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**EDUCATION —**  
*Electronic Edition*

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## Longtime Early Childhood Leader **Beth Achter** Recognized

By Linda Vukelich  
*MNAFEE Professional Development*

### *The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education(MNAFEE) Presented the Award in Honor of Lois Engstrom, Founder Figure in Minnesota's Early Childhood Professional Field*

**T**he Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) presented the Award in Honor of Lois Engstrom, Founder Figure in Minnesota's Early Childhood Professional Field St Paul, Minn., August 5, 2021 – The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education announced the Lois Engstrom Leadership Award winner in September. The award was created to recognize an individual who has made dynamic contributions to advance the goals and principles of parent education, Early Childhood Family Education and/or early childhood programming in public schools locally and throughout Minnesota.

Beth Achter was chosen as the winner of the Lois Engstrom Leadership Award for 2021. Ms. Achter is an exemplary leader and educator with Lakes Country Service Cooperative, located in the Fergus Falls, MN area (formerly West Central ECSU). Her career has always been full of children! It evolved from an early childhood teacher in Colorado and North Dakota and owner of her own program in Fergus Falls in the 70s and 80s. In 1984 Ms Achter became a part time regional ECFE Coordinator for West Central ECSU. Lois Engstrom assisted and encouraged Ms. Achter in helping about 20 districts plan and develop their new ECFE programs. Fergus Falls hired her that same year to plan and develop their new ECFE program.

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- Beth Achter*

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### **ABOUT THE Lois Engstrom Leadership Award**

Lois Engstrom was instrumental in the design, development and statewide expansion of the public school Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program for all families with children from birth to kindergarten and their parents. She provided wise and inspirational leadership for this and other family and early learning initiatives including School Readiness over 25 years in her position at the Minnesota Department of Education. After retirement she shepherded founding of the Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) and helped build it into the organization it is today.

#### *The Winner of the Lois Engstrom Leadership Award:*

- Is a current or past member of MNAFEE.
- Has five or more years of demonstrating strong leadership in the field of family and early education, particularly as it pertains to parent education, Early Childhood Family Education and /or early childhood programming in public schools in Minnesota.
- Shows a career-long commitment to the field of family and early education, particularly as it pertains to parent education, Early Childhood Family Education and /or early childhood programming in public schools.
- Has made a significant impact on the lives of young children, parents and /or families, and /or professionals in the field.
- Has had a statewide impact through their efforts to improve the lives of children, parents and /or families, and /or professionals in the field.

The individual selected for the award is announced at the Annual Family and Early Childhood Education Conference in mid-April which was held virtually this year.

*Ms. Achter will be recognized at the MNAFEE August 5 Board Meeting.*  
MNAFEE | 2738 Evergreen Circle, St. Paul, MN | 651-278-4241 | [MNAFEE.org](http://MNAFEE.org)

By the time of her retirement from Fergus Falls in 2008, ECFE, School Readiness, a United Way funded Child Care Visitor Program and other grant programs reached parents and children through 15 teachers and assistants. Some of those grant programs included classes for teen parents, a Music and Movement class for child care providers from Bremer Foundation, and a toy lending library through collaboration with Bremer Bank. She continues her work today with Lakes Country Service Cooperative serving many school districts within nine counties and working with early childhood and family education staff.

Ms. Achter's reach goes beyond the families and children as she helps to support and develop staff to move early childhood education further. She is a true advocate for high quality early

education and values the important relationships that are built from it. Melissa Amundson, a staff member and a nominator of Ms. Achter for the award says, "Beth inspires us to not only think of children and families in our classroom but to think of the larger picture and to get involved in local and state initiatives to promote and move our profession forward."

In Ms. Achter's words: "Relationships are the key to success in any profession. This is especially true working with parents and young children. I think the most significant impact early childhood educators can have on young children is to help them develop a sense of trust and security and they are valued for "who they are". I believe this is also true of parent educators. When parents receive information and support in a trusting

environment, they are encouraged and gain strength. Children are the responsibility of everyone and families deserve our support when raising their children. I believe we must serve the "whole child" in the context of their family and community. We must allow children to be children and we must provide developmentally and nurturing environments where they can grow and flourish."

