

Cooperative Connection

December 2013

Southeast Service Cooperative

Vol XXIV, No. 4

Inside

Staffing Update.....	2
Wood Lake Event Center.....	3
ACA Impact.....	4
AESA Conference.....	5
YAYA Conference.....	6
SSC's GATE Networks	7
PBIS/News From MDE.....	8
Math/Science Partnership.....	9
EAP Information	11
SSC Walking Challenge.....	12
Board Meeting Actions.....	14
Calendar	15
Directory.....	16



Shaping the future for communities of leaders and learners

Southeast Service Cooperative
210 Wood Lake Drive SE
Rochester, Minnesota 55904
ph (507) 288-1282
fax (507) 288-7663
www.ssc.coop

New Cooperative Purchasing Online Marketplace

By Katie Schmitt

We are extremely excited to share with you a new direction for our Cooperative Purchasing program!

Over the past year, we, along with seven other service cooperatives in Minnesota, have been working to build an online marketplace. The goal of the marketplace is to provide ease of access to many of our most commonly used contracts through a single online solution. We have named the marketplace Express.

Express has been built to make purchasing an easier task by providing:

- Quick access to multiple contracts through a single website with a single user name and password
- Guaranteed contract pricing on each purchase
- Custom approval workflows allowing organizations to manage how users can place orders



- Flexible payment options through Purchase Order or Credit Card

If you would like to see a demonstration of the new Express website via live webinar, join us at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, January 15 or 3:30 PM on Thursday, January 16. The demonstration will take approximately 30 minutes. Participants will be emailed the webinar session link on Monday, January 13. If you cannot attend either session, contact Katie Schmitt (kschmitt@ssc.coop) to set up a demonstration at your site or via webinar.

Science and Nature Conference a hit with local students!

99 students in grades 2-4 from eight school districts attended the Science and Nature conference at SSC on November 1. Students participated in four 60-minute sessions. Students attended sessions on acid-base rainbows, squid dissection, angry bird catapults, and floating pumice stone life rafts to safety before a volcano erupts. One chaperone exclaimed, "I know my son had a great time because he could explain in detail what they did in each session! Seemed like some really neat projects for the kids. Thank you!"



SSC welcomes Peggy Merkel, Wood Lake Event Center and Program Technician

Peggy Merkel became SSC's newest staff member when she joined the SSC team as its Wood Lake Event Center and Program Technician in November. In her new position, Peggy will be responsible for managing Wood Lake Event Center usage and reservations and assisting with member communications and event management including workshop registrations and database updates.

Originally from Taopi, Minnesota, (near Adams), Peggy has lived in Spring Valley for the last 20 years. She graduated from Mankato State with a BS in Elementary Education.

Peggy spent over 14 years working at Home Federal Bank in Spring Valley and served on the Kingsland School Board from 2008 - 2012. She has served on SSC's Board since 2009 and will end her tenure after the December 30 meeting.

Peggy and her husband Jake have two sons; Cody, 14, and Gavin, 11. She enjoys snowmobiling, scrapbooking, and attending her kids' sporting and academic events.

Peggy shared, "Working here with the SSC team has been very rewarding." She added, "I'm really looking forward to the completion



of the Wood Lake Event Center and the improvements it will bring to our members and guests."

Peggy can be reached at pmerkel@ssc.coop or (507) 281-6666.

SSC hosts ice cream social for Rochester ALC students and staff

By Nicole LaChapelle

To welcome the students and staff of the Rochester Alternative Learning Center to their new home on Wood Lake Drive, SSC, along with a group of its Wood Lake Park neighbors, hosted an ice cream social on September 27. Around 200 students, staff and Wood Lake Drive neighbors attended the event.

Rochester Public Schools' Director of Alternative Education Gordy Ziebert shared, "The students and staff of the Alternative Learning Center felt validated and welcomed into the Wood Lake Neighborhood.



ALC staff and students enjoying their ice cream sundaes at the event.

The ALC hopes to add to the already strong sense of community within the Wood Lake Neighborhood and hopes to be positive contributing citizens for many years to come."

Gordy added, "We thank all that contributed to the Ice Cream

Social for their generosity and hospitality. The event was much appreciated by the students and staff of the ALC".

The following Wood Lake Park businesses and organizations assisted SSC with resources for the social: A.B. Systems, Inc., Bimbo Bakeries USA, Child Care Resource and Referral, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson, Rochester South, Culligan of Rochester, Culver's South, Extended Stay America, Rochester, South, IEA, Inc., and Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center.

Big changes happening at the Wood Lake Event Center!

