

# LC Communicator

MARCH 2021

LAKES COUNTRY  
Service Cooperative  
*Together we achieve*

*Regional News, Views and Information*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

BEES ARE IN THE AIR  
REGION IV SPELLING BEE

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR  
JEREMY KOVASH

MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM  
RECEIVES NAT'L RECOGNITION

WCA - CLASS, CONSTRUCTION,  
COMMUNITY

WHAT WILL NEXT YEAR  
LOOK LIKE?

STUDENTS MAKE BRAINS FOR  
DEVELOPMENT

KNOWLEDGE BOWL STUDENTS  
SHOW THEIR SCHOOL SPIRIT

NYM GREENHOUSE POSSIBLE  
BECAUSE OF COVID

SOLAR SCHOOLS FOSTER LEARNING  
LEADERSHIP...AND SAVINGS

EDUCATOR TRAINING OPP  
DYSLEXIA 101

**EDUCATION —**  
*Electronic Edition*

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



## REGION IV SPELLING BEE



by Susan Ward  
State Academic Coordinator

Young spellers had a new experience as they participated in this year's Spelling Bee through Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC). Instead of performing in front of officials and a room full of guests, students competed virtually. Jolene King, LCSC's Education Services Assistant, navigated the school coordinators, spellers, and parents through the platform that Scripps provided.

The virtual Spelling Bee offered the contestants a unique opportunity as students were able to struggle through unfamiliar words without the usual nerves associated with a crowd watching. Five spellers from the region successfully advanced to the Multi-Region State Bee including Sheila Wallenstein, Browns Valley Middle School; Garrett Basta, Clinton Graceville Beardsley High School; Rylee Rood, Lake Park Audubon Elementary; Hazel Striker, Park Christian School; and Andrea Phillips, Rothsay Public School. Garrett Basta, the Region 4 champion,

successfully spelled such words as lackadaisical, kookaburra, hackamore, and anaconda.

When the Multi-Region State Bee concluded, Eliana Szabo, an 8th grader at Szabo Classical Academy, came out the champion successfully spelling the winning word, "palatial." Eliana shared a way that she would study for trickier words such as these, "I would use sticky notes of words I've missed and put them up all over the house. They are everywhere. I keep them up until I know them." Eliana will now advance to the Scripps National Bee to compete in numerous competitions against top spellers throughout the United States and the globe. We send our best wishes to Eliana!

While the online testing platform was a good option, we are hopeful that in-person bees can resume next year. Despite this year's bees having been quite different from years' past, one thing remained the same: we witnessed courageous, talented, young students doing their best.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

*LCSC Executive Director, Jeremy Kovash*

Here at Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) we are excited to announce the addition of two new members to the LCSC Board of Directors, Andy Siira of Brandon-Evansville and Kurt Mortenson of Otter Tail County. Siira, who won an election seat to replace outgoing board member Ardy Johansen of Underwood, will be joining newly re-elected members, Judith Moeller of Parkers Prairie, and Suzanne Wing of Ashby in serving four-year terms. Mortenson, who has been appointed to replace outgoing board member Douglas Huebsch of Otter Tail County, will serve a three-year term.

Siira hails from the Brandon-Evansville School Board and serves on the board of directors for the Runestone Area Education District. Siira is a graduate of South Dakota State University with Bachelor of Science Degrees in Animal Science and Agronomy.

Moeller has served on the Parkers Prairie School Board since 2006 and the Lakes Country Service Cooperative Board since 2019. Moeller served as an Assessor for Otter Tail County from 1988 – 1996. She is currently the Office Manager for John Moeller Trucking and serves as the Clerk for Effington Township.



*Andy Siira; Brandon-Evansville*



*Kurt Mortenson; Otter Tail County*

Wing has served on the Ashby School Board since 2006 where she is currently the Chair. Wing has been the Ashby representative for the Fergus Falls Special Education Cooperative since 2006 and a Lakes Country Service Cooperative Board member since 2017, most recently serving as current board Vice Chair, Minnesota Service Cooperative Board representative, Cooperative Purchasing Connection Joint Powers Board representative, and Lakes Country Academy Advisory Committee member.

