The SW/WC Service Cooperative is using innovative technology to meet the demands of a shortage of Speech Language Pathologists in rural Minnesota. With the use of high quality web based conferencing software and hardware, students are receiving speech therapy services in an efficient and effective manner. In response to trying to meet the needs of member districts, a Speech Pathology Telepractice was piloted in 2007-08, with Bismark State College providing services to the ACGC school district. Observing and evaluating the process, we decided it was a service we could develop with a similar program to provide speech and language services to more districts finding this position difficult to fill.

Josh Sumption, Manager of Information Technology, researched the software and hardware requirements necessary for this program and contracts were established with four school districts.

We hired Deborah Moorse to fill this position. Deb is an ASHA certified Speech-Language Pathologist. Presently, Speech Pathology Telepractice services are being provided in Canby, Clarkfield, Belview Learning Center and Marshall. At each of the sites, a paraprofessional is available to assist students with the login for the session, redirection or revision of the lesson, and assistance with the technology if needed. The speech-language pathologist provides therapy sessions that are structured in the same manner as face to face sessions. Lessons are introduced and taught through the headphones and microphone with the visual reinforcement on the computer screen. The high quality of hardware allows for very precise instruction and discrimination of articulated sounds and language skills.

There are very few limitations to the type of communication disorder that can be served in this manner. Students with cognitive delays, language disorders, articulation disorders, autism, and stuttering are being served through the Speech-Language Telepractice. The caseload in each of the districts varies, with students in preschool through high school being served.

Speech-Language Telepractice continues on page 4
I find spring and fall my two favorite times of the year! In fact, I don’t know if I could live in a place where there are not four distinct seasons! Be sure you take the time to get outside and enjoy our Minnesota spring; the “dog days” of summer will be here soon enough!

This spring has been extremely busy! One of the projects we have been heavily involved in is a flexible learning year request to MDE. This request is being made in collaboration with more than 20 of our school district members. The purpose of the flexible learning year request and proposal is to provide a flexible learning year predicated on the needs of our students.

“Coordination of learners and the learning year”...makes sense doesn’t it? This project, with months of discussion, is moving forward with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm! Ideally, a multi-district proposal will be presented to MDE in the next few weeks. The request is made in an effort to enhance instruction by adding instructional days to the front end of the school year, thereby providing more classroom time prior to state and national exams; coordinating instructional days between a number of schools, including K-12 and post-secondary institutions, thereby coordinating the sharing of staff, resources, and technology for delivering instruction; and coordinating multi-district staff development activities through common in-service days, thereby enhancing our schools efforts to provide quality staff development programs. This is just the beginning of enhanced shared services as we find more opportunities to collaborate with our members!

Coordination, collaboration, and education.....all things the SW/WC Service Cooperative has been about for more than 40 years! The flexible learning year discussions have created a renewed awakening and excitement around the possibilities and promise our schools can bring to their children and communities. Enjoy the spring and look toward the fall, as a number of our member schools continue to find ways to enhance the educational program for all of our learners!
Health Cost Management Program
Off To A Good Start

By Kari Bailey, Health Cost Management Coordinator

The School Pool Advisory Committee approved funding for site-based Health Cost Management Programs in October 2008. To date, we have 15 school groups that have utilized these funds with 1509 health insurance contract holders impacted by a site-based Health Cost Management Program. At their April 2009 meeting, the School Pool Advisory Committee approved funding to continue the health cost management program for the 2009-2010 school year. Site Wellness Coordinators will receive weekly WELCOA Health Bulletins, quarterly Culture of Health newsletters, as well as additional assistance as needed in the development/implementation of a site-based program.

If you are interested in forming a Wellness Committee and participating in a site-based Health Cost Management Program, please contact Kari Bailey, Health Cost Management Coordinator, at kari.bailey@swsc.org, or 507-537-2292.

Flu Shots Provided

By Kari Bailey, Health Cost Management Coordinator

Beginning in May, we will be working with groups to assist in providing flu shots to their employees, spouses, and dependents covered under the group’s insurance pool. Groups that decide to offer the FluStop program may choose a vendor from the list of pre-authorized BCBS FluStop vendors that will set up flu shot clinics at your designated locations. The cost of the flu shot would be paid out of each pool members claims account without cost to the covered employee.

A flu shot is up to 90% effective in preventing the flu in healthy adults, according to the CDC’s report. Because the flu is contagious even in its early stages, all it takes is one affected person to pass the virus to others on the job. The more employees that get flu shots, the better the chance of maintaining a productive workplace through the flu season. Employers save an average of $60 in lost work time for every employee vaccinated, according to an article in the New England Journal of Medicine.

If you have general questions regarding the FluStop program, or if you would like to offer this benefit to your employees, please contact Kari Bailey, Health Cost Management Coordinator, at 507-537-2292 or kari.bailey@swsc.org.

Reminder:

For those of you that participated in the Health Cost Management Program in 2008-2009, your Activity Reimbursement request forms are due on or before Friday, June 5th, 2009. To be eligible for reimbursement, the District will need to submit the outcomes/results of each program, a list of expenditures for how the Program Development Dollars were spent, and all expenses directly related to Program Activities you are requesting reimbursement for. Proof of payment (invoices, receipts, etc) for all expenses (Program Development and Programs) should accompany the request.