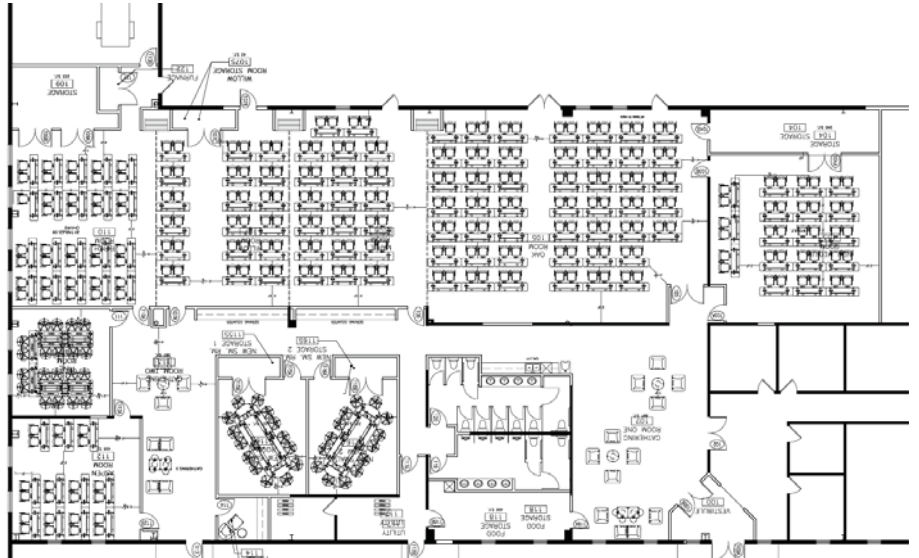
By Nicole LaChapelle

We're excited to let you know our Wood Lake Meeting Center is currently undergoing a complete renovation and expansion! (Coincidentally, SSC's neighbor and member, Channel One Regional Food Bank, is adding a 22,000 square foot facility.)

Our previous meeting space featured five meeting rooms, but often times these rooms were booked with student academic activities or SSC's PD offerings and we've had to turn away room bookings due meeting space unavailability. By increasing the number of rooms to nine, we'll not only be able to host our own events, but will also be able to rent out rooms on these busy days.

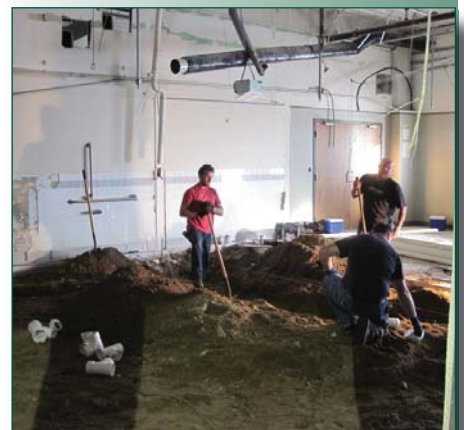
We've also changed our meeting's center name to the Wood Lake Event Center. This name better reflects our new, larger space, and the events we will now be able to host.

SSC Executive Director Suzanne Riley shared, "The availability of the south 5,000 square feet of the SSC building gives us an opportunity to expand our members' central gathering place. The updated Event Center venue will allow us to meet growing demand from private and public industry for



high-tech meeting and training spaces in Rochester, and will ultimately augment our revenue to better support our members."

Construction began on Monday, December 9 and we plan to be up and running and ready for rentals the second week of February. We'll send out updates and photos of the project in our e-newsletter, *News You Can Use*. Don't forget that SSC Members receive a 40% discount on room rental rates! See above and to the right for construction photos and our event center's floor plan.



Measuring the Impact of the ACA

By Bill Colopolous

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (“ACA”) will likely bring about many complex changes to the healthcare system and the methods used to fund it. It will be difficult to predict, let alone estimate, many of the long-term effects of the law. However, most employers are already preparing for 2015, when the most significant employer rules will apply. These new ACA rules may affect employer sponsored health plans in a variety of ways:

1. The ACA will likely increase health benefit costs, due to its federally mandated benefit enhancements. The effect in the group market is likely to be far less pronounced than in the individual market, but will still be felt to some degree as the demand for group coverage by those who were previously covered under individual policies who will not qualify for tax credits under the exchanges will be attracted to their employer’s plan. For others, the exact opposite will happen; they will be attracted to the exchange. How these shifts will impact employer plans will be difficult to predict or quantify.
2. The ACA will add aggregate health plan costs for those employers who currently offer health benefits to



- employees, due to the 30 hour rule.
3. The ACA, while mandating dependent eligibility, does not mandate dependent affordability. This will cause serious imbalances in family funding in the group market.

These issues could bring about significant transitions in how employers will manage their health benefits programs under the ACA:

- Employers will redefine their workforce (to whatever extent it is practical) to decrease their health benefit spending by increasing the number of part time jobs while reducing full time jobs. This action will hold constant or even reduce their health plan liabilities.
- Employers will use the ACA spouse coverage exclusion rules to reduce or eliminate spouse benefit costs. Some will eliminate spouse coverage altogether; most will likely charge more for it. Some may differentiate

what they charge spouses based on whether or not the spouse has health benefits available through their own employer.

