

# THE REVIEW

## WINTER 2019

### CONGRATS TO BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS IN THE REGION

The National Blue Ribbon School Award is a prestigious award that acknowledges and validates the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in aiming for, and reaching, educational excellence. The program was founded in 1982 by the second U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell.

This year, 300 public schools and 49 private schools received designation as National Blue Ribbon Schools - with only eight in Minnesota. **THREE** of these eight were from the SWWC region and had representatives attend the two-day ceremony in Washington, D.C. to receive the official National Blue Ribbon Award plaque and flag.

- **Red Rock Central Secondary School** was the only secondary school in Minnesota to receive this award. Mr. Phil Goetstouwers, 5-12 Principal, represented RRC in Washington, D.C. (top left).
- **Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart Elementary** was represented by 4th-Grade Teachers Mrs. Melanie Rudeen and Mrs. Jody Weis, and Superintendent David Hansen (middle left).
- **Canby Elementary** was represented in Washington, D.C. by Superintendent Ryan Nielsen, Elementary Principal Ryan Arndt and 6th-Grade Teacher Mrs. Marylee Giese (bottom left).



#### CONGRATULATIONS TO:

**Canby Elementary**  
**Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart Elementary**  
**Red Rock Central High School**



The SWWC region is home to **THREE** of the eight 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools in Minnesota. Schools are recognized based on their overall academic excellence or progress in closing achievement gaps among student groups.

**SWWC is proud to be your partner in education!**



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[www.swsc.org](http://www.swsc.org)

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## SWWC FACILITIES UPDATE

By Cliff Carmody, Executive Director, [cliff.carmody@swsc.org](mailto:cliff.carmody@swsc.org) and Tammy Stahl, Deputy Executive Director, [tammy.stahl@swsc.org](mailto:tammy.stahl@swsc.org)

The SWWC Educational Learning Centers provide special education services to students with severe disabilities. We continue to see growth in student numbers and many of our sites have waiting lists. It is a priority for SWWC to meet the needs of these students and we continue to engage in discussions on ways that we can better serve this growing population. SWWC currently has Educational Learning Centers in Belview, Cosmos, Pipestone, Willmar and Windom. In each of these locations, we are exploring options for repurposing so that we can expand and better serve students. Soon, we will also have our very first site built with our specific student needs in mind. Thanks to a partnership with the City of Montevideo and the Montevideo EDA, construction is underway in Montevideo. As with all winter construction projects, snow and cold weather has delayed some work, but we continue to be hopeful that the weather will improve and school will open on time this fall.

Progress on all of our building renovations and expansions has been rapid. In our Pipestone and Cosmos locations, we will be going out for bid in the next month or so. The plan for both of these locations is to start renovations this summer. Work should be complete in time for school to start in the fall in Pipestone, and work in Cosmos will continue through the year and be complete at the end of summer 2020. SWWC is also collaborating with the Windom school district and intends to repurpose the Winfair Elementary School. Discussions continue and preliminary plans are being developed for a completed project by the fall of 2020. We are still in the exploration stages for our Belview and Willmar locations.

We continue to be grateful for the ongoing partnerships that we have developed and appreciate the continued support from our members. The work that is being done will make a positive difference for students in our region and we are excited to move forward!

Find updates, including pictures, on our website at [www.swsc.org/facilities](http://www.swsc.org/facilities).



# MAKING A BETTER PLACE FOR STUDENTS EVERYDAY

We continue to focus on student needs and teamwork at the SWWC ELC - Windom and the Red Rock Ridge Alternative Learning Center (ALC).

SWWC staff members are learning about professional learning communities (PLCs) and how to improve student learning outcomes through collaboration and teamwork. The PLC process is allowing our staff to collaborate and focus on student needs and our coordinated response to the needs in our buildings. We are excited to continue growing and learning together.

We also continue to find ways to have fun at our schools. Every day in our buildings brings about new adventures, new experiences and new ways to connect with each other. Our students have an opportunity to participate in field trips and community events several times a month. Our most recent trips were to the Windom Arena to ice skate and the Windom State Theater to see a movie. We not only get out for fun events, but we also have students from our ALC who contribute to our community. Many of our ALC students volunteer weekly to fill backpacks with food for families in need in our local communities.

