

# Cooperative Connection

Winter 2015

Southeast Service Cooperative

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## SSC's annual Legislator/School Leader Forum a success



By Amy Grover

SSC, in collaboration with Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) Region 1, held its annual legislative breakfast on Saturday, February 7, in our newly remodeled Wood Lake Meeting Center. Dover-Eyota Public Schools Superintendent

Bruce Klaehn did an expert job moderating the event, and the dialogue was constructive. Superintendent Rachel Udstuen set the positive tone of the forum with the opening presentation.

Twelve legislators attended the 2015 forum, including

*Legislative Forum continued on page 3*

## The City of Kasson and Pine Island Schools take top honors in wellness challenge

Nearly 800 members participate in month long steps-based contest

By Nicole LaChapelle

Winning teams have been announced in Southeast Service Cooperative's Walking Challenge, in which nearly 800 members from 24 member organizations competed. 16 southeast Minnesota school districts and eight city and county members participated in two separate steps-based challenges.

Winners in the School District Challenge included: Pine Island – 1st Place, Kingsland – 2nd Place, Lake City – 3rd Place. The remaining teams, which each received an honorable mention, are listed in the order of their ranking:

- Hiawatha Valley Education District
- Lewiston-Altura
- Dover-Eyota

*Walking Challenge continued on page 2*

*Walking Challenge continued from page 1*

- Mabel-Canton
- St. Charles
- Grand Meadow
- LeRoy-Ostrander
- Southland
- Rochester
- Stewartville
- Caledonia
- Cannon Falls

Pine Island Wellness Coordinator Kahla Jourdan shared, "Our walkers have sent me quite a few notes thanking us for the program and inspiring them to keep moving in the dark month of January. They were eagerly anticipating the update each week to hear our place in the standings, and many of them told me how they spent extra time walking that last week to help us with the final "push" to victory!" Kahla's wellness co-coordinator Kortney Aeikens added, "We had our end of challenge celebration before the results were in and people were excited and asking how we did. Comments like "This was great", and "Way to go," were heard. I've gotten several emails from excited participants and committee members that are ready to go next year!"

The City of Kasson was the winner in the City/County division. The rest of the rankings were as follows: Rice/Steele 911 Center – 2nd Place, Austin Housing & Redevelopment Authority – 3rd Place. The honorable mention placements included:



*A group of the City of Kasson's challenge participants.*



*Members of Pine Island Public Schools' winning team.*

- Freeborn County
- Fillmore County
- The City of Albert Lea
- The City of Byron
- Wabasha County

Linda Rappe, Wellness Coordinator at The City of Kasson, noted, "Our people were very motivated this year to beat Byron and to beat each other. They have enjoyed this challenge and are looking forward to the next one!" She added, "I didn't have to personally witness them doing their walking because other employees would tell me, "I saw so-and-so out walking last

night", or "You wouldn't believe it but, so-and-so is working out twice a day!""

The contest, which ran from January 1 to February 2, was based on the number of steps walked by participating members. A trophy will be awarded to Pine Island School District and The City of Kasson. Certificates will be presented to all teams who participated. These awards will be presented to groups at SSC's April 22 Wellness Forum.

*Legislative Forum continued from page 1*

Representatives Steve Drazkowski, John Petersburg, Kim Norton, Nels Pierson, Duane Quam, and Gene Pelowski and Senators Matt Schmit, Vicki Jensen, Dave Senjem, Kevin Dahle, Jeremy Miller, and Carla Nelson.

Also in attendance were 27 superintendents and 30 school board members representing 28 area school districts, as well as Sam Walseth, lobbyist from Capitol Hill Associates (representing the Minnesota Rural Education Association); Fred Nolan, Executive Director of the Minnesota Rural Education Association; Brad Lundell, Executive Director of Schools for Equity in Education; and Grace Keliher, Director of Governmental Relations for the Minnesota School Board Association.

The key themes of this year's forum included:

### **1) Positive Impact of the 2014 Local Optional Revenue (LOR) Legislation**

Rachel Udstuen, Superintendent of Spring Grove Public Schools shared the dramatic impact of the passing of the LOR legislation on her small, rural district. This additional funding (a response to the "donut hole" problem discussed at last year's Legislative Forum) allowed them to improve the safety and security of the main entrance to their school building, without



*Senator Carla Nelson, Representative Nels Pierson, Senators Dave Senjem and Matt Schmit, and Representative John Petersburg are pictured at the Forum.*

needing to ask the community for an increased referendum, but rather just a renewal at the existing amount. She thanked the legislators for supporting this legislation in the last session.

### **2) Facilities Needs Funding**

Mike Redmond, Superintendent of Goodhue Public Schools, discussed this issue of equity and efficiency, highlighting the importance of prevention to control facilities repair and maintenance costs to avoid costly replacement costs. He noted that this topic is on the legislative platform for the Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA), Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), and Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) indicating that facility funding should be a top priority for this session. Mr. Redmond emphasized the inherent inequalities in the existing Alternative Facilities and the efficiency of better school maintenance. The key point was to ask that legislators consider adopting the recommendations

of the School Facilities Financing Work Group led by Tom Melcher, which suggests consolidating varying facility revenues into one program by enhancing state aid and giving local school boards equalized levy authority for this purpose.

### **3) Local Tax Relief & Debt Equalization**

Mark Matuska, Superintendent of Kasson-Mantorville Public Schools, provided an overview of the Task Force recommendations for the 2015 legislature related to local tax relief through debt service equalization. He highlighted the tax impact to local homeowners and farmers in rural, "property poor" districts and that there have been no significant updates since 2001 to the bond equity dollars provided by the State of Minnesota to reduce this impact. He shared the recommendations to eliminate the two-tiered threshold developed in 2000 and establish a new threshold of annual net tax capacity, and to establish and index a new equalization factor. He then shared examples of what this would mean to local taxpayers in several southeast Minnesota communities.