- Employers will shift from defined benefit plans (offering a specified or negotiated set of benefits) to offering a defined contribution that employees will use to select their own health plan – and other coverage options – from among a choice of options the employer will provide.

Public employee benefit plans

Because of the lower income positions of many employees in public sector plans (e.g. lower paid county workers, para professionals in school districts, food service and custodians) the effects of the ACA are likely to be felt rather quickly as the larger, local employers who often provide affordable coverage for spouses and children now may discontinue liberal funding for family coverage. That could force more public employees back into their own employer’s plan. Public employees could see their family health plan costs rise considerably as a result.

What to do?

Since the effects of the ACA will ultimately reflect the

SSC staff, board and member superintendents represented at national conference

By Amy Grover

During the first week in December, a group representing Southeast Service Cooperative attended the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA) 28th Annual Conference at the J.W. Marriott in San Antonio, Texas. Staff members Suzanne Riley, Amy Grover, Ann Clark, and Dale Walston were joined by Board Members Susan Phillips and Carol Cravath and Superintendents John McDonald and Bruce Klaehn. The theme of the conference was "Future Shock" ESA's in a 2.0 World."

AESA serves regional educational service agencies in 45 states with 533 agencies nationwide and hundreds of thousands of staff members. Although ESA roles may differ slightly from state to state, the foundational principle of each is to support the improvement of student performance. This commitment is more challenging than ever, as the level of accountability for student learning continues to rise. This commitment is also more exciting than ever, as the ability to respond to student needs, implement innovative programs and practices, and network and communicate with peers and experts, continues to be vastly augmented with the use of technology.



Pictured left to right: AESA Executive Director Emeritus and award namesake Dr. Brian L. Talbott, AESA president R. Stephen Aguirre, NESC's Executive Director Paul Brinkman, AESA past President Cliff Carmody and AESA Executive Director Lee Warne.

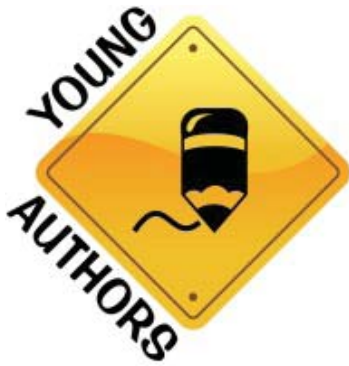
The keynotes, sessions, and exhibitors provided insight, strategies, and networking to assist in responding to education's global sea of change in the 2.0 World. Dr. Yong Zhao, opening keynote, based his presentation on the implications of globalization and technology on education. Jamie Vollmer, a champion of America's public schools, and Chester Elton, well known for his *All In* concept, also spoke. Over 80 breakout sessions offered interesting areas to explore for school and regional service agency innovation and continuous improvement.

Paul Brinkman, Executive Director of the Northeast Service Cooperative, was honored with the Brian L. Talbott Award, which recognizes some of the best technology implementations that are going on around the country. NESC received the award for its broadband infrastructure project and its technology support and leadership in the Northeast Minnesota Middle Mile Fiber Project, which connects critical service sites with a 915-mile fiber optic network across eight counties connecting schools, libraries, higher education, health care organizations, tribal, state and counties, and providing access to high speed broadband.

This was a wonderful opportunity for staff, Board, and regional leaders to generate new ideas, learn from international experts, and network with colleagues across the country. We encourage you to check out AESA's website to learn more about this organization at www.aesa.us.

Third Annual Young Authors, Young Artists Conference for Middle School students a success!

By Katie Sue Cunningham



Southeast Service Cooperative hosted the third annual Young Authors, Young Artists conference for students in grades seven and eight on November 7, 2013.

The goal of the conference was to expose students to



Students engaging in conference sessions.



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 bookmaking, reader's theater, creating your own eBook, and drawing.

The conference was attended by 96 students from seven school districts.

One teacher mentioned "My student's favorite and my favorite was drawing the character and then putting the character into different

situations and what that character would do. I will be using this lesson in my class in the future. The student's just had a lot of fun making their character and then writing about them. Also, I liked them going out of their comfort zone and getting up in front of other students they do not know and acting out a skit. It was fun to watch the students and to see them rise to the occasion. They did a great job in that session--and most importantly, the presenter was GREAT!"

The conference will be held again in Fall 2014.

Save the Date - ELEMENTARY Young Authors, Young Artists

The 27th Annual Young Authors, Young Artists Conference for students in grades 4 - 6, will take place May 20 & 21, 2014 at Rochester Community and Technical College.



SSC's Gifted and Talented Educator and Parent Networks host region's foremost GATE experts

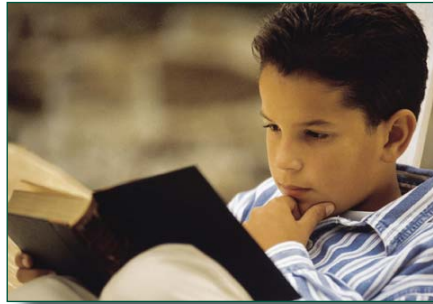
SSC is thrilled to have secured leading experts in the field of Gifted Education to work with our network educators and parents in our Regional Gifted and Talented Networks.

