

PROMOTING WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

Inclusive Workforce Employer Designation

by Dan Wenner

RMCEP Regional Planner

The Inclusive Workforce Employer (I-WE) designation was created to recognize and promote inclusive employers, reduce regional disparities, and bring awareness to the value and methods of increasing workforce diversity. The I-WE designation is awarded by the Regional Workforce Alliance (RWA). The RWA is made up of business, government agencies and community-based organizations from the 26 counties of Northwest Minnesota.

Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (RMCEP), a Lakes Country Service Cooperative member, is a member of the RWA and played a key role in developing the I-WE. According to Vicki Leaderbrand, Executive Director of RMCEP, "The purpose of the I-WE is to recognize and promote employers who are committed to supporting a diverse workplace." The I-WE is awarded to employers who:

- Include a commitment to an inclusive workforce in their mission or values statement.
- Conduct or plan to conduct an organizational assessment of diversity and inclusion.
- Conduct or plan to conduct staff and leadership diversity and inclusion education.
- Commit to contributing resources to building an inclusive community.

The I-WE designation informs job-seekers that an employer is committed to creating and maintaining a culture which is welcoming and supportive of workers from diverse backgrounds. Jobseekers can apply for work with I-WE designated employers confident of an inclusive workplace. As a result, individuals of diverse backgrounds will be encouraged to seek employment or better jobs with I-WE employers.

For employers, the expectation is that the I-WE designation will expand their pool of available talent by increasing their ability to hire and retain workers of diverse backgrounds and cultures. Inclusive employers will also serve as examples to other employers on the benefits of committing to a diverse workplace. The initiative will reduce bias and raise awareness of the value of interacting with populations experiencing disparities in employment practices. The result will be growth and utilization of the region's workforce, thus increasing the prosperity of all in the area.

To date, eight employers have achieved the I-WE designation including Delta Dental of Minnesota, Essentia Health, Central Lakes College, Rural Minnesota CEP, Goldmark Properties, West Central Initiative, DyCast Specialties, and CHI-St Joseph's Health.

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GOVERNMENT —
Electronic Edition

www.lcsc.org

A FEW WORDS FROM LCSC Deputy Executive Director, Jane Eastes



We'd all hoped that with a "pause" for the holidays, 2021 might start off a little more predictably than 2020. I think we've all left that idea behind! The signs of hope are brighter though, and we are holding on to them as much as possible.

At LCSC we are looking forward to once again opening our doors to small groups to use our meeting facilities. We can host up to 20 people with social distancing in our conference room and up to 10 in our classroom space. Like you, we are mastering online communication tools which have opened many options, and will become part of our 'new normal' after COVID.

COVID-19 is far from the only challenge we are experiencing as communities. I encourage you to read Dan Wenner's article on the Inclusive Workplace Employer (I-WE) designation, a timely reminder of the resources and opportunities available for the diversity and inclusion work. The LCSC Leadership staff have committed to work individually and as a group for equity, inclusion and diversity using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) as a growth tool for intercultural competence. If your workplace is interested, we would be happy to share regional resources, and we thank those of you who have helped us along our journey!

We started the new year partnering with West Central Initiative to host two great community conversations online. The first was a Legislative Kaffeeklatsch, an early morning, but lively discussion, with the newly elected and re-elected regional legislators. [A recording of the event can be viewed here.](#) The second regional conversation took a deep look at a proposal from retired Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Alan Page and President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Neel Kashkari. The proposal works toward amending the state Constitution, guaranteeing every child a civil right to a quality public education.

Wait – the President of the Federal Reserve Bank and a retired Supreme Court Justice are leading this major educational initiative? Yes!

They have put great thought into the large disparities in Minnesota across the board – incomes, job opportunities, housing, healthcare – and concluded that education is a root cause of these disparities across systems. In their words, "An education system that leaves behind large groups of its citizens with little chance for upward mobility is a crisis – one that demands fundamental transformation." To start that transformation, they are proposing to re-write our current constitutional educational provision written in 1857, while slavery was legal in much of America.