### **4) Early Childhood Funding**

David Krenz, Superintendent of Austin Public Schools then introduced Amy Baskin, Director of Community Education and

*Legislative Forum continued on the next page*



*Legislative Forum continued from page 3*

Communications, to talk about early childhood education and the impact on our workforce. After sharing key research findings from the Harvard University Center on the Developing Child, she outlined the benefits of a high-quality early education, and showed the return on investment in one Minnesota project. She outlined the funding sources available and described some of the challenges such as space, access for at-risk families, transportation, and alignment between providers. Ms. Baskin then asked that the legislators consider allowing flexibility of spending for ECFE funds, fully fund four-year-old programming, allow levy for lease to be used by smaller districts to address space needs for programming, and encourage and reward local autonomy.

### **5) Testing Reduction Advisory Work Group**

Rich Dahman, Superintendent of Medford Public Schools, followed with an update from the Testing Reduction Advisory Work Group, which has been looking at streamlining the assessment system while still maintaining accountability for high standards for all Minnesota students. He shared common concerns about the current testing environment including loss of instructional time, loss of availability of computer labs, testing fatigue, accountability for student growth, and the cost burden on staffing,

technology, and infrastructure. He highlighted the options considered, and outlined the Committee recommendations to keep MCA testing for grades 3-8, administer an ACT college-entrance exam to all students in either grade 11 or 12, keep the MCA reading test in grade 10 and MCA math test in grade 11, administer one consistent career interest survey to all students in grades 8 and 10, and eliminate EXPLORE, PLAN, Compass, and MCA Science (HS).

### **6) 504 Requirements**

Tammy Berg-Beniak, Superintendent of Pine Island Public Schools, provided an overview of the Section 504 responsibilities, which require districts to recognize and support qualified individuals with a disability and provide free and appropriate public education for each. While every educational leader agrees that accommodations should be provided, she outlined some examples of what this means for the district and staff, and the concern that there are no limits on what can be on a student's 504 plan, which can place a district in a vulnerable state.

Finally, Chris Richardson, Superintendent of Northfield Public Schools and Ed Harris, Superintendent of Chatfield Public Schools discussed the most important part of funding that legislators are responsible for, which is the basic general fund formula, which provides

autonomy to school boards to use the money to best meet their local needs. Unlike any other funding programs, an increase to the general fund impacts every student, every classroom, every school, and every district in Minnesota. These superintendents shared historical trends of increases and decreases to the general fund in the past, and the corresponding increases in inflation and unfunded mandates. They then shared the impacts seen in their respective districts.

We thank these superintendents for preparing and presenting information about the local impact of these education funding and mandate issues. The information and topics led to lively conversation and dialogue during the second portion of the Forum. We were pleased with the number of senators and representatives that attended our Forum this year, which is testimony to the thoughtful commentary shared and the value of the time together for educational leaders and legislators to interface.

## SSC welcomes Joe Lutterman, Operations Assistant



Joe Lutterman recently joined the SSC team as an Operations Assistant. Joe's primary duties are to conduct daily internal operations support for the Wood Lake Meeting Center, including assisting with room and meeting setup arrangements. Joe also provides

organizational technology support, assists with property and facility maintenance, and conducts various administrative support tasks.

Prior to starting at SSC, Joe spent 17 years as a computer programmer at IBM, and most recently, completed a 17 year tenure at Wenger Corporation, where he served as IT Director.

Joe was born in Jackson, Minnesota, and moved to a farm near Dodge Center when he was 3. He served in the Air Force and graduated from Winona State with a BS in Computer Science. Joe and his wife

Cindy are the parents of three adult children and grandparents of five. He enjoys fishing (especially for walleye) and spending time with his grandkids.

When asked his thoughts on his new position, Joe stated, "The people are fantastic at SSC, it's a very nice place to work." As his wife and son both work in education, Joe is doubly pleased to be working as SSC, sharing, "It has been so great to interact with so many people who work in our area school districts!"

## Wood Lake Meeting Center news

*By Peggy Merkel*

### New Exterior Signage

The Meeting Center exterior renovation has been completed with Curt from Dakota Sign Company applying our business names and logos. The canopy over the main entrance is well marked and easily identifiable. This is the sole entrance for IEA, SSC, and Wood Lake Meeting Center. There is also a new sign on our property to welcome our guests.

### Virtual Tour

Of course, we love to give tours of our beautiful and functional space. However, it is not always possible for potential guests to stop for a tour. We're excited to share that a virtual tour is available on our website, [www.woodlakemeetingcenter.com](http://www.woodlakemeetingcenter.com). This is a self-directed tour that can be viewed via the Internet from any device. We invite you to take a tour today!



### Thank You

Special thanks to you, our members, for helping to make our first year in our new space a success. We have had the opportunity to welcome many people since reopening in February, 2014. We have also had the opportunity to use our space for a variety of events. Brennan Family Chiropractic and Nutrition Center recently rented space to hold their Women's Expo, which allowed us the opportunity to showcase our facility to 14 vendors and 80 guests. We look forward to hosting a one-day conference for a business in the Metro area. This

will be our first full day conference that will utilize multiple rooms for breakouts, a simulation lab, and interview space. There will also be breakfast, lunch, and an early evening networking social. Thanks to everyone who has been here this past year and shared your feedback and suggestions and have told others about us. We look forward to continued opportunities in 2015.

### Upcoming Event

We will be opening our doors on Friday April 3rd for AM Espresso. This is a networking opportunity available to us through the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce. Last year we hosted over 60 attendees, even with a very thick blanket of snow. Usual attendance at this monthly event is close to 100 people. Feel free to join us from 7:30 to 9:00 AM to help share Wood Lake Meeting Center with the Rochester community.

# SSC staff support planning efforts at Chatfield Public Schools

By Amy Grover

Suzanne Riley and Amy Grover joined Chatfield Public Schools administrators, staff, teachers, School Board members, parents, community members, and students on January 6 and 20 to facilitate a systems planning session.

This process is assisting these stakeholders to explore the current realities of their school system and identify large scale decision-making needs in the near future. Superintendent Ed Harris believed that input from parents would be crucial in efforts to be responsive to the desires of the community as they considered big questions such as desired teaching and learning outcomes and upcoming challenges relating to facilities and budget. As such, the 28 participants represented the community well and were very actively involved in the discussion and process.