Mortenson recently retired from the Otter Tail County Attorney's office and is now the newly elected commissioner to Otter Tail County. Mortenson graduated from Underwood School, attended Fergus Falls Community College, later studied at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, then completed his undergraduate studies at Moorhead State University, and attended the University of Minnesota Law School.

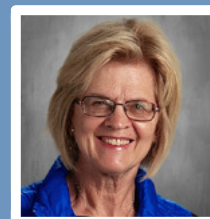
While we are excited to welcome Mortenson and Siira, we are sad to see Directors Ardy Johansen and Doug Huebsch conclude their service to the Lakes Country Board of Directors. The positive impact made by these outgoing board members is tremendous. Both Johansen and Huebsch contributed significantly to the vision of LCSC.



### ULEN-HITTERDAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

#### **Diane Blakeway Retires**

After nine years at Ulen-Hitterdal School, Paraprofessional Diane Blakeway is retiring. Diane has worked in Special Education and with the Title program for K-6th grade students. When asked about technology changes, Diane states, "A lot of technology advances, so much I found I did not know, but then the students started teaching me!" Through the years she has enjoyed watching the children learn and grow. Diane has appreciated working in a small school and will miss her coworkers and seeing her grandchildren every day. However, Diane is looking forward to having more time for her own projects and other things she enjoys doing. "Life will be different after driving to Ulen every weekday for 40 years!"





# MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

by Therese Vogel  
Communications Ulen-Hitterdal School

**U**len-Hitterdal Public School has been honored with the Best Communities for Music Education designation from The NAMM Foundation for its outstanding commitment to music education.

Now, in its 21st year, the Best Communities for Music Education designation is awarded to districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement in efforts to provide music access and education to all students. To qualify for the Best Communities designation, Rob and Kylie Anderson, respectively Ulen-Hitterdal band and choir directors, answered detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities, support for the music program and community music-making programs.

This award recognizes that Ulen-Hitterdal School is leading the way with learning opportunities as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Rob Anderson states, "Music is a great opportunity to make not only interpersonal connections, but also for individuals to make connections between the brain and the heart since music is equal parts intellect and emotion. It allows for students to show their individual creativity and for many, it is how they are able to best express themselves. Furthermore, it is truly a skill that people can use throughout their lives."

The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants with approximately 10,400 members around the world. The foundation advances active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs.



*Kylie Anderson, Choir Director and  
Rob Anderson, Band Director*

## CLASS - CONSTRUCTION - COMMUNITY

*West Central Area students take part in a carpentry and community project class*

**E**very year West Central Area Students look forward to the carpentry and community projects class. The focus of the class is to offer a job-like construction opportunity that positively impacts the communities of WCA.

The projects are typically done off campus with the students reporting directly to the job site. Projects in the past have included renovating Thorson Memorial Library, restoration, and improvements at the Barrett Pavilion, building a rustic cabin for the Tipsinah Mounds Campground, and restoring the Kensington Viking ship. Students are introduced to a variety of carpentry processes and learn from sub-contractors who engage the class in lessons that range from plumbing and electrical to flooring and concrete. These community-

focused projects are beneficial to all parties. Students get real world experiences and can give back to their communities. The government unit that benefits from the project gets labor at no cost. The District delights in the positive feedback from citizens who witness the good work being done by these young people.

This year the class is using their skills to benefit the West Central Area Secondary building. When COVID-19 impacted their ability to be outside of the building, they decided to have a positive impact "right at home." They are learning light commercial construction skills as they remodel and repurpose the media center. Through experience, students have been introduced to the rudiments of commercial work, building code and steel wall framing.



# WHAT WILL

# NEXT YEAR

# LOOK LIKE?

*A blog written by Maria Erlandson, a Principal Leadership and Education System Support at LCSC. This blog is part of a new website, MN Ed Connect, that the Regional Centers of Excellence team has launched to provide a space for our regions passionate educators to share ideas, insights, and engaging conversation.*

**“For last year’s words belong to last year’s language,  
and next year’s words await another voice.”**

**- T. S. Elliot**

**I**n my role supporting school principals, I think this question has been asked more in the last few months than it ever has in the history of education. While it can be difficult to be a school leader and feel like you don’t have all the answers, it can also be liberating. Because of all the sweeping changes that have taken place over the past year, we have the opportunity to reinvent schools in a way that is more equitable, and student and family centered than ever before.