Our staff members make our school sites wonderful places for our students each and every day! It is their commitment and dedication to our students that promotes growth and learning at our ELC and ALC programs.

[www.swsc.org/elc](http://www.swsc.org/elc)

## ELC REBRANDING

SWWC has five Educational Learning Centers located in Belview, Cosmos, Pipestone, Willmar and Windom. In addition, the building in Montevideo is being built right now and will open in August 2019.

With so many sites and a variety of different names, we decided it was time for some consistency so we did a rebranding of the ELCs.

Going forward, each ELC location will be identified by the town in which it is located:

- SWWC ELC - Belview
- SWWC ELC - Cosmos
- SWWC ELC - Montevideo
- SWWC ELC - Pipestone
- SWWC ELC - Willmar
- SWWC ELC - Windom

We are excited about this change and hope the consistency benefits our our members, staff, students and families.



By Patrick Archibald  
Principal, ELC - Windom  
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**SWWC**  
EDUCATIONAL  
LEARNING CENTERS

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**Monthly Update  
January 2019**

Visit [www.swsc.org/elc](http://www.swsc.org/elc) and click on Monthly Update to view our monthly video update.





By Nicole Lydick  
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You can find more information on the Southwest Prairie RCE at  
[www.swsc.org/rce](http://www.swsc.org/rce).



## REGIONAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE NEWS

The RCEs have been busy working with the Schools and Districts identified as needing support through ESSA. Our Southwest Prairie team is currently working with 52 Targeted Support Schools, which receive their support through event based Professional Development. We are also serving 11 Continuous Improvement Schools, and they receive their support on site. Both Targeted Support Schools and Continuous Improvement Schools are required to complete a School Improvement Plan based on their identification by March 1. We are working very hard to coach the Schools and Districts through a Comprehensive Needs Assessment to help them create a meaningful and powerful Improvement Plan. Our support will be ongoing, working towards continuous improvement to best support students.

We are also able to provide Principal Support. This support can be in a cohort or individual, and can be for any Principal in the state, even if their school is not identified.

A couple of things that are new with this identification is that we are now working with High Schools, ALCs, Middle and Elementary Schools. We are serving a couple of online “virtual” schools as well. While some of this is new territory we are excited to be able to help ALL students. This is a great opportunity to service an entire District and make an impact on the adults in the building. Our goal is always to give our students the best school experience possible!

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the Regional Centers of Excellence, please feel free to contact me at 507-537-2291.

### Southwest Prairie Regional Center of Excellence Staff

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## LOOKING FOR MORE NEWS?

Visit [www.swsc.org/news](http://www.swsc.org/news) to read our current news releases and see our latest publications.

Visit [www.swsc.org/newsarchive](http://www.swsc.org/newsarchive) to read past issues of the Review, the Member Newsletter and our Annual Reports.



# SWWC DISTRICTS COMPLETE MDE'S INSPIRE ACTION 2.0

INSPIRE ACTION 2.0 is an early childhood special education program self-assessment tool that consists of 12 quality components.

The purpose of INSPIRE ACTION is to identify areas of relative programs strength and program components that, if addressed, would increase overall program quality. Program quality is a higher standard than program compliance. Information obtained from the statewide use of INSPIRE ACTION will assist the Minnesota Department of Education to build adequate capacity across components of the tool, to support districts to achieve high quality, and to promote positive outcomes for the children and families that we serve.

SWWC work days were held December 12 in Pipestone and December 13 in Willmar. Thirty district teams were represented between both locations. There was great team collaboration at both work day sites. Teams identified key areas to focus on for program improvement. Some areas included: time for monthly team meetings, high quality curriculum and assessment tools, and increasing child find in their Birth-2 population.

Thanks for all your hard work ECSE Teams!