During the January 6 session, our initial focus was on developing shared values. Individuals identified their personal values and then considered them during group establishment of shared organizational values. Shared values provide an umbrella that help clarify expected behavior and actions, how decisions should be made, what strategies will be selected to fulfill the district mission, what is important to the school system, and what solidifies the school culture.

Superintendent Harris presented a “district status” briefing, which



*Amy Grover and Suzanne Riley assisting Chatfield Public Schools' stakeholders with their systems planning session.*

provided information about academic performance, staff development, budget/finances, and facility/operations.

A “Context Map” activity then helped to establish a collective sense of the district’s current planning status and helped to explore external and internal influences that impact the work done within the district. Considering the district status information and the context map, the group then developed “Big Questions”, which are overarching questions about issues so significant that a response is necessary for continued and future success. These questions help focus energies and keep the district aligned to its goals.

During the second session on January 20, the group of stakeholders developed a set of “Bold Steps”, which are specific ideas or initiatives that drive creative action and will propel Chatfield Public Schools forward. These are statements of what will be done to go from “good to great”

and provide the foundation for forming a strong vision linked to immediate steps.

Suzanne and Amy provided facilitation and guided activities that ensured that work progressed from brainstorming, to prioritization, to finalization of several focus areas for future planning.

This work provided guidance and focus for leaders in making strategic, proactive, and well-planned decisions that move the district toward their goals. This process is a rewarding experience for stakeholders, and the SSC staff was honored to help Chatfield establish where they are going and how they will get there.

Suzanne and Amy have also conducted systems planning sessions for Southland Public Schools, LeRoy-Ostrander Public Schools, and LaCrescent-Hokah Public Schools, and are scheduled to work with Spring Grove Public Schools and Caledonia Public Schools in March 2015. If your agency is interested in learning more about our unique and effective process for systems planning, please contact Amy Grover at [agrover@ssc.coop](mailto:agrover@ssc.coop) or 507-281-6693.



# How to prepare for the Cadillac Tax

By Bill Colopoulos



While often speculated as being the “least likely to survive” provisions of the ACA \*, as of the present time the Cadillac Tax is due to take effect within three short years – counting 2015. Thus, it is high time for employer plan sponsors to not merely plan for it, but to put an action plan into effect that takes aim at mitigating its costs. This tax is not only potentially expensive, it will also be complex to track, report and pay.

## The Tax

The Cadillac Tax is a 40% excise tax on annualized total plan costs that exceed \$10,200 for self-only coverage and \$27,500 for other than self-only coverage paid during the 2018 calendar year; regardless of policy year; accounted for on a monthly basis. Adjustments to the thresholds for plans that have pre-Medicare retirees or have the majority of workers employed in high-risk jobs also increase by \$1,650 for self-only coverage and by \$3,450 for other than self-only

coverage (to \$11,850 and \$30,950, respectively). The limits are also linked to inflation and other indices.

There are also other adjustments within the tax formula itself. For example, if the average national workforce is aged 47, an employer with an average age of 51 or 55 would have an upward adjustment in the cost thresholds would pay a lower tax. Similarly, if the employer’s gender characteristics vary from the national workforce, their tax could also be lowered. Typically, this would apply for employers with a higher percentage of female workers than national averages.

## Calculating Total Plan Costs

“Total plan costs” for the purpose of calculating the Cadillac Tax refers to:

1. Plan premium or premium equivalent (self-insured) health plan costs
2. Employer and employee contributions to HRA, HSA, VEBA and FSA (medical only) healthcare savings accounts
3. The costs of self-insured dental and vision plans
4. Executive-only physical examination plans
5. Employee assistance group plans
6. On-site medical clinics, if provided as part of a group plan

For example, John Doe is enrolled for single coverage under his employer’s self-insured plan

in 2018; his total plan costs (annualized) are:

- Plan premium = \$7,800
- Employer contributions to HSA = \$1,500
- John’s contributions to his HSA = \$2,000
- John’s self-insured dental and vision costs = \$1,000

John’s total costs for 2018 = \$12,300. The Cadillac Tax applicable to John’s total cost is 40% of the amount over \$10,200 or \$840 ( $\$12,300 - \$10,200 = \$2,100 \times 40\% = \$840$ ). This amount will be an excise tax charged ultimately to John’s employer (a self-insured plan sponsor).

## Tracking the Tax

As you can see in the example, the Cadillac Tax applies only to those plans (and individuals) whose total plan costs exceed the threshold amounts. For example, if only one of your plans exceed the thresholds, only that plan would be subject to the tax.

Note, however, that employee healthcare savings account contributions also accrue towards the tax. That means that the tax could apply literally at the employee level. Additionally, within the scope of any given plan, the single employee total cost could be under or over and the family cost could be under or over the thresholds. In other words, the Cadillac Tax will not only be potentially expensive, it could easily become a reporting challenge. And not just at the employee level.

*Cadillac Tax continued from page 7*

Under ACA rules, the employer is required to determine the amount of the Cadillac tax on a monthly basis and then allocate that tax among “coverage providers.” This monthly calculation will be either simple or complex, depending on how coverage provider is defined – and their number.

For example, the ACA stipulates that the coverage provider for insured health coverage is the insurer and that (in the case of an HSA plan) the employer is the coverage provider for HSA contributions; responsible for also keeping track of employee contributions. For all other coverages, including self-insured plans, the coverage provider is “the person who administers the plan benefits”, i.e., the employer’s various vendors. That would include the third-party administrator (TPA) or pharmacy benefits manager (PBM) stop loss carrier, healthcare service account provider, etc. Thus, an employer with a self-insured plan would need to allocate the excise tax among multiple vendors.