Do you agree that amending the educational language is the most effective place to start? It's a necessary and spirited conversation that Page and Kashkari have sparked across the state, and we love it when our entire community can participate. If you missed the regional presentation online, [you can view a recording of the event here.](#) You can find the [proposed language and the Page-Kashkari explanation here.](#)

Together...we Achieve.

CPC Spotlight

Get Bobcat through Cooperative Purchasing Connection!



For more than 60 years, Bobcat Company has built compact equipment that helps you work more efficiently and effectively. Bobcat Company's partnership with Cooperative Purchasing Connection provides Bobcat products, deeply discounted and available with streamlined purchasing.

For more information please contact
Julia Dangerfield
at 218-282-5289 or julia@purchasingconnection.org



For more information please visit www.purchasingconnection.org

The employer application process includes:

- Completing an online survey to provide basic information.
- A contact by the regional Workforce Strategy Consultant, Chet Bodin, who shares the I-WE toolkit, checklist, and worksheet with the employer.
- A determination by the employer as to whether it meets the four criteria for certification or is developing processes to meet the criteria.
- Completion of a survey by the applicant which is used to determine the qualification for I-WE designation.
- Determination by the Regional Workforce Alliance as to whether criteria has been met to award the I-WE designation.

The I-WE designation was created in partnership with the Community Workforce Inclusion Council (CWIC) of the Fargo-Moorhead area, whose mission is to champion a robust and diverse workforce that meets the needs of regional employers. According to Ms. Leaderbrand “Employers with the I-WE designation will be promoted to job seekers throughout the Northwest Minnesota’s 11 CareerForce locations”

For more information about the RWA and the I-WE visit <https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-workforce-employer>. You may also contact Dan Wenner, Regional Planner, at rmcep.com or Chet Bodin, Department of Employment and Economic Development, at chet.bodin@state.mn.us.

LAKE AGASSIZ REGIONAL LIBRARY IS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF SERVICE IN 2021

by Hillary Stevens

Lake Agassiz Regional Library Marketing Coordinator

Lake Agassiz Regional Library (LARL) is celebrating an important milestone in 2021: 60 years of service to the community! LARL is a public library system which operates 22 locations serving the residents of Becker, Clay, Clearwater, Mahanomen, Norman, Polk, and Wilkin counties.

This year, the library will offer a series of events in honor of this anniversary, including a virtual event featuring Midwest native plant expert, Alan Branhagen.

This virtual author event with plant expert Alan Branhagen will be streamed live Tuesday, March 9th at 7PM on the Lake Agassiz Regional Library Facebook page and will feature advice from his book “The Midwest Native Plant Primer.” As Director of Operations at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Alan Branhagen has extensive experience in utilizing native species in a variety of landscape designs to great effect.

Attendees can ask Alan questions about the use of native plants in their landscape spaces at the end of the presentation. This event is made possible thanks to funding from the Minnesota Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund. A recording will be available at larl.org/athome after the presentation.

Visit larl.org/60years to discover more LARL’s 60th Anniversary celebrations which will take place throughout the year.



photo: Alan Branhagen, midwest native plant expert

LCSC Welcomes Siira and Mortenson to Board of Directors!



by Ciera Champion
LCSC Communications Specialist

Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) is excited to announce the addition of two new members to their 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.

Johansen, who began serving on the LCSC Board in 2015, has contributed significantly to the vision of LCSC. "His keen eye and thoughtful questions have led to many positive results for LCSC, our operations and financial stability," said LCSC Executive Director, Jeremy Kovash.

In regard to outgoing Board member Huebsch, Kovash shared: "Doug Huebsch has provided outstanding leadership to the LCSC Board since 2012. Doug's business acumen, entrepreneurialism, and ability to bring people together have made the LCSC Board stronger. His vision for programming has been especially noted in procurement and services for our city and county members."