Our educator network offers assistance and support to districts and GATE educators as they continue to develop, modify and expand programs and activities that benefit high ability learners at all grade levels. Its goal is to promote effective, thoughtful, and differentiated learning options for gifted children.

To help assist districts with vertically aligning their program, we encourage elementary, middle and high school educators to attend sessions together if possible.

Each network meeting features a presenter who specializes in Gifted and Talented Education. Time is set aside at the start of each session to allow attendees to eat lunch and network and the session will end with round table discussions.

In conjunction with our GATE Teacher Network, SSC is also offering a network for **parents** of gifted children. These evening sessions, which are held from 5:30 - 7:00 PM, feature the same GATE experts that present at the teacher network. Sessions focus on the challenges and joys of raising a gifted child. GATE Parent Network sessions cost \$12 each.



The network's goal is to promote effective, thoughtful, and differentiated learning options and parenting tips for caregivers of gifted children.

For more information, click [here](#) or contact SSC's GATE Network Coordinators:

Lori Mack
lmack@ssc.coop
(507) 281-6691
or
Nicole LaChapelle
nlachapelle@ssc.coop
(507) 281-6674

2014 Gifted and Talented Educator Network Dates/Topics

January 16

Enhancing Professional Development Using Case Studies: Underrepresented Populations

Wendy Behrens - MDE
(Due to construction on SSC's Wood Lake Event Center, this session will be held at Assisi Heights Spirituality Center, 1001 14th Street NW, in Rochester)

March 20

Teaching to All Types of Brains

Dr. Jane Kise

May 1

Perfectionism

Dr. Thomas S. Greenspon

Sessions take place from 1:00 – 4:00 PM at SSC.

2014 Gifted and Talented Parent Network Dates/Topics

January 16

Bringing Out the Best

Wendy Behrens - MDE
(Due to construction on SSC's Wood Lake Event Center, this session will be held at Assisi Heights Spirituality Center, 1001 14th Street NW, in Rochester)

March 20

Parenting to All Types of Brains

Dr. Jane Kise

May 1

Perfectionism

Dr. Thomas S. Greenspon

Sessions take place from 5:30 – 7:00 PM at SSC.

Become a PBIS School!

By Katie Schmitt

School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) provides a dynamic framework to create a positive school culture in which students are taught behavior expectations and rewarded for meeting or exceeding those expectations. PBIS empowers staff to pre-correct and prevent unwanted behaviors. PBIS is structured to meet each school's specific needs because it is designed by school staff.

As of May 2013, over 430 Minnesota schools are in training or have completed Minnesota's two-year scope and sequence for SW-PBIS. This initiative now includes 20% of Minnesota



schools and has impacted over 180,000 students.

What can you expect from PBIS?

- Improved classroom and school climate
- Decreased reactive management
- Maximized academic achievement
- Improved support for students with EBD
- Integrated academic and behavior initiatives
- Increased data-driven decision making

PBIS training is provided for school teams by the Minnesota Department of Education through the Southern Regional Implementation Project (S-RIP). The next training cycle begins in August 2014.

For more information on this opportunity, contact Katie Schmitt at kschmitt@ssc.coop. The Cohort 10 application is available now and due in mid-January.

MDE announces Celebration Schools

MDE recently announced that 48 schools are being designated as Celebration schools. This year, 166 schools were eligible and applied for the honor. 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.

Congratulations to the following SSC Member Schools and Schools Served by the Center of Excellence that have been designated as Celebration Schools by MDE:

SSC Member Schools

- Dover-Eyota Elementary/Dover-Eyota Public School District
- Hayfield Elementary/Hayfield Public School District
- Pine Island Middle/Pine Island Public School District
- St. Charles Elementary/St. Charles Public School District

Focus/Priority schools served by the Center of Excellence

- Garlough Environmental Magnet/West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan
- New Millennium Academy Charter School
- Partnership Academy, Inc.

Dover-Eyota High School a finalist for national music award

Dover-Eyota High School was recently chosen as one of 123 finalists across the country for the 2014 Grammy Signature Schools award, which honors public schools that are making an "outstanding commitment to music education." The school was one of just four Minnesota locations selected from a pool of more than 20,000. The other schools include Edan Prairie, West Ottawa and Hopkins. The designation as a Grammy Signature School finalist makes Dover Eyota eligible to receive up to \$15,000 in grant funding for its music department. The current group of 123 schools will be trimmed again in March.

