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Regional News, Views and Information

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#### EDUCATION

Electronic Edition Open the full issue www.lcsc.org

### The Minnesota Education **Policy Fellowship**



Front row: Jason Borglum, Courtney Henderson, Erin Raab, Bailey Sutter and Ariel Keller Back row: Todd Van Erp, Derek Grahn, Josh Haag, Josh Nelson, Tom DeGree, Staci Allmaras, Melissa Matson, Kelly Anderson, Khrisslyn Goodman, Jane Eastes and Kristi Hastings

ight area Fellows were selected to participate in the Rural Cohort of the Education Policy Fellowship. Participants were carefully chosen throughout LCSC's nine-county region in West Central Minnesota. The Minnesota Education Policy Fellowship is a joint partnership between The Center for Policy Design and LCSC.

Fellowship members include:

- Kelly Anderson, High School Principal at Hawley High School
- Randy Bergquist, Superintendent at Osakis Public Schools
- Derek Grahn, Business Education Teacher at Breckenridge High School
- Josh Haag, Secondary Principal at Moorhead Area Public Schools
- Kristi Hastings, Attorney & Partner at Pemberton Law
- Brad Hoffarth, High School Principal, Osakis High School
- Melissa Mattson, Director of Administrative Services at Lakes Country Service Cooperative
- Todd Van Erp, Principal Leadership Support with the Western Lakes Regional Center of Excellence

Fellows recently traveled to St. Paul to participate in policy work at the capital aimed at education. They met with Non-Partisan House and Senate staff, Committee Administration, Governor and Lieutenant Education Policy Advisor, and former State Legislator, Jen Loon.

Troy Haugen, Coordinator of the Rural Fellowship Cohort, and LCSC Director of Career & College Readiness said, "Our goal for the policy fellowship is multi-faceted; to increase capacity in our school leaders in understanding the education policy landscape state and nationwide, to see stronger intersections outside the immediate school ecosystems, and to functionally shift systems not serving our students in the best way for their future."

Cohort members will participate in a 16-session program focused on state and federal public policy development and the leadership necessary to influence public policy development.

The Fellowship program runs from October 14, 2021, through October 13, 2022.



Leaning into a New Challenge

The 2021/22 Morris Public School year unexpectedly began with Shane Monson as the new Interim Superintendent. "I felt as though the plane was taking off, and I was outside, running alongside the plane," described Monson, of how he felt when he jumped into the role of Interim Superintendent this past August 23rd. Monson agreed to take the leadership position when then-Superintendent Troy Fergusson had a sudden family emergency and decided to resign.

Not a stranger to Morris School District, Monson served as the Elementary Principal in Morris for six years before receiving this leadership role. Before serving as Elementary Principal, he worked as an elementary teacher and coach for Braham Area Schools.

When Monson stepped into the new role, he picked up where Fergusson left off with staff negotiations and worked with a local task force to continue the development of a school district strategic plan focused on three specific areas:

1

The hiring and retention of staff to adequately support 1,100 plus students.



Ensuring resources are available to support the mental health of students and staff.



Supporting the diversity and equity of students and staff.

Now well into the 2021/22 School Year, Monson said, "we are at a place where we are successfully managing Covid protocols for the safety of students and staff while prioritizing the best ways to support our students." With all the additional stress the pandemic has created for students and families, Monson understands paying attention to mental health needs is critical for the well-being of the school district. This concern prompted Monson to provide

online mental health resources for the students and staff to assist with anxiety and mental health needs. "It has also been beneficial for students and their families to get back into the routine of music concerts, sporting events, and academic challenges," said Monson. This year marks the first time the Girls Tennis Team competed at State, and the Morris Boys Basketball team celebrated when team member Jackson Loge tied the 1996 record of 1,938 points scored. Loge tied the record in 106 games on December 8. Coincidentally, Loge's father, Kevin Loge, held the 1996 record also at 106 games.