Now, let’s be realistic, change is hard, and it often comes very slowly in school systems. I was a school principal for 22 years and saw some innovations come but found that many times changes were short-lived because people were anxious to get back to the type of instruction and idea of school, they were comfortable with. I recently saw this anonymous quote -

**“STATUS QUO IS AROUND THE CORNER, AND IT HAS A STRONG PULL. IT WILL TAKE DISCIPLINE, COMMUNITY, COURAGE, STRONG ARGUMENTS, AND A HEALTHY DOSE OF OPTIMISM AND WONDER TO RESIST THAT PULL.”**

This really got me thinking about how important it is for a school leader to keep their vision and mission for what school can be at the forefront as they work with their school community (staff, parents, and students) to start planning for a new school year.

If you are an educator, I’m sure you’ve seen many different roadmaps and theories about how to reconstruct school systems. But, I recently landed on an e-book that was put out by the Big Questions Institute that shared nine simple (but very complex) questions to ask as you think about your restart.

Here are the questions they shared:

1. WHAT IS SACRED?
2. WHAT IS LEARNING?
3. WHERE IS THE POWER?
4. WHY DO WE \_\_\_\_\_?
5. WHO IS UNHEARD?
6. ARE WE LITERATE?
7. ARE WE OK?
8. ARE WE CONNECTED?
9. WHAT’S NEXT?

From my standpoint, if leaders worked with their stakeholders to answer these questions, they would be well on their way to seeing a better educational future for their school systems. If you are interested in learning more about these questions, you can access the free e-book at <https://bigquestions.institute/9-questions/>.

If you are a school leader and would like to engage with a thought partner to think more about how to implement change in your district, you can certainly reach out to the Principal Leadership Support Team. Our support is free! For more content like this, visit [MNEdConnect.org](https://MNEdConnect.org)



## STUDENTS MAKE “BRAINS” FOR DEVELOPMENT

Child Development/Psychology students in Lake Park Audubon High School are approaching brain development in a “hands-on” way. Students made brains from homemade play dough and labeled parts of the brain that are responsible for controlling the various centers of a child’s development and learning.

“It is essentially the first unit we cover in the class,” stated class instructor Cheryl Hogie; “I find this method has more meaning in helping students to remember that connection.” Students also complete memory challenges in conjunction with the unit to help understand how important intentional learning is for a child.

“A child should have mastered 1000 words and speak in three-to-four word sentences by age three.” stated Hogie. The emphasis on language, social, emotional, and physical development in early learning is a large part of the first unit within the class.

Additional resources obtained to help reinforce this unit were received with a \$500 grant from the Carl Perkins federal authorization funding through Lakes Country Service Cooperative of which the Family Con-

sumer Science program of Lake Park Audubon High School has an approved state and federally funded program.

A brain model, activities binder for online resources/programs, posters and a brain development theorist video were all received to reinforce this unit. The Child Development/Psychology class is also an approved Articulation Agreement Class for college credit with several two-year colleges in the state.

### **Photos:**

**Top:** students measuring ingredients for project

**Middle:** Lillie Clapsaddle, Jaycie Mikkelsen, Chloe How

**Bottom:** Bethany Vareberg, Katie Pickett



## KNOWLEDGE BOWL STUDENTS SHOW THEIR SCHOOL SPIRIT

by Susan Ward  
State Academic Coordinator



First Place Team “Wheaton Water” - From Left-to-Right: Sean Swedlund, Matthew Breach, Jakob Edwards, Ashton Ayres, and Jennifer Findlay

As everything was shutting down this fall, we became even more determined to make sure we could provide a varsity Knowledge Bowl season for our students. We knew it would not be in-person, so we set our goal on providing virtual Knowledge Bowl meets.

We offered a choice of dates for Knowledge Bowl meets and were excited as coaches quickly registered their teams for the competition. It was not long before we had 92 high school teams registered.