### Who calculates and who pays the Cadillac Tax?

**Insured plans:** Employers calculate; insurance companies pay.

**Self-insured plans:** Employers calculate; employers pay.

### Benefits exempt from the Cadillac Tax

- Indemnity and other medical plans paid for by employees with after-tax dollars
- Stand alone, insured dental and vision plans
- Long term care plans

- Accident and disability benefits
- Workers compensation
- Auto insurance

### Cadillac Tax Strategies

What steps can employers take to reduce or eliminate their Cadillac Tax? Here are some definitive steps that employers can begin to take now to reduce their liabilities:

1. **Offer only one health plan; a consumer directed health plan.** Eliminate all other plans; require all employees to take part in consumerism. Surveys have consistently shown that employees with healthcare savings accounts are more cost-conscious, participate in wellness activities more often and are generally healthier than employees who do not participate in consumer health plans.
2. **Promote outcomes-based wellness incentive programs.** For example, offer a biometric testing program with incentives structured for employees who actually achieve healthy goals, such as losing weight, giving up tobacco, improving their cholesterol, etc. These programs can reduce employee demand for healthcare services by 20% or more.
3. **Require spouses who are eligible for coverage through their own employer to elect that coverage at the next available opportunity.** Employers should charge higher premiums for spouses if they were eligible during the past 12 months period for their employer’s plan and declined to enroll in it. Over time, this will make your group younger;

improving the overall risk profile of the group.

These solutions will not be easy to implement overnight. They will require considerable communications and engagement efforts with your employees. But the payback to all health plan stakeholders will be considerable.

Like many revenue provisions of the ACA, the administration of Cadillac Tax and the associated reporting and payment processes and forms are a “work in progress” whose details will become clearer once 2018 draws nearer.

For more information, please contact Bill Colopoulos, 507-281-6690, [bcolopoulos@ssc.coop](mailto:bcolopoulos@ssc.coop)

Bill is Southeast Service Cooperative’s Health Benefits Consultant.

**Reference:** Patient Provider and Affordable Care Act – SEE Revenue Provisions: Sec. 9001 (Excise tax on high cost employer-sponsored health coverage)

**Resources:**  
Congressional Budget Office, “Table 1: 2014 Estimate of the Affordable Care Act on Health Insurance Coverage,” Gold J, “‘Cadillac’ Insurance Plans Explained,” Kaiser Health News, 2014. “Looking Under the Hood – Five Open Issues for the Cadillac Tax” Buck Consultants/Xerox Group 2015

\* The Congressional Budget Office projects the Cadillac Tax will create a revenue stream to fund the ACA of over \$80 billion during the three year period 2018 – 2020. Unless the ACA is repealed, it is unlikely that this tax will be otherwise eliminated – the Author



## Ann Clark named Centers of Excellence Project Manager; SSC's Lori Mack transitions to new role at Center of Excellence



Ann Clark

Ann Clark has been named the Regional Centers of Excellence Project Manager. In her new position, Ann will partner with the Minnesota Department of Education to support all six Regional Centers of Excellence in transforming schools.

Prior to her promotion, Ann served as the SE-Metro Regional Center Director in which she supported the SE-Metro Statewide System of Support (SSOS) team, whose goal is to build capacity and sustainability in Focus and Priority schools by providing cohesive, focused, and systemic support. The ultimate outcome is for schools to close achievement gaps by half by 2017 while raising achievement for all students. The Center partners with Focus and Priority schools in Minnesota's 11 southeast and 7 Metro counties, MDE, and the Southeast Service Cooperative.

Prior to joining the SE-Metro Center of Excellence, Ann spent 13 years in administration in

the Rochester Public Schools as the Executive Director of K-12 Curriculum and Instruction and as an Elementary Principal; and 10 years as a teacher.



Lori Mack

SSC's Regional Education and Literacy Specialist Lori Mack has recently transitioned to a new position as the SE-Metro Regional Center of Excellence's School Advocate/Implementation/Reading Specialist.

Through her work at SSC, Lori taught a variety of literacy-focused PD sessions for educators, both at SSC and onsite at districts, offered onsite literacy coaching, coordinated PD sessions as a member of SSC's Instructional Services team, and wrote her popular *Speaking of Literacy...* column.

In her new position, Lori will work with the other SSOS team members to coordinate improvement efforts for all students. She will assist leadership

teams in setting goals, developing professional learning teams, effectively managing change, building intentional cultures, and improving communication. As a School Advocate / Implementation/Reading Specialist, Lori collaborates with other Center staff, Department of Education personnel, and district and school leadership teams to determine the most appropriate and impactful course of action, to build capacity and sustainability.

Lori holds a BS in English Education, MA in Education, and a K-12 Reading Certification. Before beginning her work at SSC in 2012, Lori spent 20 years as a classroom teacher.

# Top Junior High Knowledge Bowl Teams compete; winners named

By Kirsten Kuehl

Fifty-two teams from 18 area districts participated in 2014-15 Junior High Knowledge Bowl. Teams competed in Round Robin competitions in October, November and December. Each team then competed in the Sub-Regional competitions in January. The top twelve teams from each tier advanced to Regional. The competitions consist of 1 written round (60 questions) and 4 oral rounds (45 questions/round).

The Junior High Knowledge Bowl Sub-Regional Competitions were held on January 8-9 at the Southeast Service Cooperative. The Tier AA teams were from: Chatfield, Dover-Eyota, Kasson-Mantorville, Kenyon-Wanamingo, Pine Island, Plainview-Elgin-Millville, Red Wing and Winona. The Tier A teams were from: Caledonia, Fillmore Central, Goodhue, Houston, Kingsland, Lanesboro, Mabel-Canton, Rushford-Peterson, Southland, and Spring Grove.



The Junior High Knowledge Bowl Regional competitions were held on January 21 and 22 at the Southeast Service Cooperative.