As Interim Superintendent Monson and I toured the newly renovated facility, it was not uncommon to hear the enthusiastic greeting of "Mr. Monson, Mr. Monson!" from students walking to lunch or their next class. One of our stops included a visit to the classroom of the Genius Team. Monson admitted in his 27 years of working in education that the technology available to students and the speed at which learning happens for students has significantly increased. This was evident as we visited with Technology Coordinator Austen Miller. Miller leads the Genius Team and works with nine area students to provide live streaming for sporting events, concerts, and more. If you were a parent, fan,



or family member who could not attend graduation, school concerts, and sporting events in person but watched them from the comfort of your home, you have the Genius Team to thank for that great option. The objective of the Genius Team classroom structure is to create a

learning environment for students where they can practice the skills of video production and determine if this is a potential career option for them before they enroll in college courses.

As we continued to tour the Elementary facility, I asked Monson what keeps him motivated to continue to serve as the Interim Superintendent; Monson responded, "positive relationships are critical to a strong organization. I regularly ask myself; how can I personally and professionally impact positive relationships in our organization? I do

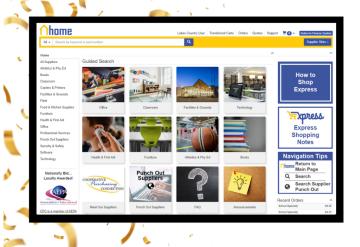
this by intentionally filling my bucket by putting the people and activities in that bucket that keep me motivated. A way I do that is by walking the school halls, seeing the kids, and all the activity that fills these buildings."

While Monson serves in this capacity, he is navigating through new territory and uses his past experiences while leaning into all the new challenges this leadership role provides. Delivering administration to a school district and managing this process during a pandemic is a unique learning experience for everyone.

If you want to learn more about Morris Public Schools and their educational excellence, reach out to Interim Superintendent Shane Monson at smonson@morris.k12. mn.us. You can also visit their website at morris.k12.mn.us.

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## **Lakes Country Service Cooperative Receives Funding for the**

## Program

#### Brandon Evansville ECFE Pilots the Program

#### **Deb Berry**

is passionate about providing learning opportunities for children and it shows through her work with the Brandon Evansville Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program and serving as the Lakes Country Service Cooperative's Raising a

Reader Early Literacy Coordinator. "Our local children are the people that will be taking care of me in the future in my community and I want them to be able to read and thrive," said Berry.

When the opportunity became available to invest time and resources into the Raising a Reader program, Berry looked to find local funds to make this program possible. With the help of First Security State Bank in Evansville, Berry applied for a matching fund grant through the LA Amundson Ohana Foundation in the amount of \$30,000. Berry then searched for local matching grant partners. To date she has local matching dollars totaling \$27,000. Matching grant supporters include Evansville Historical Foundation, Douglas County Early Childhood Initiative, West Central Initiative GEERS Grant, United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties and the State of Minnesota through a school learning recovery grant. Lakes Country Service Cooperative serves as the fiscal host of the grant and program affiliate.

The mission of the Raising a Reader program is to engage caregivers in a routine of book sharing with their children from birth through age eight to foster healthy brain development, healthy relationships, a love of reading, and the

literacy skills critical for school success.

Raising A Reader's Theory of Change is simple. They believe that IF...

- 1. Children drive the process and the Red Book Bag and books become a favorite toy;
- 2. Program Implementers learn how to train parents in "read aloud" strategies

and early brain development;

- **3.** The book bag delivery system is turnkey: a simple sustainable routine is easily managed in several diverse settings;
- 4. Parents learn and engage in "read aloud" strategies and develop a regular book sharing routine with their children; Families get to know and use their local library;

THEN, children will benefit from healthy brain development, family bonding, and increased literacy skills – all proven elements for lifetime success! Children will enter school with a love of books and will be motivated and ready to learn.

Berry is planning to launch the program in February of 2022. Caregivers of the children participating in the program will receive training to help establish a routine for



reading in the child's home. Berry stated, "I help the parents to see it is more of a book cuddle time not just reading a book to your child

I help them understand they can do this." Each child receives a Red Bag which contains three books. The books distributed are preselected by the Raising a Reader program. The bag belongs to the child, and the books are their responsibility. A Red Bag exchange date is scheduled at each child's childcare or ECFE program and they will rotate the books for the fourteen-week program.