LCSC Co-Coordinator of Academic Challenges, Monica Thompson and LCSC Education Services Assistant,

Jolene King guided the teams through the virtual competition. Students competed as a team, but at a distance. The in-person meets were missed, but we were glad the competition could continue virtually. Student Brendan Lau-meyer of Osakis shared, “Although the year has been one for the books, the start of the Knowledge Bowl season gave me a sense of normalcy. Seeing all the other teams with the same sense of competition was a great thing to see. I am grateful that we are able to have a season. A year without Knowledge Bowl would be a school year wasted.”

Another student of Osakis, Anna Wolf said, “I felt that Knowledge Bowl helped me find something normal in this season of chaos. It felt really good to participate in something that I love to do, distance and all.”

Students and coaches are now preparing for the post-season competition which includes subregion, region, and state meets. The regular season was great, and we look forward to a terrific post-season!

# NYM Greenhouse

## Possible because of COVID

by Connie Vandermay, Media Processor and  
Jason Peralá, Building & Grounds Supervisor

There is a common expression that “every cloud has a silver lining.” While the Covid-19 Pandemic has been a black thundercloud for many, we at the New York Mills (NYM) School have been fortunate enough to see some silver.

In the Spring of 2020, Brunswick Corporation set up two metal-framed tents to help fulfill the health protocols necessary to screen employees before entering the NYM’s boat factory. As the protocols changed, Brunswick no longer needed the fabric shelters and graciously donated them to the NYM School. We decided to use the metal framework for the greenhouse.



The greenhouse idea sprouted back in the early 2000s, as NYM educators were exploring ways to bring authentic hands-on experiences to their lessons. A greenhouse seemed like a perfect addition on so many levels—especially when it came to the curriculum on horticulture. Unfortunately, funding a greenhouse was not feasible at that time. But thanks to the ever-changing pandemic guidelines, a greenhouse on the elementary end of the building is now a reality.

The greenhouse project was a true collaboration. The tent came from Brunswick, the rot-resistant base made from cedar powerline poles was donated by Lake Region Electric Company. A local sawmill cut down the poles into usable 4x6x16 foot planks. Most of the wood utilized in the project came from the old doors that were removed from the elementary classrooms during last summer’s remodeling project. And the labor was a collaboration of the NYM custodial staff and Doug Salo and his fifth-grade class.

Throughout several weeks this fall, Doug Salo worked with small groups of fifth grade students building (and rebuilding) the metal frame. Merging two small tents into one large one was one of those, “learn as you go” scenarios, said Doug. At one point, students noticed the screws were pointing out and could potentially tear holes in the



plastic. To prevent such a problem, the students took the time to flip the screws around.

Although the house itself has been complete for several months now, the fifth graders, alongside our custodial staff, are working on potting tables and a floor system that allows for water drainage. They are also researching seeds and ideas to decide what to plant. Thanks to a grant from the NYM Education Foundation, the seeds and potting soil will be paid for this year.



This project is extremely exciting for the NYM Elementary School community. Even before planting season begins, the greenhouse has provided an excellent learning opportunity for the students. This spring, the greenhouse will allow NYM elementary students the opportunity to dig into a true horticulture experience.

The young mind is like a seed; it needs fertile soil to germinate and flourish. The kind donations from the community, as well as the insight of school staff dedicated to the children’s education, is indeed fertile soil. And, interestingly enough, when the sun is at the right angle, the plastic that lines the greenhouse has a silver shine to it.



# Solar Schools Foster Learning, Leadership...and Savings



by Melissa Birch  
Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)

## Morris Area Schools: from Dilemma to Opportunity

The Plaid Pillagers, Morris Area Schools' Robotics Club, had a dilemma—fundraising—that they turned into an opportunity—solar!

According to high school robotics coach, Eric Buchanan, "We're always struggling to raise annual operating funds, so we thought, 'Why not have our team get a solar array installed and get the school's electric bill savings dedicated to the robotics team? And why not conduct a few public educational and fundraising events to get others involved? And why not make solar production data available to high school science teachers?'"

The array cost \$30,000. The team secured three grants for \$13,000, including a CERTs Seed Grant for \$7,000. Otter Tail Power's POP Solar incentive program provided \$10,000 and the students raised the rest through picnic fundraisers. A perfect storm of clean energy, community education, and young people!