Math Science Partnership Programming delivers to area science and math teachers

By Kari Kubicek

Thirty-six southeast Minnesota math and science teachers are participating in programming offered through the Math Science Partnership (MSP) grant project during the 2013-14 school year. This programming has been made possible through an award by the Minnesota Department of Education to assist teachers in improving content knowledge and pedagogical techniques to more effectively implement the Minnesota Mathematics and Science Academic Standards with the goal of improving student learning. The Southeast Service Cooperative, along with project partners Winona State University and Hamline University, are providing these exciting professional development opportunities for grades 5-8 math and science teachers.

This year's programming was developed for two cohorts including a 5 to 8 grade math and science teacher cohort and another designed specifically for 6th grade science teachers. All cohort participants are expected to participate in six full day sessions that began with a two day session in August and has continued with full day sessions throughout the year.

Mathematical Modeling in a Science Context for grades 5-8 math and science teachers.



Members of the MSP Science Cohort work together on an experiment during a recent session.

The primary objective of the Mathematical Modeling in a Science Context program for 5-8 grade math and science teachers is to focus on using a learning cycle (inquiry) to take data from real-world systems for learning and applying mathematical and scientific concepts. The facilitators work through several lessons that begin with hands-on activities to take data and explore/develop integrated scientific and mathematical concepts. Participants experience standards-based activities that help their students build an understanding of algebra and promote inquiry in the classroom. The major emphasis of this programming is on constructing mathematical models, equations, and principles based on data from scientific systems.

This programming was developed and is facilitated by Nicole Williams, Ph.D., and Andrew Ferstl, Ph.D, both of Winona State University.



Grade 6 Physical Science and Engineering

The Minnesota Science Standards for 6th grade offer a special challenge for students and for their teachers. The mixture of systems-based engineering and physical science requires a strong science background and innovative strategies to help young students grasp challenging concepts. In grade 6, in addition to the nature of engineering, science topics include force and motion, waves, energy transfer, properties/states of matter and more.

The sessions developed for this program were designed to assist teachers help their students meet the science standards. Participants in this cohort are experiencing a review of key concepts in physics and chemistry from a variety of presenters, gathering and sharing resources, expanding

Math/Science continued from page 9

their skills in scientific inquiry and engineering, and preparing to translate these skills and knowledge to their students.

This programming was developed by Lee Schmitt of Hamline University and is facilitated by Schmitt along with Jamie Crannell, a chemistry and physics teacher for Chaska and Chanhassen High Schools, Angie Lawrence, the STEM coach for Chaska Elementary and district science committee leader in Eastern Carver County Schools, and Eric Koser, physics teacher at Mankato West High School.

Cali Salley and Tim Andring are both 6th grade teachers at Dover-Eyota Schools and are the only

two teachers participating in both of the MSP cohorts. Each of these individuals have found their experiences with the project to be beneficial.

Salley states that “By participating in the MSP cohorts, I’ve had the chance to work with peers in some of the same grade levels on content that pertains exactly to my classroom. I’ve walked away enthused and ready to try new things I’ve learned from instructors and fellow teachers. I have found the time to be beneficial not only for the content, but also for the interaction with other teachers.”

Andring indicated how valuable the programming has been for

his classroom instruction. “The MSP cohorts give us a hands-on experience of active learning. The sessions have been valuable and have enriched my instruction in the classroom. They challenge us as teachers yet still give us useful and effective activities and skills that are immediately useful in the classroom. It is nice being able to discuss activities and strategies, have the chance to go back and try them in your classroom, and then get together again to share your experiences.

Happy Holidays from all of us at Southeast Service Cooperative. We wish you peace and a happy new year filled with health, happiness, and spectacular success.

We're honored to work with and serve you, our valued members.

To recognize the giving nature of the season, a donation of \$1,000 will be made to Channel One Regional Food Bank (a SSC Member) on behalf of the SSC staff, Board of Directors and entire membership.

Employee Assistance Program: When is a good time to use it?

By DJ Enga

The Sand Creek Group

Southeast Service Cooperative is proud to partner with the Sand Creek Group, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that provides confidential counseling services designed to offer employees, and their immediate family members.

Life Stressors

Stress tends to dominate the workplace – sometimes it's visible, other times it's not. Employers are increasingly realizing that providing an EAP counseling resource will benefit their staff and has been proven to boost productivity. The EAP counselor may provide immediate relief as well as coping skills for future issues in any personal crisis, or life situation.

Workplace Difficulties

Multiple stressors are present for everyone, and many happen right in the workplace: high expectations from supervisors; too much work and not enough time; and issues or disputes with fellow co-workers. Speaking with someone in the Employee Assistance Program will provide tools for coping with workplace difficulty and provide a plan to address issues and practical ways to deal with challenges.

Financial and Legal

Dealing with financial hardship, or an unexpected legal matter can be daunting in our modern consumer

society. Using an EAP counselor to help provide an unbiased, expert perspective can help wade through the many options out there for consumers, or people in need of legal assistance, without the pressure to purchase products or services that may not necessarily be warranted or helpful.