Earlier in 2021, Berry coordinated a test roll out. Four-year-olds, infants and toddlers participated with a total of 25 families. Following the test program, a survey was completed with the participating families. The data indicated children increased their time looking at books, increased the number of times they asked to read a book with a caregiver, and increased individual behaviors such as more pages turned, and asked questions about the story.

Berry stated the program will operate for four years under the current funding. The initial cost to purchase the red and blue bags and books is \$50 per child. As books receive wear and tear with use, they are re-stocked.

Upon the 14-week program completion, children will participate in the Blue Bag celebration at the local library. They will receive a tour of the library, a Blue Bag containing books, a library card or information about the Book Mobile. The family will also receive information about the local school library. All families receive a survey at the end of the program with questions tracking the outcomes of improved reading skills to report back to the grantors.

"I am from a literate family, said Berry, and I know the difference it makes when families work with their children on reading skills. I have worked with families where reading was not a priority, and I can see the difference in the children." A significant benefit of this program is that it gets the entire family involved. Grandparents, parents, siblings, and friends can all participate in the reading routines in the home and bond with the child and help to develop their reading skills.

If you would like more information about the Raising a Reader program you can contact Deb Berry at dberry@b-e.k12. mn.us. You can also visit the Raising a Reader website at raisingareader.org. TEACH STUDENTS TO
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#### For more information contact

Megan Peterson mpeterson@lcsc.org Monica Thompson mthompson@lcsc.org





#### Breckenridge Teacher Earns MBITE Emerging Teacher of the Year Award

Going Above and Beyond for His Students



Breckenridge High School Business Education teacher Derek Grahn earned the Emerging Teacher of the Year award at the Minnesota Marketing – Business – Information Technology Educators Fall Conference held Friday, Oct. 8 in Arden Hills, Minnesota.

The conference welcomed educators in the above fields to join professional development workshops and breakout sessions during the annual conference and recognized several deserving teachers during the Professional Awards Session.

Grahn said he discovered he had won the award before the conference, though he doesn't know who nominated him. "It's nice to be recognized for a lot of the stuff we're able to do, especially for an outstate school ... I think it says a lot about what the school and the community have done to support the business department here," Grahn said. "I don't think a lot of the stuff we do is possible without their support."

Grahn said he is in his sixth year of teaching at Breckenridge High School. Before Grahn, the school had been without a business teacher for roughly four years.

He pulled the program out of its hiatus by introducing business technology

courses, starting a DECA chapter, reopening the school store, and networking with area businesses.

Even in his first few years of teaching, Grahn has made a lasting impact on his students. As an educator, some of his proudest moments are when former students tell him the discussions and lessons they learned in Grahn's class prepared them for their futures. One year, 17 high school seniors signed up for a retirement account before graduation. "They might not always realize the importance of the stuff we're talking about today, but when they're able to reflect on it and see their growth, that's something pretty special," he said. Not only does he help his students prepare for the woes of adulthood, but he also makes it fun. Grahn maintains an active classroom based on the real world. In Grahn's marketing class, the students are currently organizing a video game tournament.

Breckenridge Public Schools Superintendent Brad Strand said the award is well-deserved for a teacher like Grahn, who keeps quality learning as his top priority and challenges his students.

"Derek is a teacher that continues to go above and beyond for his students," Strand said. "He promotes a growth mindset for all students in career and technical education."

As for the future, Grahn has no plans to slow down his improvements and innovations to the department as for the future. He wants to continue building up partnerships between his students and local businesses.

Grahn is in the process of developing a sponsorship program. Students would be able to work with an industry they're interested in pursuing post-high school, attending work conferences and field trips, and getting to know what the career looks like in the real world. He is also interested in setting up a career fair in the spring, depending on the status of the pandemic.

"I put in a lot of time and effort to make sure that my students are prepared for success. We've had a great opportunity to have support throughout the community for kids to be able to work on things," Grahn said. "In general, I'm just passionate about education. I love working with the kids every day, and I think that shows as far as what the kids get out of it, too."