## Solar Schools around the State

The Morris Area Schools are not alone. Around 40 Minnesota school districts have solar installations—over 150 sites. Solar provides a wide array of benefits for schools, including educational, financial, environmental, and resilience.

We all know that educational opportunities are schools' number one priority. Access to solar arrays lets students connect classroom learning to a real, working technology in a rapidly expanding STEM field. Equally important are the broader lessons. Pat Collins, a Chisago Lakes Middle School science teacher, expressed it well: "The much bigger question is, what are we really teaching our students? The solar panels on our school roofs teach our students to look ahead, to innovate, to think differently, to see beyond our time, to be leaders rather than followers."

The Chisago Lakes school district, which has solar installations on five of its buildings, as well as extensive community solar subscriptions, is seeing another of the key benefits of solar: financial stability. Taken together, those on- and off-site solar arrays are expected to save the district \$3 million over their lifespan. Utilities are typically the second largest expense for schools (behind personnel). The dramatic decrease in the cost of solar, as well as innovative financing options, have made school solar investments significantly easier.

But wait, did someone say environmental benefits? Yes! Nationally, it's estimated that solar on schools offsets an estimated 1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year, equivalent to the annual emissions from over 200,000 cars or the carbon sequestered by 27 million trees.

Finally, solar on schools can enhance community resilience. Schools are often the designated community shelter, so they're perfect places to combine solar and battery storage when the grid is down.

## Starting Your Solar Journey with CERTs

Is your school ready to explore solar? CERTs staff are available to walk alongside you on your solar journey! Explore some of our tools and resources at <https://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/solarschools>, or contact Melissa Birch or Peter Lindstrom directly; <https://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/staff>.



## Live, Online Tutoring available through Viking Library System Member Libraries!

by Erin Smith  
Viking Library System Director

Viking Library System and its member libraries are pleased to announce the launch of Brainfuse HelpNow™ – on demand, anytime, anywhere eLearning for all ages and levels. HelpNow™ provides differentiated learning solutions for users of diverse needs and backgrounds. Using the HelpNow™ online tool, students can communicate with live tutors for homework help, skills building and test preparation.

HelpNow™ is available free to residents of the six county Viking Library System service area (Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, and Traverse) with a library card. To access HelpNow™, please visit your library's website, click on the HelpNow logo, and enter your library card number. Find your county library's website [here](#)!

## FREE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY FOR MN EDUCATORS

### Dyslexia 101 for the classroom educator

The Reading Center's Dyslexia Institute of MN's entirely online five clock hour Dyslexia 101 course is offered for FREE for any professional working in a Minnesota school due to the generosity of their funders, including Mayo Clinic.

Dyslexia 101 is an online informational course designed to provide you with an increased understanding of dyslexia.



**Learn more about this opportunity and additional resources at [The Reading Center, Dyslexia Institute of MN](#).**

### CONTACT US

**Phone:** (218) 739-3273

(800) 739-3273 (toll free)

**Fax:** (218) 739-2459

**Email:** [communicator@lcsc.org](mailto:communicator@lcsc.org)

**Executive Director:** Jeremy Kovash

### COMMUNICATOR STAFF

#### Editors:

Jane Eastes: [jeastes@lcsc.org](mailto:jeastes@lcsc.org)

Ciera Campion: [ccampion@lcsc.org](mailto:ccampion@lcsc.org)

Nancy Valentine: [nvalentine@lcsc.org](mailto:nvalentine@lcsc.org)

#### Address:

Lakes Country Service Cooperative  
1001 E. Mount Faith  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
An equal opportunity employer

### THE LCSC COMMUNICATOR IS A PUBLICATION OF LAKES COUNTRY SERVICE COOPERATIVE.

Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) is a public, non-profit membership-based organization dedicated to providing services that help make our members successful. Originally created by legislation in 1976 as one of Minnesota's nine service cooperatives to provide services to pre-K through 12 education, we have grown and expanded to provide high quality, innovative programs to cities, counties, other governmental agencies, and non-profit entities. Together, we build relationships that help make all members and communities stronger.

*Together...We Achieve.*

### STAY CONNECTED.



ATTRIBUTION FOR SOCIAL MEDIA: VECTREZ.COM