Life Transitions

Major transitional events can add stress to our lives: divorce, retirement, an illness, death of a parent, all can provide a feeling of anxiety and sometimes depression. Sometimes individuals or their family members need help in processing these events. Even changes of a positive nature can add to feelings of being overwhelmed, and a need to seek outside help. Whether it's financial, legal, or personal, an EAP can provide an independent perspective.

Substance Abuse

Getting help with an alcohol or drug issue is another reason to seek EAP treatment. Employees with such problems experience more absenteeism and reduced work performance, increasing the likelihood of eventual termination. Thus, it is in their best interests to seek help. The EAP will also have many referral sources for ongoing treatment, if necessary.

Confidentiality!

The use of Employee Assistance Program services is confidential,



so employees can seek help without fear of reprisal or facing any stigma from managers or co-workers.

The Sand Creek Group is a women-owned small business specializing in exceptional EAP services to support the human spirit at work. Over the past 15 years, The Sand Creek Group has earned a reputation with top employers as the vendor of choice to assist them in offering creative, caring, and compassionate counseling, consulting, and work life resources to employees and their family members. Sand Creek currently provides employee assistance programs for federal and local government, hospitals, universities, school districts, and small and large private organizations.

If you have an immediate need or if you are in crisis, please call 888-243-5744 to speak with a clinician right away. Or access our website and complete a convenient on-line intake form at www.sandcreekeap.com

Multiple school districts and city/county members slated to compete in SSC's Member vs. Member Walking Challenge - Begins January 1st!

By Nicole LaChapelle

For the third year, SSC is coordinating a walking challenge amongst its member organizations. Last year, 13 southeastern Minnesota school districts and seven city and county members participated in two separate pedometer-based challenges (Zumbrota-Mazeppa won the education challenge and the City of Byron won the city/county challenge). At press time, seven SSC Member city and county groups and 16 school districts have signed on to compete in the upcoming challenge, which will run January 1 – 31.

Beginning January 1, participants will start wearing a pedometer and tracking their steps. Step counts are turned in to the person designated to keep track of steps at their organization (most likely the person in charge of the organization's wellness programming). Coordinators then send in the step totals and number of people participating each week to Nicole LaChapelle at SSC, who will send out weekly updates on team standings.

A winner in both categories will be announced on February 3. SSC will provide a trophy for the winning school district and the winning city and/or county. They will be presented at the Spring Health Forum (date to be



announced soon!). The winning teams will also be featured in the March 2013 *Cooperative Connection* and a press release announcing the winners will be sent to the local media.

Participating groups are encouraged to offer additional incentives to increase participation. (For example: incentives for the top male/top female, most improved walker, etc.) Groups in SSC's Health Insurance Pools are welcome to use a portion of their health promotion funds from SSC for challenge expenses. SSC has inexpensive, quality pedometers available for our members at cost (\$6.50 each). If you would like to place an order, and receive them prior to the January 1st start date, please contact Nicole LaChapelle by Monday, December 23.

Please contact Nicole LaChapelle, nlachapelle@ssc.coop or (507) 281-6674 by Monday, December

What wellness coordinators are saying about the challenge:

"Cannon Falls Wellness is excited to promote the SSC walking challenge 2014 to our staff! We will be 'on track' with our new FitBits, water bottles and exercise bands after the Holiday Break. Thank you SSC for all your support!"

- Lori Hanson,
Cannon Falls Public Schools

"We have a record number of participants this year - 64 staff members! The anticipation is building, pedometers are being prepped, and walking shoes are at the ready."

- Sharon Manley,
Lewiston-Altura Schools

"I love the new year. A fresh start is always what I need after the craziness of the holidays. The challenge is perfect timing to get our staff moving towards their goals. They seem excited and ready to go. "

- Marcia Schultz, PEM Schools

"Let's put our Fitbits to the test! We are going to smoke 'em."

- Renita Irvin, Stewartville Schools

"We have more signed up than usual and everyone is excited because it's going to be so much easier to track with our new Jaw-bone UP bands!"

- Cindy Stier,
Grand Meadow Schools

ACA continued from page 4

complexity of the law itself, employers should focus their efforts on sound health benefit management strategies.

Essentially, this means avoiding practices that could create adverse risk selection (i.e., letting people buy insurance only when they perceive the need for it). Here are some examples of what can be done to protect the integrity of the employer's health plan:

- Limit cash in lieu to those employees who have spousal coverage options elsewhere. While the market trend is heading towards employers limiting spousal coverage by charging more for it if the spouse is covered as an employee elsewhere, cash in lieu of benefits can provide a better solution for public employers that cannot afford making substantial contributions for family coverage. However, keep in mind that cash in lieu programs are an example of a minority of employees being given advantages over the majority of employees who rely on the future financial integrity of the employer's health plan. It is best not to redesign your program to address special interests.
- Simpler solutions are often better ones; this is especially true when it comes to employee health plan contributions. It is best to transition to simpler

formulas now so that future benefit strategies affecting affordability can more easily be tracked and measured against what subsidies the exchange may provide for some of the lower paid employees. Ultimately, it will be important for the public employer to be able to calculate when it is best to provide funding for lower paid employees and when the better course may be to allow them to qualify for exchange subsidies.