When notified of the award, Ms Achter said, "I am honored to be recognized by MNAFEE whose members are recognized as leaders in our field. To receive it in the name of Lois Engstrom is humbling. This award is not just for me. I share it with the dedicated teachers, coordinators, school administrators and my employer." ■



# 2021 TCOE

## *Award Winner*

Moorhead High School's  
**Jeff Schneider** Wins Outstanding  
Educator of the Year

The Minnesota State Transportation Center of Excellence (TCOE) is proud to sponsor annual awards to educators, advocates, supporters, and industry partners, for their outstanding contributions to the field of transportation-related education. Award winners are nominated by their peers, and recipients of these awards are selected at a regular scheduled meeting of the TCOE Awards Committee. Our committee includes a variety of representatives from industry, administration, and instructional staff.

TCOE is honored to grant Jeff Schneider the Outstanding Educator of the Year award. This award celebrates educational and instructional excellence in the field of transportation teaching and learning.

Jeff has always had an interest

in creating, constructing, and improving things. It started with his Lego City in the late 1980's and has progressed into a passion for teaching students about rewarding careers in trades and industry. He has been teaching at Moorhead High School for 15 years and has taught classes in many disciplines across the trades, with a special enthusiasm for Power Equipment Repair and Welding. He is active in his district as a member rights representative and department chairperson and makes time to coach Girl's & Boy's Swimming and Diving, SkillsUSA, and the Supermileage team.

Jeff doesn't just teach welding and power equipment repair curricula, he understands the value of sharing amazing opportunities for students in the trades by having specialists and guests regularly visit his classes. These range from the Armed Forces to

Trades Unions, and those days give students the opportunity to interact with people that work in their field which, in turn, allows the students to really think about their future career choices. Jeff works tirelessly to improve the chances of success for all students and has been a leader at Moorhead High School in showing that a skilled trade career can be a great way to make a living.

"He is one of the best teachers at our school and approaches each day with a passion and purpose that is second to none. His enthusiasm for his students, the trades, and their success is infectious. You cannot be near him and not get excited about something!" - Colleague. ■

*View the full '2021 TCOE Award Winners Announced' article by TCOE Project Coordinator, Cassidy Jelen [here!](#)*



# Science IN THE World



By John VanKempen  
WCA High School Science Teacher



**T**he Echinacea Project is a team of researchers made up of students from local high schools, college students from all over the United States, science teachers, and ecologists who study local prairies in Douglas and Grant counties, mostly focusing on *Echinacea Angustifolia*, commonly referred to as the Purple Coneflower.

Together, the scientists investigate the consequences of habitat fragmentation in the tallgrass prairie. The project conducts research to better understand the biology of plants, insects, and prairies and how fire can be used to enhance prairie plant species and various bee species. The size of the group varies from eight, to as many as fifteen researchers. The Echinacea Project has been researching prairies locally for more than 25 years, so they have some extensive, accurate data for both plants and insects (specifically bees). The researchers live together in local communities in rented facilities and have enjoyed getting to know the local people, the area, and celebrating in local festivals on the weekends.

This year the team includes local high school students Laura Beld from Morris Area Schools (MAHS), Kennedy Porter from West Central Area (WCA) School and Emma



Kennedy Porter (left - class of 2022 from WCA) is doing an internship with the Echinacea Project researching prairie plants and insects in Douglas and Grant Counties this summer.

Reineke from Alexandria High School (AHS) and high school teacher John Van Kempen from WCA. Van Kempen says, "It's an unbelievable opportunity for our students to be actively involved in relevant research happening right outside their backdoors." There have also been several

other local students from previous years involved in the project. The Echinacea Project in 2019 established 12 plots at West Central Area Schools Environmental Learning Prairie. The plots are planted with the native Purple Coneflowers and WCA students, in collaboration with The Echinacea Project, will assess how these plants and other native species respond to fire over the upcoming years. WCA students and the Echinacea Project work in conjunction with planning burns and gathering data from the plots to determine how a spring prairie fire may have different effects than a fall fire in the plots, comparing that to the unburned plots. Porter says of her experience, "It's fun and I've met some really great people from all over the country. It's been a great experience doing relevant, meaningful hands-on science in the prairies where I live."