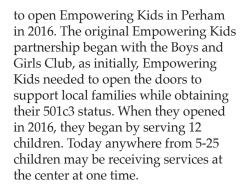
# Skills are Built From Little Moments

### Creating Developmental Individual Relationships

or the parents of a new infant or toddler, noticing something is different with their child may be as small as unusual babbles, repeating words, lining up toys, avoiding eye contact, or wanting to play alone.

For Christi Stoll, General Manager of Empowering Kids, and her young son, Mike, each transition into a new activity created anxiety and a setting for Mike to have what Christi terms a "meltdown." "Meltdowns occurred 10-15 times a day for Mike," said Christi. Christi felt strongly that Mike should be having more moments of contentment, play, and little boy giggles. She knew she needed to find help for Mike after being asked not to return to a childcare facility because "he cries all day." Christi looked to

find services in her local community and region and found services were not available specific to what Mike needed. An Autism support group became available in Perham, and there she met Kim Nelson. Kim was also seeking advice, ideas, and support for her grandson Levi. Fast forward, with Kim Nelson's leadership and serving as the founding supporter of Empowering Kids, they worked together



Tiffany Schroeer serves as the Executive Director, with ten full-time and six part-time employees. Their focus is on three main areas of support for the children that walk through their doors daily while they are in the process of building a fourth area of focus to better serve individuals across their lifespan:

#### • Mental Health

Their outpatient mental health services are for children and families. They serve individuals from childhood through adulthood to help them cope with various stressors that impact their mental health.







#### • EIDBI

Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Intervention services offer the medically necessary assistance and support to people under 21 with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or related conditions. This program allows individuals to receive anywhere from 10 to 40 hours of services per week.

After School Age Program
 Empowering Kids works to provide individuals that have autism a chance to learn skills and meaningfully engage in interactions with others in the clinic, on outings in the community, and through their interests.

• Employment Program

Roughly 60 percent of people with autism have an average or above-average intelligence, yet 85 percent are unemployed. Empowering Kids received a two-year grant to purchase curriculum and create opportunities for learning and practicing employment skills.

During floor time, teachers are working to have Developmental

Individual Relationships. "Floortime is where Developmental Individual Relationships happen," said Executive Director Tiffany Schroeer, "This is where skills are built from little moments. Children need relationships and need to feel connected. Skills such as learning ways to support your body feeling regulated, engaging in a backand-forth interaction, problem-solving with another person, and engaging pretend play are learned during Floortime."

Autism support is essential for early intervention and ensuring children grow up with the social skills and programs to support their everchanging and growing needs. The vision for Empowering Kids is to provide a life of hope, happiness, dignity, and purpose for individuals with autism and their families.

Success stories are what all parents and the staff of Empowering Kids want for their families. One example listed below provides an example of how the work of Empowering Kids has made a difference in this family's world.

"Empowering Kids has helped my

child in so many ways it is hard to put it in just a few words. I have a child who didn't want to express himself before Empowering Kids verbally. Now that same child is laughing while telling us what is funny, sings songs to his little sister, will identify and yell "square" in the grocery store and make sure we are all looking, tells me colors, and says "hi" to others." - Megan Graten, an Empowered Parent.

Empowering Kids is excited to be moving to its new location in January of 2022. The new site is located at the Hub Project in the former Perham High School location. Here Empowering Kids will expand their services and have a more significant impact on children in the region.

If you would like more information about Empowering Kids and their services. Please email Empowering Kids at info@ empoweringkidsperham.org or call 218-346-2322. You can also visit their website at www. empoweringkidsperham.org to find more information about their services.



Lakes Country Service Cooperative Hosts Round One of the

2021/22

Knowledge Bowl at Concordia College



Testing Students' Recall, Problemsolving, and **Critical Thinking** Skills

oncordia College's Knutson Campus Center was full of energy when over 500 students from West Central Minnesota participated in round one of the Senior High Knowledge Bowl. The Minnesota Knowledge Bowl is coordinated by Lakes Country Service Cooperative's **Education Services Team of Susan** Ward, Academic Challenges Coordinator – Monica Thompson, Co-Coordinator of Academic Challenges, and Jolene King, Education Services Assistant. This team coordinates the many

logistics of hosting the Minnesota Knowledge Bowl for participating schools across Minnesota and ensures all scores are accurately tracked and reported.