## Teams placing at Regional

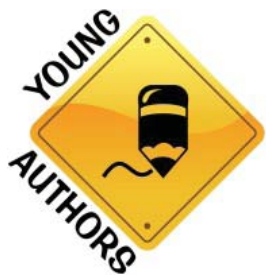
### Tier A

- 1<sup>st</sup> place Houston 1
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place Kingsland 1
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place Rushford-Peterson 1
- 4<sup>th</sup> place Lanesboro 1
- 5<sup>th</sup> place Spring Grove 1

### Tier AA

- 1<sup>st</sup> place Kenyon-Wanamingo Red
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place Kasson-Mantorville 1
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place Chatfield 1
- 4<sup>th</sup> place Kasson-Mantorville 2
- 5<sup>th</sup> place Kenyon-Wanamingo Black

The Minnesota Service Cooperative Knowledge Bowl competitions are interdisciplinary academic contests for students. Junior High Knowledge Bowl is for students in grades 6-9. During the contest, teams of students compete in written and oral rounds by answering questions related to all areas of learning, typical of secondary educational programs. Questions test students' recall, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. This competition provides a format for student growth centered around academics. Teams consist of six students (six competing in the written round and five competing in each oral round).



## Big changes this year for Young Authors, Young Artists Elementary Conference!

The 28th Annual Young Authors, Young Artists Conference has changed its grade range to provide offerings for students in grades 3-5, rather than grades 4-6.

The conference has added a day and will take place **May 19-21, 2015** at Rochester Community and Technical College. There will be seats for 300 students each day, so be sure to register early!



# Top placing teams at Regional Knowledge Bowl



1st Place (Tier A) - Houston 1  
Coach: Becky Carr



1st Place (Tier AA) - Kenyon-Wanamingo Red  
Coach: Darin Walling



2nd Place (Tier A) - Kingsland 1  
Coach: Laura Gudmandson



2nd Place (Tier AA) - Kasson-Mantorville 1  
Coaches: Dillon Denter and Jon Buchanan



3rd Place (Tier A) - Rushford-Peterson 1  
Coach: Mary Wolter



3rd Place (Tier AA) - Chatfield 1  
Coach: Trish Doyle



## Fourth annual Young Authors, Young Artists Conference for Middle School students a success

By Katie Hartman

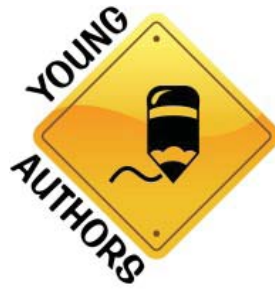
Southeast Service Cooperative hosted the fourth annual Young Authors, Young Artists conference for students in grades seven and eight on October 31, 2014.

The goal of the conference was to expose students to writing and illustrating as an art form, and to provide students an opportunity to express themselves in a positive and creative way.

Students participated in four 60-minute sessions. Topics included sculpting, reader's theater, writing, and drawing. The conference was attended by 125 students from nine school districts. One teacher mentioned

"...very well organized and a great opportunity for students."

The conference will be held again in the fall 2015.



## Science and Nature Conference a hit with students

By Katie Hartman



The conference for students in grades 2-4 was held on October 24, 2014 at Southeast Service Cooperative. 125 students from nine school districts attended this conference. The goal of this conference was to provide the opportunity for students to learn outside the box of the typical school day.



Students participated in four 60-minute sessions. Topics included magical fun, marine biology, snakes and reptiles, rocket science, and air-powered cars.

One chaperone mentioned about a presenter, "She was animated, full of stories, visual displays, and provided hands-on dissection of a sea star. Something new and exciting for this age group! The children also like the science behind the magic tricks, touching on many areas of science and enabling the kids to show others!"

# SSC Member districts/schools honored

**Red Wing Public Schools' Every Hand Joined** program was recently awarded the overall school district winner at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs' Local Government Innovation Awards. This program is a community-wide cradle-to-career initiative that ensures the community's economic viability by increasing the number of college-educated residents. Red Wing schools, businesses, and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations are working to make sure that every child is prepared for school, is supported throughout his or her K-12 and college experiences, and begins a career. The program has already increased participation in the school district's Kindergarten Boot Camp by 90%.

**Kingsland Public Schools** were recently presented with the 2014 Profile of Excellence Award by the Minnesota Rural Education Association. The Profile of Excellence Award recognizes innovative programs and efforts that serve as an example of educational opportunities for rural students. Kingsland was honored for its Project Lead the Way STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) program for kindergarten through 12th grade.

The following SSC member schools were chosen by MDE as 2014 Celebration schools:

**Blooming Prairie Elementary,**  
Blooming Prairie Public School  
District

**Dover-Eyota Elementary,** Dover-Eyota Public School District  
**Ridgeway Community School,**  
Ridgeway Community  
**Southgate Elementary,** Austin  
Public School District

Celebration-eligible schools are the 25 percent of schools directly below those designated as Reward schools (the top 15 percent of Title I schools). These schools are then able to apply for Celebration status by documenting what efforts they are using to increase student achievement. Celebration-eligible schools are identified annually.

## Northfield Public Schools' Superintendent Chris Richardson named recipient of the MASA Polaris Leadership Award

SSC congratulates Chris Richardson on being named the recipient of MASA's Polaris Leadership Award. Dr. Richardson will be honored for his exemplary school leadership and a lifetime of balanced achievement inside and outside of education at a statewide recognition ceremony to be held at the 2015 MASA Fall Conference, September 27-29, in Duluth.

In a letter of support for Dr. Richardson's nomination, Northfield School Board member Noel Stratmoen wrote, "Dr. Richardson is an educational leader with many great strengths including vision, hard work, thoroughness, frugality, and

common sense. He is a beacon of light for education at the state level." Julie Nielsen, Assistant Superintendent for Academic Excellence and Accountability with South Washington County Schools wrote, "The passion and integrity with which Dr. Richardson approaches his job is to be commended. He is one of the hardest working people I know."

Dr. Richardson has over 38 years of education administration experience, ranging from principal to curriculum director to superintendent, and has been leading Northfield Public Schools since 2004.

## SSC welcomes new Board Member Marilyn Syverson



Marilyn has served on the Kenyon-Wanamingo School Board since 2011. She is an RN at the Mayo Clinic's Spine Center. Marilyn and her husband Todd, a livestock dealer, have three children; Evelyn, Anna, and Derek. Marilyn's family also includes their big farm dog, Duke. Marilyn enjoys fishing, boating, long-distance running, and visiting antique shops with her girls.