A bonus to this great project has been the sharing of information and data with our local students, preschool-aged to graduation. Members of the research team have presented their findings with preschoolers and their families, and middle school and high school students, bringing to the forefront how important our local habitat is and how it needs to be continually studied. ■



# Real Life History in DC

By Nate Wood  
WCA High School Counselor  
and Leader of the Trip

Every two years the juniors and seniors of WCA have the chance to take a trip to Washington, DC. This normally happens in the spring, but like everything in our lives, COVID threw some wrinkles into the plan. Luckily the trip was still able to go on as intended, just in June, not March! The group left the scenic view of the Barrett fireworks in order to be at the airport for a 5:00 am flight. This pre-dawn flight allowed the group to arrive in DC with a full day of touring ahead!

Day one highlights included an initial stop at the Air Force memorial followed by visiting the WWII memorial. The students then went on a short hike to the Washington monument. Due to COVID many indoor attractions remained closed but the students were able to see the outside of the Holocaust museum and Ford's Theater (the location of the Lincoln Assassination). The afternoon

continued to be busy, with an opportunity to visit an extremely large souvenir shop (and explore the WaWa next door for coffee) and concluded with a walking tour of the tidal basin, visiting the MLK, FDR, and Jefferson Memorials.

Day two picked up right where the first day ended, with many sights and experiences to be had. The first stop was a visit to Mt. Vernon, where students explored the many facets of the first president's personal home. This took most of the morning and the afternoon opened with a photo op on the Capitol steps. There was time for a quick ice cream break on the National Mall, then the group was off to the newly opened Eisenhower and WWI Memorials. The day wrapped up with another photo opportunity outside the White House and a somber walk along the Vietnam Wall. The tired

students finished their long day watching a beautiful sunset from the Lincoln Memorial.

After walking about 10 miles on Day two the students were grateful for a bus ride to the north of Pennsylvania, as Gettysburg was on the docket for Day three. This tour was extremely informative and helped the students visualize one of the deadliest days in American history. One of the most interesting parts of this tour was learning how the 1st Infantry Unit from MN fought to save the battle for the North. The rest of Day three was fairly relaxed, as students checked out the Iwo Jima memorial and had some free time at the National Harbor.

Day four was the final day of the trip. Students began the day visiting Arlington National Cemetery. This is always a very moving experience and this day proved no different. We observed as a funeral was going on and then the students witnessed the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The rest of the day entailed traveling back to MN, arriving in the evening with sore feet and many new memories and experiences! ■





## Vendor Promotions and Resources Page!

CPC vendors frequently provide information on grants, product specifications, and pilot programs to our members. We understand so much information can be hard to consume all at once. To help meet that need, CPC has launched the CPC Vendor Promotions and Resources page!

Our Vendor Promotions and Resources page is a hub for CPC Alerts, Vendor provided information, and for information on promotions that go above and beyond the regular discounts associated with the CPC Contract. The page will be updated regularly so that you have a one-stop-shop for the latest catalogs, information, pilot programs, and promotions.

The Vendor Promotions and Resource page is accessible by going to

1. [PurchasingConnection.org](https://purchasingconnection.org)
2. Hover over Meet Our Vendors
3. Click on Vendor Promotions and Resources

Or go straight there by clicking this link: [CPC Vendor Promotions and Resources](#)



(left to right) Lisa Truax, Mary Juliot, Julia Dangerfield, Melissa Mattson, Lori Mittelstadt, Jerome Evans, Jane Eastes

## Cooperative Purchasing Connection Wins National Award for Relationship Excellence

Cooperative Purchasing Connection has received a national award for relationship building through the Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies (AEPA).

Cooperative Purchasing Connection (CPC) is the trusted cooperative contract procurement partner for education communities, municipalities, and nonprofits. Through AEPA and in partnership with other agencies, CPC maintains a portfolio of competitively solicited contracts that Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota schools and organizations have come to rely on for service, relationship, and great value.

AEPA is a national cooperative of

education purchasing professionals from 29 states, managing national contracts with vendors in dozens of buying categories.

Each year AEPA members vote to recognize outstanding contributions from and performance by AEPA member states and vendor partners.