I	Identification
N	Natural or Least Restrictive Environment
S	Services are Coordinated
P	Partnership with Families
I	Intentional Instruction within Routines
R	Responsive Interactions and Environments
E	Effective Technical and Adaptive Leadership
A	Assessment
C	Curriculum
T	Transition
I	Intensity
ON	ONgoing Data-Driven Program Improvement



By Hollie Pater  
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By Tom Hoff  
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“I am amazed what students have been able to experience in just one or two classes. Healthcare organizations have been enthusiastic partners and students have been able to explore all aspects of this exciting and growing field”.

~ Tom Hoff



## LYFT CAREER PATHWAYS HOLDING CTE WORKSHOPS

Launch Your Future Today (LYFT), a rural career and technical education pathway initiative, launched in 2018 with a legislative grant of \$3 million dollars secured by SWWC. Since then, LYFT has supported CTE projects in nearly 40 high schools increasing the number of students enrolled in shared CTE courses from 15 to over 500. The response to the LYFT Pathways project has been incredible. Partnerships are coming together to offer CTE experiences to students in many creative ways.

LYFT Pathways partners are excited that there are still opportunities for education and industry to collaborate and gain access to funds. To help, LYFT Pathways is hosting four workshops across the region. Communities are encouraged to bring a team of education and industry representatives to explore their opportunities to access up to \$50,000 to advance CTE through collaboration.

Healthcare and manufacturing are key industry sectors in the region served by SWWC and are some of the industries that are seeing the benefit of collaboration. Twenty grants have been awarded to build CTE opportunities in a variety of career fields, several of which provide a unique opportunity for students to gain exposure to local/regional jobs.

Schools in the Minnesota River Valley Career and Technical Education Collaborative (MRV CTEC) are working with Fagen, Inc. to host an Industrial Construction Methods course within the Fagen, Inc. facility in Granite Falls. The course is being developed in partnership with Fagen, Inc., area MRV CTEC high schools, SW MN Private Industry Council, and Minnesota West Community and Technical College. “Fagen, Inc. is very excited to work with the MN River Valley CTE Collaborative and introduce the students to Industrial Construction”, said Evan Fagen. “With the current labor shortage the industry is facing we feel it’s important that at least three LYFT projects have been supported to expose student to careers and skills required for manufacturing.”

Healthcare is reaping the benefits as well with six new collaborative CTE opportunities for students in 12 high schools. The courses developed thus far include hands-on experiences at local care facilities.

Innovative collaborations have been supported to help students explore CTE opportunities in other areas such as culinary, pharmacy, aquaculture, drones, IT, entrepreneurship and more.

### CTE Workshop Dates and Locations

- February 19 – Appleton
- February 20 – Balaton
- February 25 – Litchfield
- March 7 – Jackson

To learn more and to register, visit [www.lyftpathways.org](http://www.lyftpathways.org).

# DCD/ASD/PHD COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Participants were enlightened at the DCD/ASD/PHD Community of Practice event that took place on November 8, 2018, in Redwood Falls.

Kursten Lass Dubbels from the Minnesota Department of Education and Sue Redepenning from LiveLife Therapy Solutions, Inc. started out the day by speaking about Assistive Technology for School and Home. Kursten defined assistive technology and the SETT (Student, Environment, Tasks, Tools) Process.

Sue Redepenning explained that Technology for HOME offers a team approach to individuals in their home setting by providing consultation and training of assistive technologies that can help individuals live more independently.

Cadan Technologies, which specialize in assistive technology devices, shared Milo. Milo is an exceptional robot that is designed for students with an autism spectrum disorder. Milo interacts with students in order to enhance their communication and social skills. He is able to walk, talk, and model human facial expressions. Curriculum that is used with Milo is supported by a staff person who is able to govern where the lesson goes as well as instantly collect data. Cadan Technologies also demonstrated a Reading Pen. (After the workshop, Willmar Middle School purchased 12 of these and are seeing improvements in student's ability to read independently.)

Chris Kuehl shared educational Moodle sites that could be used in educating and enhancing paraprofessional interactions with students.

Heather Stolp concluded with statistics and updates from a state wide perspective on students and curriculum for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. She also engaged participants in a fun game to review the 27 evidence based practices that are proven to be effective in working with students.