The positive impact made by these outgoing board members is tremendous. In looking toward the upcoming year, Kovash states: "We are pleased to have both Suzanne Wing and Judith Moeller maintain their seats on the LCSC Board as well as excited to add Andy and Kurt to the Board. We look forward to learning from them and the knowledge and expertise they will provide. They will have an opportunity to stamp their mark on LCSC, our programs, and services to our members."

For more information on the programs and services provided by LCSC to schools, cities, counties, government agencies or non-profit organizations, please visit our website at www.lcsc.org.

Cindy Rogholt
Transit Alternatives Otter Express
Operations Manager - Retiring

Rogholt provided a missing connection between the employees, ridership, and the director at the transit site. She will miss the people she has worked with over the years, but is looking forward to sleeping in and getting retirement projects done around her home.

Rogholt has many memories of her time working with the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA), and still believes that transit is an important part of her community. "Without transit, many people wouldn't have a mode of transportation to get to where they need to go. We have been able to get people who have no other means of transportation to jobs, school, medical appointments, hair appointments, groceries, etc.," Rogholt said.



Kayla Sullivan
Transit Alternatives Otter Express
Incoming Operations Manager

Although MPTA and Transit Alternatives are both sad to see

Rogholt go, they are eager to welcome Kayla Sullivan as the new Operations Manager who will be overseeing the drivers and dispatch supervisor. Sullivan worked for Transit Alternative's parent company, Productive Alternatives, in the Human Resources department. She is excited to look for changes that can positively impact her department and employees

and has already set a few goals. "I will look at various avenues to ramp up our social media and marketing. I will review our routes and look for more efficient alternatives. I also will be working with Daryn, our Transit Director, on our fleet and review what is current and what our future needs are." Sullivan states.

Not only is Sullivan looking forward to how implemented changes will have a positive impact on the department, but she is also excited to see them take effect at the community level. Sullivan shares, "We have a large elderly and low-income population, and in our area, transit is an extremely important low-cost mode of travel."

Learn more at:
Otterexpress.com
Productivemn.org



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director
AESA Executive Council

Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) Executive Director Jeremy Kovash has been elected to serve on the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA) Executive Council. Kovash will represent AESA's central region. AESA is a professional organization serving educational service agencies, like LCSC, in 45 states.

Learn more about AESA here: <https://www.aesa.us/about/executive-council.cfm>



Lisa Truax
Procurement Solutions Coordinator
NIGP Board Member

LCSC's Procurement Solutions Coordinator Lisa Truax has been elected to serve as a Board Member on the Minnesota Chapter of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP) Board. Lisa will be chairing the Professional Development Committee.

Learn more about NIGP here: <https://mnnigp.org/announcements.php>

CAPLP's NEW BUILDING TO HELP MORE PEOPLE AND CHANGE MORE LIVES

by Lori Schwartz
CAPLP Executive Director

CAPLP-Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership is proud to serve the community from their new building! For over fifty years, CAPLP has served Wilkin County residents with the mission of eliminating poverty by empowering families and engaging the community. While services have always been provided, CAPLP has relocated multiple times throughout the years. CAPLP has always sought a permanent location to serve the community.

The new building project started in 2018, when a board member noticed the property was for sale just across the street from the Wilkin County Courthouse. The location was perfect for serving the community and plans to build came shortly after. The construction of the building began in June 2020 and was completed at the

end of October 2020. The CAPLP team moved in on November 16, 2020. The building also features an additional office to house a community partner.

CAPLP's new building houses Self-Sufficiency Advocates who work to help families and individuals overcome barriers to live their best life. Services include helping obtain and maintain housing, application assistance, resource navigation, landlord mediation, food insecurity assistance, help finding and maintaining transportation and communication options, MNsure insurance navigation, tax preparation, and assistance meeting basic needs (especially for those affected by COVID-19).