Minnesota Service Cooperatives' Knowledge Bowl competitions are interdisciplinary academic contests designed for grades 7-12. Students compete in written and oral rounds during the contest by answering questions related to all areas of learning typical of secondary education programs. The questions test students' recall, problemsolving, and critical thinking skills.

Sources: Susan Ward, Academic Challenges Coordinator - Monica Thompson, Co-Coordinator of Academic Challenges and Jolene King, **Education Services Assistant** Author: Mary Phillipe - LCSC Communications Generalist

#### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2021, **RESULTS**

Listed below are the top five rankings from each division.

#### A Division

Participants: Ashby, CGB, Rosholt, Rothsay, Ulen-Hitterdal, and Wheaton

- 1. Ashby
- 2. CGB
- 3. Rosholt
- 4. CGB
- 5. Rosholt

#### **AA Division Participants**

Participants: Breckenridge, DGF, Hawley, Minnewaska, Morris, Osakis, and Perham

- 1. DGF
- 2. Hawley
- 3. Minnewaska
- 4. Hawley
- 5. DGF

#### AAA Division Participants

Participants: Detroit Lakes, Fergus Falls, Hillcrest, Fargo Davies, Fargo South, and Fargo North

- 1. Fergus Falls
- 2. Fargo North
- 3. Fergus Falls
- 4. Fargo North
- 5. Detroit Lakes

#### MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021, RESULTS

Listed below are the top five rankings from each division.

#### A Division

Participants: Battle Lake, Brandon-Evansville, Campbell-Tintah, Chokio-Alberta, Hancock, Underwood, New York Mills

- 1. Chokio-Alberta
- 2. Chokio-Alberta
- 3. Hancock
- 4. New York Mills
- 5. Battle Lake

#### **AA Division**

Participants: Barnesville, Lake Park Audubon, Parkers Prairie, Pelican Rapids, West Central Area

- 1. Parkers Prairie
- 2. West Central Area
- 3. Barnesville
- 4. Barnesville
- 5. Parkers Prairie

#### **AAA Division**

Participants: Alexandria, Moorhead, Park Christian

- 1. Park Christian
- 2. Moorhead
- 3. Park Christian
- 4. Alexandria

Senior High rounds two and three Knowledge Bowl meets will take place at Zion Lutheran Church located at 202 E Summit Ave, Fergus Falls the following dates.

- January 5, 11, 12, 19, 25, 26 and
- February 2, 9, 14, 15, 16, 23 and

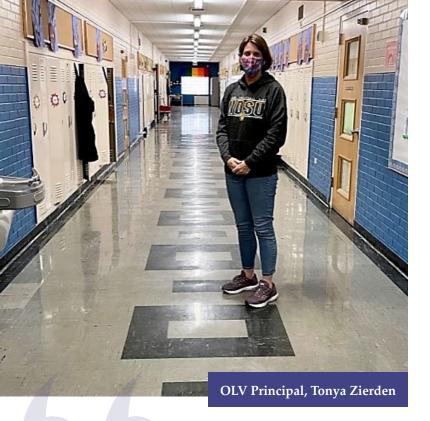
Postseason Knowledge Bowl meets

- Sub Regions: March 14, 17,18 at Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Fergus
- Regions: March 22 at LIFE Church in Fergus Falls.
- State Knowledge Bowl: April 7 and 8 at Cragun's Resort in Brainerd.

Want to learn more about the Minnesota Schools Knowledge Bowl? You can email Susan Ward at sward@lcsc.org or visit our website at www.lcsc.org/Domain/47







# Our Lady of Victory School Founded in 1956

"It was not in my plan to be the Principal at Our Lady of Victory's (OLV) Elementary

**School,"** said Tonya Zierden about choosing to serve in this capacity, "but sometimes, your path is not up to you." Now, eight years into her role as Principal at OLV Elementary, Zierden is proud of the exceptional learning environment provided at OLV School.