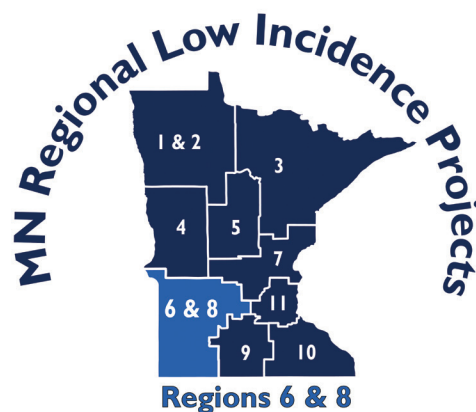
Another DCD/ASD/PHD/TBI Community of Practice event will take place on February 27 in Redwood Falls. Please mark your calendars to attend!



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## YOUNG ARTISTS RECAP

Students and teachers from area school districts and numerous parents with their students were among the 1045 participants at the Conference for Young Artists held on October 25, 2018. This was the 25th annual conference sponsored by the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council & SWWC Service Cooperative and held at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall.

Derek Anderson, the keynote presenter, shares his personal story of struggles and successes on his journey to becoming a successful children's author and illustrator. He inspired students and adults by his message about when you get rejections you just keep on trying. Derek also presented three small group sessions with students, where they created characters and drew story lines.

Students attended three hands-on sessions on various topics related to the arts such as, zentangle, origami, paper marbling, pointillism, woven bracelets, watercolor painting, creating creepy vs cute characters, chalk painting, becoming a zombie, tile art, birch tree painting, dance, mixed media, hand lettering, and so much more. Students were excited to be there to try new things and very focused and engaged on creating their own personal piece of artwork.

Pictures from the conference can be found at [www.swsc.org/ya](http://www.swsc.org/ya).



## YOUNG WRITERS RECAP

Over 500 students from around the region were inspired and learned new writing techniques at the Conference for Young Writers held January 9 at Southwest Minnesota State University.

Students in grades 3-8 learned how to write poetry, acted out scripts, learned how to write a news story, and so much more. Presenters were excited to share their knowledge and talent with the students.

Keynote speaker Douglas Wood, an author of 37 books, artist, musician and wilderness guide, started the day with some music and an inspirational story about his struggles and successes of becoming an author.

You can find pictures from the conference at [www.swsc.org/yw](http://www.swsc.org/yw).

# SCIENCE & NATURE CONFERENCE

**May 15, 2019 - SMSU, Marshall**

Come see what the excitement is all about! Kids will venture into the world of science with engineering, chemistry, electricity, energy, medical, robots, zoo life, aquatic species, birds, bees, gardening, minerals, stars, and so much more! This conference is for K-8 students, and you can register students through your participating school or individually as a parent.

Keynote Mike Zacher, from Aerostar International, a division of Raven Industries in Brandon, SD, will explain the stratified world of lighter-than-air. This will include aerostats, parade balloons, scientific balloons and stratospheric balloon platforms. He will also share how to conduct a stratospheric flight.

See all the sessions being offered at this conference, organized by appropriate grade levels, and register online by visiting our conference website at [www.swsc.org/sn](http://www.swsc.org/sn).



## REGIONAL SPELLING BEE RESULTS

Schools in SWWC's 18-county service area are invited to participate in this academic enrichment activity each year. The 2019 Regional Spelling Bee was held February 5 in Redwood Falls. Thirty-two students from 26 districts (winners at their local level) came together to compete for the top four places that advance to the Multi-Region State Spelling Bee.

After the scores from the written and oral rounds were combined, the top 15 students competed in the afternoon spelldown. It was an exciting day with challenging words, and it took 16 rounds to get to the top four spellers. These students advance to the Multi-Region State Spelling Bee on February 19 in Fergus Falls. The winner from that Bee will go to the National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C. in May.



### Regional Spelling Bee Winners

**1st: Jack Gunn**  
6th grade, Marshall

**2nd: Peighton Dandurand**  
6th grade, Central MN Christian

**3rd: Rachel Pixler**  
6th grade, GSL/First Lutheran School

**4th: Gavin Starr**  
8th grade, Lester Prairie

**Alternate: Melody Filzen**  
8th grade, Renville County West





By Mari Wagner  
Insurance Specialist  
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## INSURANCE UPDATE

We are working hard getting the 2019 School Pool Renewals ready. This year SWWC offered to help schools with their mandatory bid process as we know this can be complex, and several schools chose to take advantage of that offering.