# Finding evaluation consistency amid new state requirements

By Amy Grover

As you plan for next school year, now is the right time to explore how TalentEd Perform, a Minnesota Service Cooperatives partner, can simplify the evaluation process for members of all sizes. Seventeen Minnesota districts and institutions, including Southeast Service Cooperative members Chatfield, Kingsland, and Rushford-Peterson, have chosen TalentEd Perform. You can read how Chatfield meets expanded state evaluation requirements more simply at <http://goo.gl/qNTvPv>. Below is another Minnesota district's success story:

Theirs was a challenge not unfamiliar to hundreds of school districts across the country. New Prague Area Schools had a formalized process for teacher evaluation, but the content was inconsistent. What's more, the evaluation process wasn't efficient. Evaluations were done entirely on paper, which required additional time for scheduling, data compilation, and filing.

With Minnesota's new, more complex evaluation requirements on the horizon, Sandy Eaton recognized that managing the process for everyone involved – administrators, principals, teachers and staff – was certain to become even more daunting, especially as the district sought consistency. "We could see that the evaluation process would take longer," says Eaton, the district's Human Resources Coordinator. "We needed to create something that would



streamline all of our processes and make them electronic."

The challenges New Prague Area Schools sought to overcome:

- Implement an electronic evaluation system that fostered consistency across the district, yet could allow for individualization per building as needed.
- Eliminate the reliance on paper and allow for easy data access and comprehensive reporting capabilities for administrators and those being evaluated.

New Prague Area Schools got right to work and, for the first time, rolled out a formal evaluation for its principals. By allowing principals to participate in the process as a direct report, Eaton expects that the full expansion to teacher and all staff evaluations in time for Minnesota's more robust standards will be less imposing while also cost-saving. TalentEd Perform has helped us start a consistent, electronic evaluation process that we will use for principals, teachers, clerical, custodians, bus drivers and more," Eaton says. "I loved that showing a staff member how to use TalentEd Perform only takes 10 or 15 minutes."

Remember, at the heart of New Prague's decision was to create

evaluation consistency. Already, Eaton says, the district has enjoyed the improvement. Of course, they aren't likely to end there. "We now have the ability to run reports we never had before," Eaton says. "By being able to compare teachers and staff within each building and within the district, we will see what areas need to be addressed so we can help our staff continue to improve."

To hear more Minnesota TalentEd Perform success stories or to learn more, contact Mitch Parker at [mitch.parker@TalentEdK12.com](mailto:mitch.parker@TalentEdK12.com).

All Minnesota schools have access to a TalentEd Perform pricing discount thanks to an ongoing partnership with the Minnesota Service Cooperatives. Other discounted solutions are also available from additional partners. We will feature information from other providers in future issues of our newsletter. If you would like to learn more about options available through the Service Cooperative, please check out details at <http://www.mnservcoop.org/domain/32> or contact Amy Grover at 507-281-6693 or [agrover@ssc.coop](mailto:agrover@ssc.coop).



## SSC receives 2014 Live United Campaign Award



SSC was selected by the United Way Campaign Cabinet for our continued excellence and the best overall United Way campaign of 2014, with 100% employee participation and a 78% increase in giving over last year! SSC staff members Kari Kubicek (L) and Nicole LaChapelle (R) are pictured at the awards ceremony with SSC Executive Director Suzanne Riley (C).

## Safety and compliance training and more for SSC Members with Scenario Learning



SSC has partnered with Scenario Learning to provide members the opportunity to ensure a safe environment for their students and staff with the following products:

- SafeSchools Training offers an online staff training and compliance management system and includes a library of 100% school-focused courses matched with a state of the art compliance management system,
- SafeSchools MSDS offers an online MSDS (material safety data sheet) management system that allows users to organize, update, and store chemical inventory lists and MSDS's into virtual binders, accessible from any computer with an Internet connection,
- SafeSchools Alert is an online incident reporting and tracking system that allows students, staff, and parents to confidentially report safety concerns to your administration 24/7/365; and,
- SafeSchools Accident is an online accident tracking

and first report of injury system that lets you record, investigate, and manage accidents and injuries anywhere on your campus, through any web-enabled device.

- SafePersonnel offers safety and compliance solutions for non-academic organizations including staff training, safety incident reporting and tracking and SDS management.

SSC has negotiated the discounted pricing outlined below for each of the above components for our member districts:

Product	Price	Minimum purchase
SafeSchools Training	\$5/FTE	\$400 minimum
SafeSchools MSDS	\$100/building	\$300 minimum
SafeSchools Alert	\$.50/student	\$400 minimum
SafeSchools Accident	\$195/building	\$400 minimum
SafePersonnel Training	\$10/employee	\$500 minimum

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Kari Kubicek at [kkubicek@ssc.coop](mailto:kkubicek@ssc.coop). We also encourage you to explore the SafeSchools and SafePersonnel website at [www.scenariolearning.com](http://www.scenariolearning.com).

# Now available



## Information Center



[www.PurchasingConnection.org/SMARTSystems](http://www.PurchasingConnection.org/SMARTSystems)

### Seven reasons why your district should consider integration

1. Express integration ensures that teachers and staff are receiving discounted pricing.
2. Express allows price comparisons across multiple suppliers.
3. Orders that are processed and submitted to SMART Systems are routed through a district's existing approval process.
4. Paperless requisitions make the purchasing procedure from teachers to staff a fluid process.
5. Forgot what you ordered last year? No problem! Staff and teachers will be able to see previous orders in Express – making it easier to place future orders.
6. Integration offers order placement flexibility. Orders can be placed individually for each teacher, or, the district can combine orders within SMART Systems for a larger, single order to each supplier.
7. We make training easy! We have created step-by-step tutorials, videos, and guides that can be shared with staff to help streamline the integration and training process.