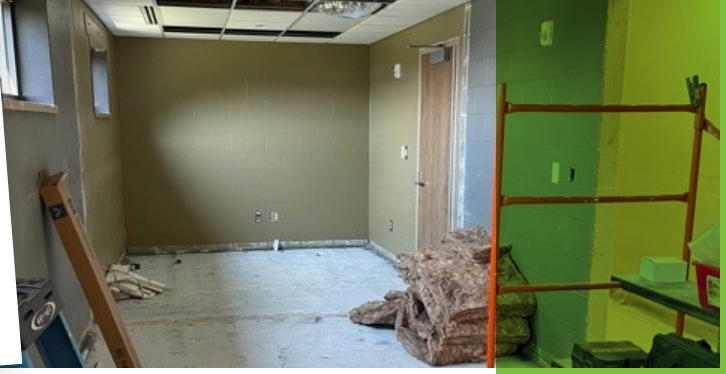
The CPC team received the award for Relationship Excellence at the AEPA Spring 2021 Annual Meeting, held virtually on April 20, 2021.

The Relationship Excellence award recognizes excellence in stakeholder engagement strategies that proactively support opportunities for co-discovery, intimacy, trust-building, collaboration, brainstorming, solution development, and other activities that support the mission of AEPA. ■

### Contact the CPC team for more information:

- [Info@purchasingconnection.org](mailto:Info@purchasingconnection.org)
- 888-739-3289
- [www.purchasingconnection.org](https://www.purchasingconnection.org)





## Lakes Country Academy Fergus Falls

# REMODEL

Given our role as a service cooperative, the Lakes Country Academy (LCA) continues to strive to meet the needs of our member districts. This includes working closely with our regional director of special education to design specific programs for students with special needs.

The SUN program (Students with Unique Needs) supports students with cognitive, communication and behavioral challenges. Research indicates that students with these needs require a structured quiet space, with specialized materials to make progress within a school setting. At times, our districts are unable to support this level of service. This is when a separate program can be very helpful for our schools, our families, and our students.

Over the past couple of years, the LCA in Fergus Falls was unable to meet district needs by not

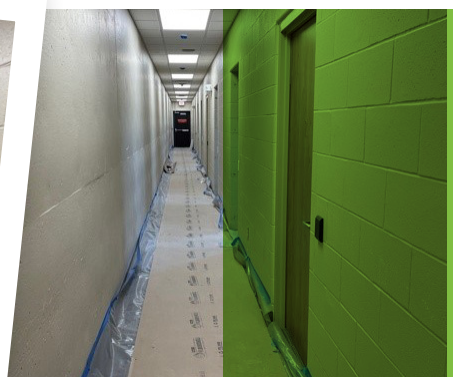
accepting some student referrals to the program due to inadequate space, design, and staffing. The LCA in Alexandria supports students needing a SUN program but transporting students for over an hour was not an option.

Looking to better serve our districts and students, discussions were facilitated with our member districts. Within these discussions, our member districts indicated that they would like us to consider options and the possibility of designing a new program in the Fergus Falls area.

After looking at different options, the member districts preferred to expand/remodel our current site in Fergus Falls prior to adding any other new programs/buildings in other locations, as it proved to be the most efficient and effective use of resources. We joined classrooms to create a larger space, created a separate entrance to support our more vulnerable students, and now have the materials and training required to support our staff.

Completing this construction grants the LCA the ability to accept students with unique needs. We now have the space, safety measures, specialized materials, and highly trained staff available to serve students and districts and develop the SUN program. ■

*[Learn more about the LCA here!](#)*



By Allyson Kuehn  
LCSC Special Education Director

LCSC Business Partner

# OnToCollege

Shares



## 4 Tips

to Find Scholarships  
for College



Source: OnToCollege



When it comes to planning for college, it can be overwhelming to know where to start, especially when it comes to scholarships. Everyone encourages you to apply for and earn scholarships, but how do you find the right scholarships to apply for?

The blog provided by OnToCollege walks you through some tips to find scholarships and places to start!

1

Start with  
your guidance  
counselor

2

Look to past  
scholarship  
recipients

3

Ask college  
admissions officers

4

Use online  
resources

Earning scholarships and merit-based aid can truly make a difference in your college experience. The scholarships you earn will decrease the amount you have to pay or borrow for school, setting you up for success later in life as well.

But none of that is possible without a good GPA, test scores, and participation in extracurricular activities. Invest the time and energy during high school to keep up your grades and to score well on the ACT or SAT. Those will pay dividends when it's time to apply for merit-based scholarships for college.

College admissions can be complex, but you don't have to do it alone. John Baylor and OnToCollege are here to help. ■

[Visit this blog to learn more!](#)

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