We have been collecting data, setting up files, sending off requests, and meeting with account managers of each school district. Print ads were placed in the individual school districts newspapers in February and bid opening dates start the last week of March and run through April 1.

Now is the time to be talking about what you want your health insurance plan offerings to look like and what fits your district best. Do you want to maximize your members tax dollars by adding a medical savings account? Does your school participate in SWWC's Wellness program? Do you want to add to a medical savings account for the Wellness incentive dollars? The wellness incentive is \$500 this year, so it is a great time to put that in place. Talk to Kari Bailey, Regional Wellness Specialist, and she can help you get set up. She can be reached at [kari.bailey@swsc.org](mailto:kari.bailey@swsc.org) or 507-537-2292.

We can also help with vision, dental, long term care, disability, and cyber liability. If you are looking to round out your benefits package, please give us a call.



Kari Bailey

## Did You Know ...

... that SWWC has ancillary benefits and other lines of service?

Vision

Long Term Care

Medical Savings Accounts

Group Life

Group Long Term Disability

Dental

Wellness Programs

Membership Programs



Contact Mari or Kari for more information on these ancillary benefits and other lines of service!



# MORE THAN JUST ROBOTS

By Adam Teut, Science Teacher and Robotic Coach

No matter the geographical location, zip code, or size of the bill, I believe Robotics is for every child, every learner. Everybody has something to offer in perspective, solutions, and collaboration, but it takes a community dedicated to ensuring opportunities like this are available for their students.

When my wife and I agreed to move to Minnesota, I had no idea the community I would find myself in. I had thought I was leaving my dream job, but Lester Prairie has redefined my picture of community. Never in my life did I think I would have the chance to start not one, but TWO, robotics clubs. After my first go around, I never thought I would find a community so supportive to make it happen. I did.

Because of this support, I am able to offer, in the first year of the program, two competition levels. A FIRST Lego League and a FIRST Tech Challenge team. My teams and I are unburdened by need which has freed the creativity and opportunities of the students. This includes a 4th place finish in FTC league play this season.

I am no expert. I am not an engineer. I am not a computer programmer. I am just a facilitator. I connect the student's passion and curiosity to the problem and the parts for a solution. I will take whoever walks through my door and search for what they can offer the team. I find a place for them. I went out looking to build robots, and found myself building a community.



## SHARE YOUR DISTRICT NEWS!

*The Review* is published three times a year. We welcome submissions from schools - so if you have news to share, send it to us!

If you have suggestions, comments or items for submission, contact Shelly Maes at [shelly.maes@swsc.org](mailto:shelly.maes@swsc.org).



## CLASSROOMS THAT ARE STUDENT-CENTERED ARE SUCCESSFUL!

By Maureen Heinecke, Principal

The Appleton-Milan Elementary School has embraced Flexible Seating. What might you ask is Flexible Seating? Flexible Seating provides students with numerous options beyond the desk and chair environment of the past. Some classroom seating options students have to select from include yoga balls, stools, floor chairs, low tables, and standing tables to name a few. The students have also embraced this concept. They have responded amazingly well to the responsibility of selecting where they will sit and are better able to take ownership for their learning. Another key benefit of Flexible Seating is that students move around more within the classroom benefiting not only their learning, but their physical activity level as well. Too much sitting in a classroom takes away from learning. Having the option to stand, wiggle on a stool, or even bounce on a yoga ball stimulates cognitive maturation and physical development.



Some things to be considered when introducing Flexible Seating:

- The environment should be suitable and appropriate for the age level.
- The importance of enforcing classroom rules is essential. Just because students are able to stand at tables or bounce on balls, doesn't mean they should be allowed to disregard classroom rules.
- Finally, the cost of implementing Flexible Seating can be daunting. At our school we have utilized fundraisers and grants to help support this initiative.

Is Flexible Seating for every classroom? Not necessarily. However, at Appleton-Milan Elementary we have found it has been a great fit for our students and staff. Please stop in and check out the wonderful things happening in our building!



