber, Elementary Principal

This school year, Lakeview students in grades Pre-K through 8 will be focusing on a peaceful bus system. The Peaceful School Bus is a program by Olweus designed to decrease inappropriate behavior on buses while creating a climate of respect and cooperation. Teachers, administrators, and students take part in school bus route meetings three times a year to focus on team building activities, develop mentoring relationships, talk about bullying, and personally connect with the bus family.



Elementary principal Melissa Wilber is already seeing a difference. “Students are seeing their bus mates as team members and connecting on a deeper level with their bus driver,” she states. Students are working together as a team to problem solve bus issues and build relationships with fellow riders and their driver. Drivers have also commented that they enjoy the focused time with students and appreciate the teachers who lead these meetings. The bus meetings will occur this year in September, December, and March. The first meeting was a success with groups of 50-70 students coming together to create a team bus name, snap some fun photos, and talk about good bus choices. The December meeting will continue to focus on improving bus behavior, mentoring fellow riders, and working together as a bus family.

In the end, Lakeview is committed to functioning as “one heartbeat” and the Peaceful School Bus supports this mission. Students, staff, bus company, and the outside community will all benefit from such a positive, relationship-based program.

MAKERSPACES: A MEDIA CENTER MAKEOVER

By Megan Field, Director of Communication

New London-Spicer’s Prairie Woods Elementary Media Center underwent some enhancements. Previously, a traditional library setting with bookshelves that were ceiling high and therefore out of the reach of our students. Purchases included kid-friendly shelves and book trucks, collaborative furniture, whiteboards, and a circulation desk that places materials at our students’ fingertips and can hold STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and makerspace activities. The goal was to create an adaptable space to allow teachers to promote hands-on literacy and create a variety of learning ecosystems.

The center is staffed by Library Paraprofessional Julie Spors, Media Teacher Becky M. Carlson and Technology Integration Specialist Lindsay Vernier. Normally, the space is used for Technology Specials, book checkout, STEM/Makerspace activities, as well as special events that support literacy. Makerspaces are designated areas where students can explore new learning and experience things like computer coding and prototype building to test concepts, all while working with their hands!

Makerspaces can be individual learning experiences or group activities that expand the realm of what is possible. Most of our classrooms are too small with immobile furniture which limited these types of opportunities, but now every student gets to experience new ways of learning! This versatile design even has our staff using it to collaborate in their Professional Learning Teams. Two days in, we asked, "What's the most inspirational moment in the new space?" Lindsay replied, "For me, it's been when using our collaborative whiteboards. Our kids have amazing hearts!"

For more information about Makerspaces, check out:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLEJLOB6fDw>



LITTLE REBELS RECEIVES GRANT

By Todd Burlingame, MCC Elementary Principal

The Murray County Central (MCC) preschool received a five year grant for Classroom Engagement Model (CEM) from MDE. CEM is a framework for improving engagement and promoting full participation of every child in a classroom setting. The model emphasizes teaming and collaboration to embed opportunities to learn and practice functional goals into daily routines.

Staff will learn strategies such as establishing consistent 'Routines within Routines', creating activities to engage all children, implementing a Zone Defense Schedule, and integrating therapy into routines in order to promote engagement, independence and social relationships.

CEM benefits children with and without disabilities and can be implemented in typical education and care settings, inclusion programs and SpEd classrooms. Through training and coaching, practitioners increase their ability to engage all children, learn strategies to engage individual children, generate ideas for teaming and collaboration and expand their understanding of how to use data to drive instruction and intervention. The quality of the relationships and interactions among adults affects the success of programs and in effect the children and families in their care.

What are the benefits of CEM?

- Staff have the skills to increase engagement of every child.
- Staff look to each other as sources of additional information and support.
- Staff become intentional and purposeful in interactions with children in order to build on their strengths.
- Community partnerships are strengthened through collaborative practices.
- Families and caregivers are included in a meaningful way in planning and delivery of their child's services
- CEM improves and promotes full participation of every child in the classroom.

MCC Little Rebels staff are excited for the challenge and looking forward to the benefits not only for our students, but staff and families as well.





SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS WALK AT LQPV ELEMENTARY

By Maureen Heinecke, Appleton-Milan Elementary Principal

On Wednesday, October 4th, students and staff at Appleton~Milan Elementary School participated in the statewide supported Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) walk. This event has been a part of our October calendar for several years. It encourages both staff and students to be more active not only on their way to school, but throughout each day. SRTS is not a stand-alone program. It is a strategy set to instill life-long healthy habits supporting physical activity and good nutrition choices.



The morning of the walk, students and staff met at a local church. Buses and parents helped transport students to the kick-off location. Local National Guard officers led the staff and students to the school following a 1-mile route. Other local participants included the chief of police, the mayor, and area clergy. Upon arrival, students were served a healthy breakfast and were then on their way to class.

A couple of comments heard throughout the walk included, "This is my favorite morning of the school year" and "I wish we could do this everyday!"

Staff agreed that this is a great way to begin our day of learning! If your school hasn't participated in an event such as this, I would highly suggest trying it out!

WELCOME TO THE MAGICAL WORLD OF LEARNING AT LP!

By Rachel Kraemer, Teacher

Lester Prairie fifth-graders in Miss Kraemer's class were accepted into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Just kidding! Instead, they entered a Harry Potter - inspired classroom. The Harry Potter books by J.K. Rowling inspired countless readers and became a worldwide phenomenon. Once students step inside the classroom, they are transformed to Hogwarts, with crests of the four houses on display, a "Daily Prophet" board, Quidditch AR chart, portraits of Harry Potter characters, a castle wall, and much more. On the first day of school, students were sorted into their "houses" (Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, or Slytherin) using a sorting hat. Each quarter, the four houses compete to earn points and win a house cup. Points can be earned for positive behavior and exceptional answers given in class.

The class is also reading Harry Potter and talking about the importance about accepting and celebrating differences. These are important themes mentioned in the Harry Potter series. Students are enjoying learning about a new book series and learning more each day about why Harry Potter is a great book series for kids. Hopefully this passion will carry over to a love of reading, and an imagination that will last a lifetime.

CEDAR MOUNTAIN HS STARTS A MALE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

By Rob Brandl, High School Principal

Cedar Mountain High School in Morgan recently started a Male Leadership program as they look to prepare their young men to be great citizens and leaders. This program is mandatory for boys in grades 9 and 12 and optional for others. The first year of the program is set up as a speaker series where an outside speaker will share a message on how they are a leader in their given field. Speakers currently scheduled are from the National Guard, Minnesota politicians, a college football coach, leaders in local agriculture and much more. The goal is to provide our students information and experiences that help shape them during this crucial time in their lives.

Mr. Brandl (pictured at right) shared “We as a school often talk about how we want our students to be great leaders, but many are not sure what that looks like or where to start. We are really excited to give our students the tools necessary to be great leaders while at Cedar Mountain and for after graduation.”

Special thanks to all of the speakers for donating their time to us and also to the Cedar Mountain PBIS team for designating funds to help make this program a success. We look forward to another great year at Cedar Mountain!



Mark Your Calendar!



2017 EDUCATOR OF EXCELLENCE

The Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) recently announced their 2017 Educators of Excellence - and we have a recipient from our region: **ROGER EBNET**, Benson Public School Northside Elementary Teacher. Roger is being recognized for his commitment to community partnerships and going beyond the classroom to give students an engaging learning opportunities. For nearly 30 years Ebnet has invested in the individual success of each of his second grade students and the community they all live in.

“Roger’s ability to get gain the funds to provide unforgettable experiences to his students and others in the community is rare,” MREA Executive Director Fred Nolan said. “He’s a teacher who’s truly invested in his community and the return has been high.”

“It is easy to see that Roger Ebnet demonstrates excellence in the classroom, in the district, and the community,” Benson Public Schools Superintendent Dennis Laumeyer said. “Roger has selflessly worked to improve his school and community. He truly embodies the positive characteristics of a rural educator of excellence.”



Read more about Roger’s accomplishments at:

www.mreavoice.org/awards/#educators-of-excellence

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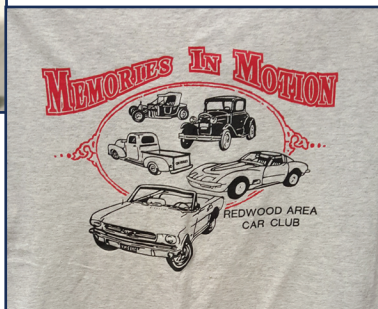
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