The new building also houses an Early Head Start Home Visitor. Head Start offers nurturing and supports for the healthy growth and development of each child in the context of family, culture, and community. CAPLP's Early Head Start works with pregnant moms and children from birth to age three. Home-Based services eliminate the transportation barrier and allow families to receive services in the comfort of their own homes. Currently, due to COVID-19, all visits are virtual and via telephone. Home-Based Early Head Start provides parenting resources, help with behaviors and sibling rivalries, learning supports, and assistance with ensuring basic needs are met within families.

CAPLP believes in serving the whole family and many families work with multiple programs to overcome barriers and move from barely surviving to fully thriving. For the health and safety of CAPLP staff, those we serve, and the community, the new CAPLP building is currently not accepting walk-ins. CAPLP is offering virtual and phone appointments to continue providing needed services. If you, or someone you know needs services, please call 218.643.2888 or text 218.443.2195. You can also email info@caplp.org for assistance or more information.



PARENTING TIME CENTERS

Offers New Service

by Emilyn Haugen

Someplace Safe Director of Parenting Time Centers

Someplace Safe Parenting Time Centers is excited to announce that our staff have been certified in the Nurturing Parenting Program. When Courts or Human Services are referring families, they now have the option of selecting if they would like the Nurturing Parenting Program to be part of the services referred families receive.

The Nurturing Parenting Program is a trauma-informed, family-based program designed for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Through the Nurturing Parenting curriculum, certified Parent Coaches from Someplace Safe Parenting Time Centers work with parents to help them learn positive and caring nurturing skills.

The program is competency-based. Each referred parent will complete an assessment at the time of implementing this as a part of their supervised parenting time services. Throughout parent's participation in this program there are competencies designed to measure when parents have acquired a new understanding and demonstrate new skills that represent nurturing parenting strategies and practices.

For more information on Nurturing Parenting, please view their website at: <https://www.nurturingparenting.com/>



Nurturing Parenting®
Established 1983



CITIES & COUNTIES:

FREE Facilities Evaluation

from LCSC Business Partner ICS

Today, more than ever, healthy buildings are critical for our communities. When is the last time you asked, "are my facilities adapting to meet new needs?"

Lakes Country Service Cooperative continues to support the efforts of our member organizations to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of your building and the people they serve. Through our trusted partner ICS, we are happy to offer you a complimentary facility evaluation session now through April 2021.

ICS's experienced and knowledgeable building experts will provide feedback on your progress in adapting to current needs using healthy building principles. You will gain an overview of your building's status and receive guidance to ensure your facilities are able to serve your communities well.

Ready to start planning? LCSC also negotiated a 10% discount with ICS to incorporate your facility needs into a detailed budget planning strategy that will help you form a comprehensive 10-year facility plan.

Gain confidence of knowing your operations and facility planning are keeping pace with the needs of today and into the future.

For more information, reach out to Karen Klein at karen.klein@ics-builds.com or 651-728-1880, or LCSC's Manager of Health & Safety Rick Brynildson, rbrynildson@lcsc.org or 218-737-6555.

Take steps to improve the health of your employees. We'll help you get started!

Because the majority of adults spend much of their day at work, either in person or virtually, the workplace plays a big role in helping your employees be well.

We'll help you create a culture of health at work. It's fun, easy, and proven effective. Join our free learning collaborative and get strategies that can increase employee engagement, retention and job satisfaction.

We'll help you customize a wellness initiative that's right for you.



SHIP workplace wellness is making an impact



9 out of 10 workplaces that teamed up with Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) said their wellness efforts advanced due to SHIP

Contact us to learn more. Our next learning cohort will begin in late March.

Karen Nitzkowski, PartnerSHIP 4 Health Worksite Wellness Coordinator
Direct: 701-371-9644 / knitzkowski@gmail.com



www.partnership4health.org



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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.