## ABOUT

The BrightBytes Clarity platform translates complex analyses and cutting-edge research into fast actions that improve student learning.



*This research has helped us initiate conversations about connected learning, improve the instruction within our classrooms and enhance the opportunities that our students have."*



Randy Ziegenfuss  
Asst. Superintendent  
New York

## GETTING STARTED

... with the CASE module is an easy, well-supported process that's guided by the BrightBytes Customer Success team. Many of our member districts are already participating! Contact us to learn more about the CASE collection process.

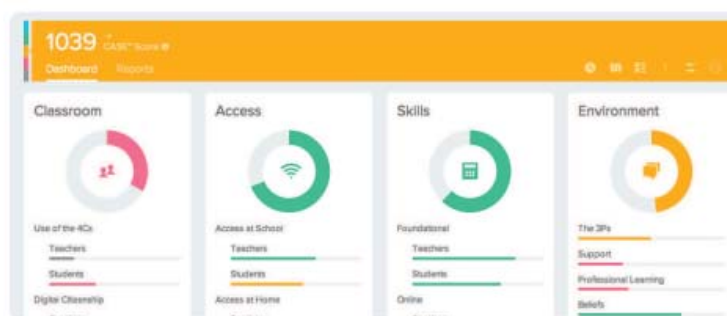
## TECHNOLOGY & LEARNING



## GET STARTED WITH THE BRIGHTBYTES CASE MODULE!

Wouldn't you like to have a clear understanding of which technology tools and resources are available in your schools, and how they're impacting meaningful learning?

The BrightBytes CASE module analyzes the influence of technology on student learning in your district, and enables you to better allocate technology resources. Many districts in your region have already used CASE to make better spending decisions, and to understand the trends and progress that their tools and resources are enabling.



## WHY DO WE RE-COLLECT?

In addition to helping us assess the progress and influence of initiatives over time, CASE re-collection enables districts to objectively:



Voice requests and interest for desired professional development opportunities and curricular designs, enabling us to better target those needs.



Demonstrate the exact impact of key programs on driving student achievement by direct comparisons of each data point to previous data collections.



Reach annual district benchmarks by better understanding where gaps lie, and addressing those gaps with programs and support from the service agency.



Recommend additional programs based on your district's personal profile.



## The Collaborative for Learning and Community aims to double donations with the Otto Bremer Foundation

By Amy Grover

The Collaborative for Learning and Community (CLC) was established in April 2003 to provide lifelong learning, planning and development on a regional basis and to assist in meeting specific educational needs of children and adults in participating schools and communities which could be better provided as a collaborative than by the schools and communities individually.

The CLC is located in Rochester, Minnesota and is closely affiliated with the Southeast Service Cooperative (SSC), a public agency initiated in 1976 by Minnesota Statute to serve schools and government units. The CLC's mission is somewhat broader than SSC's in that it reaches beyond meeting specific needs of individual entities in administrative and instructional programming to facilitate collaboration by diverse groups within and across communities in southeast Minnesota. Most recently, the CLC has provided support for literacy education and K-12 student creativity.

We are excited to announce that the Otto Bremer Foundation has offered to match up to \$100,000 of individual donations made on GiveMN.org to the Collaborative for Learning and Community during the month of March as



part of the \$1 million matching campaign!

With this opportunity from the Bremer Foundation to have donations doubled, we need support now more than ever! Every year, generous supporters make online donations through GiveMN.org to support to facilitate collaboration by diverse groups within and across communities in southeast Minnesota. Please help the CLC raise funds for innovative regional projects that promote collaborations and partnerships in lifelong learning and community development.

The Otto Bremer Foundation's March Millions campaign begins March 1, 2015. Our goal is to raise \$5,000 so we can do great things for learners in our region. As an added bonus, not only is each donation to selected southeastern Minnesota organizations doubled during the campaign, but donations have the chance to increase by an additional \$1,000 or \$10,000. From March 1 through March 31, every donation made on GiveMN.org to participating

organizations will be entered into a daily drawing for a Bremer Boost—a \$1,000 addition to the donation. On March 31, one donation will be randomly drawn from all March Millions donations to receive a \$10,000 Bremer Boost.

So please mark your calendar to double your donations in March. Visit [GiveMN.org/MarchMillions](http://GiveMN.org/MarchMillions) and click on COLLABORATIVE FOR LEARNING AND COMMUNITY.

## Recent Board meeting actions and information

**Note: Complete SSC Board of Directors meeting minutes are available on the SSC website at [www.ssc.coop](http://www.ssc.coop).**

In addition to routine fiscal and routine business actions, the Board took the following actions in recent meetings:

### October 2014 Meeting

Approved the purchase of a new telephone system and first year service agreement.

Accepted the resignation of Eric Walston effective end of the day October 31.

Authorized the Executive Director to conduct a search for a full-time Operations Assistant and fill the position as soon as possible.

Authorized the Executive Director to conduct a search for a School Advocate/Implementation Science and Reading Specialist, and fill the position as soon as possible.

Approved Associate Membership per request by New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva Public schools, effective November 1, 2014.

### November 2014 Meeting

Authorized the Executive Director to share costs with the other Service Cooperatives in the MSC Insurance Coalition to secure independent, professional support for participating groups required to comply with the Healthcare

Information Transparency Act and set aside up to one-seventh of projected statewide actuarial and accounting fees from the SSC School Health Pool reserves for this purpose, with the recommendation that the statewide process be a comprehensive service to include data entry on behalf of districts.

Accepted the request of City of Lewiston for SSC membership and participation in the CCOGA Health Insurance Pool effective January 1, 2015.

Approved the 2013-2014 Annual Report.

Approved added language to the SSC Policy on Work Hours and Overtime.

Confirmed the hiring of Joe Lutterman in the full-time position of Operations Assistant effective November 1, 2014.

Confirmed the transfer of Lori Mack from SSC Literacy Specialist to the full-time position of School Advocate/Implementation Science and Reading Specialist, Southeast/Metro Regional Center of Excellence effective Monday, December 1, 2014.