- Highly compensated employees. All predictions point to the need to eventually eliminate special health benefit plans for highly compensated employees.

How to prepare for the ACA

In advance of 2015's deadlines, employers estimate their ACA eligibility and affordability liabilities based on their current employee health plan costs, contributions and workforce management rules. Employers should not try to solve every aspect of eligibility compliance, such as selecting a measurement period or figuring out how they are going to satisfy the reporting requirements when the law goes into effect – if it ever does – in 2015. For now, the first important step for employers is to understand how their health plan liabilities project going

forward under the ACA rules - as they exist today.

For more information, please contact:

Bill Colopoulos, (507) 281-6690,
bcolopoulos@ssc.coop

Bill is Southeast Service Cooperative's health benefits consultant.

Recent Board meeting actions and information

Note: Complete SSC Board of Directors meeting minutes are available on the SSC website at www.ssc.coop.

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

September 2013 Meeting

Approved the 2013-2014 Annual Plan.

Awarded a contract to Schwab, LLC for construction of the Wood Lake Meeting Center remodel/expansion project for an amount not to exceed \$606,300.

Authorized the Executive Director to open the position of WLMC/Program Assistant and immediately conduct a search and fill the position as soon as possible.

Hired Dick Riley in the temporary, part-time PERA exempt position of events manager for up to four months at the hourly pay rate he received at the time of his retirement June 30, 2013.

Authorized the Executive Director to enter into a contract with MNsure for SSC to serve as a Consumer Assistance partner providing Navigator and In-Person Assister services.

October 2013 Meeting

Accepted the 2012-2013 fiscal audit report. Kyle Meyer of Abdo Eick Meyer distributed and presented the fiscal audit report.

Authorized staff to advise the MN Department of Education that SSC intends to cease offering classes and will allow its provider status to end.

Established the 2014 SSC Board of Directors Election Process as follows:

1. Nominations to be opened Tuesday, October 1 and close Friday, November 1.
2. The ballots will be prepared and sent to local Boards on or about Monday, November 4.
3. Election ballots to be received at the Southeast Service Cooperative by Friday, December 20.
4. Canvassing Committee to meet at 4:30 PM on the day of the regular December Board meeting on December 30, 2013.

Elections will be confirmed by the Southeast Service Cooperative Board at its regular December meeting.

Set the date for the December regular Board meeting on Monday, December 30, 2013 at a location to be arranged by staff and announced at the November Board meeting.

November 2013 Meeting

Chairwoman Cravath appointed Brian Grudem to the Personnel Committee to replace Peggy Merkel.

Chairwoman Cravath appointed Canvassing Committee for 2013 Board Elections: Susan Phillips and Theresa Arrick-Kruger.

Accepted a grant of \$500 from the Collaborative for Learning and Community to support the purchase of an exemplary literacy book collection and mobile cart.

Hired Peggy Merkel effective November 7, 2013 as Wood Lake Meeting Center/General Administration Technician, with compensation set within the SSC wage guidelines; also the Board thanked Dick Riley for his assistance in meeting support needs and training during the months of October and November.

Authorized the Executive Director to open the position of Data Analysis and Technical Assistance Specialist for the Centers of Excellence, conduct a search, and fill the position as soon as possible.

Calendar

December*December 30***SSC Board Meeting**
5:00 - 8:00 PM**January***January 15***Express Demonstration via Webinar**
9:00 - 9:30 AM*January 16 (At Assisi Heights)***Gifted and Talented Educator Network
- Enhancing Professional Development
Using Case Studies: Underrepresented
Populations**
1:00 - 4:00 PM*January 16***Express Demonstration via Webinar**
3:30 - 4:00 PM*January 16 (At Assisi Heights)***Parent Network for Gifted and Talented
Learners - Bringing Out the Best**
5:30 - 7:00 PM*January 20**(At the Pizza Ranch in Stewartville)*
AAC Meeting
12:00 - 3:00 PM*January 22 (At Willow Creek Golf Course)***SSC Board Meeting**
5:00 - 8:00 PM*January 24 (At Willow Creek Golf Course)***SEMLAC Leadership Team Training
(Day 2)**
8:30 AM - 3:30 PM*January 30 (Location TBA)***MSTP Math Cohort Session**
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM**February***February 1 (Century High School)***Legislator/School Leader Breakfast
Forum**
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM*February 4 (Country Inn and Suites -
Rochester South)***MSTP Science Cohort Session**
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM*February 5 - 7***Senior High Knowledge Bowl
Round Robins**
9:00 AM and 12:30 PM*February 5***Introduction to the iPad**
8:30 AM - 2:00 PM*February 11***Spelling Bee Regional**
8:00 AM - 4:30 PM*February 12***Writing Power (Pre-K - 7)**
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM*February 18 - 20***Senior High Knowledge Bowl
Round Robins**
9:00 AM and 12:30 PM*February 20***AAC Meeting**
12:00 - 3:00 PM*February 25***Spelling Bee Final**
8:00 AM - 4:30 PM*February 26***Explore the "E" in STEM**
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM**March***March 4***MSTP Science Cohort Session**
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM*March 4***SMART Board Intermediate with
Updated Notebook 11 Software**
8:30 - 11:30 AM*March 6***MSTP Math Cohort Session**
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM*March 6***SMART Board Beginner with Updated
Notebook 11 Software**
8:30 - 11:30 AM*March 6***Understanding and Creating Argument
and Informational Texts**