From the outside, it's hard to imagine ten classrooms, a gym, a lunchroom providing well-balanced meals, a music room, a staff lounge, administration offices, and more are housed in this building, in addition to student enrollment averaging between 95-116 children in kindergarten-6th grade. Eight years ago, registration filled one preschool class of 20 children; now, there are three classrooms of preschool children. OLV School also offers on-site reading support using the Barton Reading and Spelling System for students who show dyslexic tendencies. "Though the building may be small, there is so much more going on at OLV School than what meets the eye," said Zierden.

With increased enrollment and

programming, OLV is outgrowing its current building. The school's infrastructure has significant needs and continually needs updating as funding allows, like many schools built in the 1950s. Finding additional space and updating for modern technology can be challenging. All classrooms are outfitted with SMARTboards, 1:1 devices, and Wi-Fi capacity throughout the building; however, some aspects of the building are more difficult to modernize. For example, Wi-Fi connection remains a challenge as the signal must travel through the thick steel of the lockers and concrete walls.

Fortunately, OLV has a new grant opportunity to help address some of its space challenges. Zierden was excited to announce recently that OLV has been offered a challenge grant from the Schulze Family Foundation for \$25,000. OLV must first raise \$25,000 to receive the matching funds. If these funds are secured, Zierden hopes to use funds to address some of the space limitations and update some of the infrastructures and provide more STEM education curriculum.

With growing preschool enrollment and limited space, Zierden knows expansion is inevitable. "We are working with a feasibility group to continue the conversation on updating and expanding the school. We will need to consider the cost of supplies and the long wait time for ordering and delivery." Strategic planning for OLV runs on a seven-year cycle, and they are in year six of completing the current plan.

OLV School was also the recipient of State and Federal Covid Relief dollars – Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) dollars. This emergency support has made a significant difference in the ability to continue operating during the pandemic while meeting safety protocols. OLV also receives funding through the national hot lunch program, Title1 and II services, textbook aid, and nursing services, in addition to covid relief funding. This support helps OLV provide many of the services offered at public schools.

The pandemic has introduced many challenges to families and schools alike. Zierden consistently works toward operating safely and sensitively to support the beliefs and feelings of all the families who have enrolled their children at OLV School.



When asked what keeps her up at night, Tonya replied with three main concerns:

- 1. How can the school best support students who struggle with problems outside of their control like academics, mental health, or social-emotional concerns?
- 2. Our teachers and staff have always been a significant part of what makes our school great. How can we continue providing caring support for our students while ensuring we support our staff and care for their well-being?
- **3.** How can we best manage the concerns and feelings of our students'

parents while we build on the feelings of community within our faith family.

Every school is experiencing the effects of the pandemic on the mental health of children and families. OLV staff and administration work daily to build the children's confidence and emotional well-being in their school. When discussing the social-emotional needs of their students at OLV, it was a feeling from staff and administration that each student receives significant individual attention. Social and emotional learning has always been a part of their school's faith curriculum, and teachers work each day to meet

students where they are at in their emotional and social well-being.

In this pandemic, private and public schools are navigating through uncharted territory and discovering their strengths and challenges in their everyday operations and policies.

If you want to learn more about Our Lady of Victory School in Fergus Falls, their educational excellence, and how they face daily challenges, reach out to Principal Tonya Zierden at tzierden@folv.org. You can also visit their website at ffolvschool.org.





Dave Bahr 507-254-6858 dbahr@hillercarpet.com



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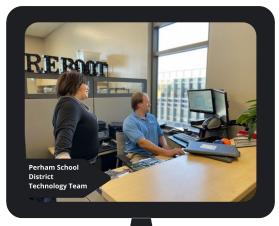


#### Lakes Country Service Cooperative

## **Technology Solutions**

akes Country Service Cooperative's (LCSC) dynamic team of IT professionals provide affordable, high-quality hardware and software solutions for members.

Many local governments and nonprofits find they don't have the internal expertise or resources to effectively manage their IT infrastructure and support the demands of their organization. LCSC offers IT services and support that is affordable with high-quality network, hardware, and software solutions.



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- Firewall Installation and Maintenance
- Digital Signage Design and Support
- Technology Helpdesk Ticket System



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