Changed the date of the January Board meeting from Wednesday, January 28, 2015 to Thursday, January 22, 2015.

### December 2014 Meeting

Accepted the report of the Canvassing Committee and declared election of the following

individuals for Education positions: Two new 4-year terms to Mike Christensen (Red Wing School Board) and Brian Grudem (Zumbrota-Mazeppa School Board) and one 1-year term to Marilyn Syverson (Kenyon-Wanamingo School Board) to fill the remaining one year of the vacancy due to Stephen Rosenthal's retirement from his local board.

Accepted the recommendation for the 2015-2016 plan year School Health Insurance Pool Bid and awarded the group health plan administration contract to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.

Accepted the request of Steele County SWCD for SSC membership and participation in the CCOGA Health Insurance Pool effective January 1, 2015.

Accepted a proposal submitted by markit for contracted WLMC marketing and business development services between January 1 and June 30, 2015.

Accepted the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that SSC lease from Enterprise Fleet Management, from time to time, such motor vehicles upon such terms and conditions, as in the judgment of the Executive Director, this Corporation may require.

Resolved further that the Executive Director or her designee is authorized and

## Recent Board meeting actions and information continued...

empowered on behalf of and in the name of this Corporation to execute Motor Vehicle Leases with Enterprise on such terms as may be agreed to by said person.

Resolved further that Enterprise is authorized to act upon this resolution until written notice of its revocation is received by Enterprise.

Adopted the proposed revised Vehicle Purchase, Lease, and Use policy as recommended by the Policies Committee.

### January 2015 Meeting

Elected 2013 Board Officers:  
Chair - Carol Cravath, Vice-Chair - Theresa Arrick-Kruger, Clerk - Al Nelson, and Treasurer - Susan Phillips.

Accepted and approved the settlement report for the 2013-2014 School Health Insurance Pool, and, pursuant to SSC policy on management of the Health Insurance Pools, credited calculated excess claims fund for eligible groups as outlined in the settlement document.

Transferred \$290,000 from the School Health pool RSR margin fund to the IBNR fund to be reserved for IBNR risk coverage.

Approved the recommended distribution of the 2013-2014 SSC employee group claims margin return.

Approved a three-year contract with Bill Colopoulos of Next Generation Benefit Solutions, LLC

effective July 1, 2015.

Approved the Pay Equity report based on December 31, 2014 payroll data and verified positions and class codes; authorized staff to submit the data to the State of Minnesota.

Chairperson Cravath appointed Board Members to the following committees: Finance, Personnel, Policies, ByLaws, and Canvassing.

Set the Board meeting schedule for 2015 through January 2016

Wednesday, February 25, 2015

Wednesday, March 25

Wednesday, April 8 – Special School Pool Renewal Meeting

Wednesday, April 22

Wednesday, May 27

Wednesday, June 24

No July Meeting

Wednesday, August 19

Wednesday, September 23

Wednesday, October 28

Monday, November 30

Wednesday, December 30

Wednesday, January 27, 2016 – Annual Organizational Meeting



## Calendar

**March***March 2, 4, 9, 11, and 20***SH Knowledge Bowl Sub-Regionals**  
8:30 AM - 2:00 PM*March 3***Gifted and Talented Educator  
Network Session - Opportunities  
for GT Learners to Explore Social  
Studies through the Minnesota  
Academic Standards**  
1:00 - 4:00 PM*March 5***MASA Region 1 Winter Session**  
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM*March 7***Purposeful Play: Facilitating  
Learning Through Play and  
Interaction**  
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM*March 16***Out of This World Customer  
Service Training**  
8:30 - 11:30 AM - *Houston County  
Justice Center in Caledonia*  
2:00 - 5:00 PM - SSC*March 16***Pochoir Printmaking**  
4:30 - 6:30 PM*March 17***Playground Safety**  
10:30 AM - 1:30 PM*March 19***AAC Meeting**  
12:00 - 3:00 PM*March 24***RTI/MTSS in Action: 8 High-Impact  
Keys to Success**  
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM*March 25***SSC Board Meeting**  
5:00 - 8:00 PM**April***April 3***AM Espresso at the Wood Lake  
Meeting Center**  
7:30 - 9:00 AM*April 8***SSC Board Meeting**  
5:00 - 8:00 PM*April 9***AAC Meeting**  
12:00 - 3:00 PM*April 11***Save Your License Saturday**  
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM*April 22***SSC's Spring Wellness Forum**  
10:30 AM - 4:00 PM*April 22***SSC Board Meeting**  
5:00 - 8:00 PM*April 28***Gifted and Talented Educator  
Network Session - Helping Gifted  
Girls Grow Up: Tools to Navigate  
Adolescence and Beyond**  
1:00 - 4:00 PM**May***May 21***AAC Meeting**  
12:00 - 3:00 PM*May 27***SSC Board Meeting**  
5:00 - 8:00 PM*May 19, 20, & 21***Young Authors, Young Artists**  
8:45 AM - 1:30 PM**June***June 16***Media Literacy Standards:  
Classroom Implementation  
Strategies**  
8:30 AM - 3:30 PM*June 23***9 Essential Skills for the Love and  
Logic Classroom**  
8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

National media literacy  
expert Frank Baker to  
present at SSC!



Frank will present **Media  
Literacy Standards: Classroom  
Implementation Strategies** on  
Tuesday, June 16 8:30 AM - 3:30  
PM.

Frank is highly lauded in the  
field of media literacy. He  
has conducted hundreds of  
workshops for educators and  
students across the United  
States.

He positions media literacy  
within the standards and  
provides concrete ways to  
incorporate it into instruction.

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## Southeast Service Cooperative direct dial phone numbers, e-mails, and 800 #

We want to be there when you call, so try dialing us directly at the numbers below. Our voice mail system allows you to leave a detailed message if the person you're calling isn't able to answer right away. If you don't know who you need to talk with, dial (507) 288-1282 or 1-800-657-6996 and one of our staff or our auto-attendant will direct you from there. To send a fax dial (507) 288-7663.

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for communities  
of leaders and learners.