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

*March 12***Introduction to the iPad**
8:30 AM - 2:00 PM*March 20***AAC Meeting**
12:00 - 3:00 PM*March 20***Gifted and Talented Educator Network -
Teaching to all Types of Brains**
1:00 - 4:00 PM*March 20***Parent Network for Gifted and Talented
Learners - Parenting to All Types of
Brains**
5:30 - 7:00 PM*March 21***Senior High Knowledge Bowl
Regional Tier AA**
8:30 AM - 2:30 PM*March 22***Save Your License Saturday**
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM



SSC is a 2013 Recipient of the Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility.

Cooperative Connection is a publication of the Southeast Service Cooperative, published four times per year for members, associates, and the general public.

Editor: Nicole LaChapelle
nlachapelle@ssc.coop

Southeast Service Cooperative
 210 Wood Lake Drive SE
 Rochester, MN 55904
 Phone (507) 288-1282
 Fax (507) 288-7663

Office Hours:
 Monday - Friday
 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM

For up-to-date news, visit
www.ssc.coop

Views and ideas expressed in the *Cooperative Connection*, by its contributors, advertisers and editors do not necessarily reflect views or policies of the Service Cooperative and should not be considered an endorsement thereof.

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.

	name	phone	email	service area
SSC Staff	Suzanne Riley	(507) 281-6673	s Riley@ssc.coop.....	Executive Director
	Katie Sue Cunningham	(507) 281-6667	kcunningham@ssc.coop.....	Training and Program Technician
	Amy Grover	(507) 281-6693	agrover@ssc.coop.....	Director of Planning and General Administration
	Chris Hancock	(507) 281-6671	chancock@ssc.coop.....	Accounting Technician
	Kari Kubicek.....	(507) 281-6668	kkubicek@ssc.coop	Program Coordinator
	Kirsten Kuehl	(507) 281-6670	kkuehl@ssc.coop.....	Instructional Services Coordinator
	Nicole LaChapelle	(507) 281-6674	nlachapelle@ssc.coop.....	Communications and Program Technician
	Lori Mack	(507) 281-6691	lmack@ssc.coop.....	Regional Education Specialist
	Peggy Merkel	(507) 281-6666	pmerkel@ssc.coop	Wood Lake Event Center and Program Technician
	Katie Schmitt	(507) 281-6676	kschmitt@ssc.coop.....	Cooperative Purchasing Technician and PBIS Trainer
Center of Excellence Staff	Bob Tweten	(507) 281-6663	btweten@ssc.coop	Health and Safety Manager
	Dale Walston	(507) 281-6675	dwalston@ssc.coop	Director of Operations
	Ann Clark	(507) 696-7735	aclark@mnce.org	Director, Regional Center of Excellence
	Kelly Frankenfield.....	(507) 696-0277	kfrankenfield@mnce.org	English Language Development Specialist
	Barb Marchetti	(507) 696-0274	bmarchetti@mnce.org	Special Education Specialist
	George Sand	(507) 696-3721	gsand@mnce.org	Charter School Specialist
	Andrew Schalm	(507) 696-0254	aschalm@mnce.org	Mathematics Specialist
	Kristin Scherman.....	(507) 696-0285	kscherman@mnce.org	Reading Specialist
	Carol Swanson	(507) 696-0229	cswanson@mnce.org.....	Implementation Specialist
	Consultants	SSC Consultants		
Bill Colopoulos		(507) 281-6690	bcolopoulos@ssc.coop.....	Health and Benefits Consultant
Roger Jones.....		(507) 951-6749	rjoneshr@yahoo.com	Human Resource Mgmt Consultant
IEA (Institute for Environmental Assessment)				
Thad Dahling		(507) 281-6680	thad.dahling@ieainstitute.com	Project Manager
Christi Jorde		(507) 281-6665	christi.jorde@ieainstitute.com.....	Project Manager
Natalie Nagel		(507) 281-6688	natalie.nagel@ieainstitute.com	Support
Angie Radel		(507) 281-6682	angie.radel@ieainstitute.com	Senior Project Manager