## MCC OPENS NEW BUILDING ADDITION

By Joe Meyer, Superintendent

In August of 2017, voters in the Murray County Central School District approved a \$4.6 million referendum to construct a new addition and for some remodeling of existing facilities at their high school location. The new addition was primarily for a new gymnasium that will be used for physical education and health classes along with practices for all levels elementary-high school. The facility will also be able to host some sub varsity events but the existing gym will still be used as the primary competition gym. The gymnasium addition comes with a three



lane walking track around the perimeter that is open to the public. The addition also includes a new wrestling/all-purpose room and two storage rooms. The remodeled portions of the existing building include the original lobby, the old wrestling room being converted into a commons area/new concession stand, and the metal shop adding new welding hoods and the relocation of a new overhead door.

Construction started in April of 2018 and just wrapped up on December 28, 2018. When students returned to school on January 2nd, they were able to finally use the new facility for classes and practices. The public was also able to start using the facility for walking. "It is exciting to finally open this new facility for our students and community" stated Joe Meyer, Superintendent at MCC. "This has been a much needed space and it turned out as we envisioned it several years ago."



## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

By Lisa Dinger, SWMN CEO Board Member

Luverne, Hills-Beaver Creek, Adrian, Pipestone, Ellsworth, Edgerton Public, and Southwest Christian in Edgerton have come together to form the Southwest Minnesota CEO Program.

The goal of the CEO (creating entrepreneurial opportunities) program is to foster the growth of young people who are able to demonstrate out-of-the box thinking, who are equipped to communicate well, and to be problem-solving, teamwork oriented and self-motivated.

Over the course of a 9-month school year, students will have an opportunity to practice this communication by visiting and interacting with 60 to 70 businesses in our SWMN Region, working one on one with a business mentor and also by working three different businesses.

Every school day, these students spend 1-½ hours learning outside of the traditional classroom. They travel to various sites and businesses for class and dress in business casual as they learn about what owning and operating a real business is like. The students have made real connections with adults in the business world and have learned a lot of communication skills along the way.

In addition to visiting businesses, they have also been working together to run a badge business and a class business that has earned real dollars. The second half of the class will be spent with them continuing to learn as they individually each start their own business.

The ultimate goal of the program is to show the students that Southwest Minnesota has so much to offer and that they can create their own opportunities right here.

SOUTHWEST MN 



Photo courtesy of Jill Fennema, Edgerton Enterprise



# THIS IS WHAT JUNIOR HIGH

## Region 6 Sub-Regional January 3, 2019



**1st Place  
Montevideo Thunder**



**2nd Place  
GSL Black**



**3rd Place  
Willmar Red**

## Region 8 Sub-Regional January 7, 2019



**1st Place  
JCC I**



**2nd Place  
MCC 4**



**3rd Place  
MLPS Olive**

# KNOWLEDGE BOWL SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

## JHKB Super Regional January 10, 2019



**1st Place  
Montevideo Thunder**



**2nd Place  
MCC 4**



**3rd Place  
Dawson-Boyd I**

You can find more pictures and information by visiting [www.swsc.org/KB](http://www.swsc.org/KB).

## LOOKING FOR PD?

SWWC's Professional Development Catalog is online and updated regularly. We no longer print/mail copies to each school in the region. However, you can still get a printed copy by downloading the catalog as a PDF.

If you don't see the training you need, let us know - we might be able to provide it for you. Contact Shelly Maes ([shelly.maes@swsc.org](mailto:shelly.maes@swsc.org)) with any training requests.

Visit [www.swsc.org/workshops](http://www.swsc.org/workshops) for a full list of offerings and to register.

**[Click this link to view the Professional Development Catalog.](#)**



**2018-19  
Professional Development Catalog**

[www.swsc.org/workshops](http://www.swsc.org/workshops)



# LOOKING FOR UNIQUE GIFTS?

Glassy Treasures and Gifts, located at SWWC ELC - Windom, creates unique glass gifts and home decor. Contact them about your gift needs at 507-831-6935. View additional items at [www.swsc.org/glassy](http://www.swsc.org/glassy).