If you have questions about the reimbursement process, please contact Kari Bailey at 507-537-2292 or kari.bailey@swsc.org.

Physical Activity at the Office

Most of us have sedentary jobs, and work takes up a significant portion of the day. Below are some ways to increase your physical activity during the work day:

1. Brainstorm project ideas with a coworker while taking a walk;
2. Stand while on the phone;
3. Walk down the hall to speak with someone instead of using phone/email;
4. Park in the furthest spot in the parking lot;
5. Join a fitness center. Work out before or after work or at noon;
6. Schedule exercise time on your calendar and treat it as any other important appointment;
7. Start a recreation league at your agency;
8. Form a sports team to raise money for charity events;
9. Take the stairs instead of the elevator;
10. Take along a jump rope in your suitcase when you travel.
Speech-Language Telepractice  (Continued from page 1)

Administrators have observed sessions, and commented that the sessions are very direct and intense, with a high number of responses elicted throughout the session. Students adapted very quickly to using a computer monitor for their instruction, and relationships were formed very similar to face to face sessions. In addition to the web based instruction, face to face sessions are provided twice per month in each of the sites. The IEP dictates the amount of speech-language therapy provided to each student. The speech pathologist is involved in the assessment, IEP development, and meetings related to the IEP. “Providing speech/language therapy services to students through the Telepractice has been a very exciting career challenge” states Deb Moore. After a long career providing face to face therapy, helping to develop this innovative program has been challenging and rewarding. The support of the IT department has been instrumental during this first year of service. Each school participating in the Speech Language Telepractice program needs to have high speed internet or a T-1 line; a dedicated computer with a 12-17 inch monitor, and a web cam and headset. The American Speech Hearing Language Association has approved the use of Speech-Language Telepractice to provide services in schools and hospitals. This program can provide services to schools with very large caseloads to help ease the caseload size on the therapists in the district, or to provide services where a speech-language therapist is not available. The use of web based instruction has unlimited potential to provide a variety of educational opportunities to schools. For more information on the Speech-Language Telepractice contact Teresa Ostlie at the Montevideo Service Center at 320-269-9243 or teresa.ostlie@swsc.org.

2009 Gathering of Champions Logo Winner from Windom

By Shelly Maes, Manager of Member Services

The votes are in, and the logo for the 2009 Gathering of Champions has been chosen! Congratulations to Carissa Sargent, age 12, from Windom Area Middle School, Windom, MN.

Sargent’s original design will appear on promotional and event materials for the Gathering of Champions, which is held annually at Nickelodeon Universe®, in the Mall of America. Sargent will also receive a scholarship for her entry and will be acknowledged at the Gathering of Champions. This year’s event is scheduled for Aug. 7.

The Center for Academic Excellence (CAE) received 68 entries from August to December. All entries were posted to the CAE web site for voting. More than 200 votes were received throughout December and January.

Last year nearly 4,000 people attended the Gathering of Champions to celebrate academic achievement in Minnesota’s students. The Gathering of Champions is an annual statewide event honoring students who are named as Academic All-Stars by officials in participating schools. The honored students may include top academic achievers, students who have made a dramatic improvement in their academic work or achievement, and the top finishers in academic challenges and competitions at a regional or higher level endorsed by the state’s Academic League Council.

For more information on the Gathering of Champions and the Center for Academic Excellence, visit: www.mncae.org.
Nominate Your Students As Academic All-Stars

By Shelly Maes, Manager of Member Services

It is time to nominate your students as Academic All-Stars! Minnesota’s teachers, principals, and academic challenge coordinators have an opportunity to provide testimony to the outstanding teaching and learning taking place in our schools through the selection of 2009 student “Academic All-Stars.”

All Minnesota K-12 teachers, principals and academic challenge coordinators are invited to designate their students as “Academic All-Stars,” who are then eligible to attend the 2009 Gathering of Champions. This free annual celebration and recognition of student excellence is sponsored by the Center for Academic Excellence and its educational partners.

Who Should I Designate as an Academic All-Star?

- We recommend you consider the top 2-5% of your students from the following three categories:
- Students who are consistent top academic performers
- Students who have shown significant improvement in achievement or have overcome barriers to academic achievement
- Students who are local, regional, or state champions in an Academic League challenge. The names of Academic League challenges are found in the Reach for the Stars catalogue, which is available online at www.mncae.org – click on “Reach for the Stars”.

Please Note: Students do not need to attend the Gathering of Champions event to be designated as “Academic All-Stars.”

How Do I Nominate Students?

- Nominate your students online today – www.mncae.org – click on Gathering of Champions. The nomination deadline is June 27.
- After you submit your nomination, you will see a link for a PDF “letter of notification.” Please print this letter of notification and distribute it to the students you have named as Academic All-Stars.

When and Where Will the Gathering of Champions Take Place?

- Ten hourly recognition ceremonies begin at 9 a.m., with the last ceremony at 6 p.m.

Academic All-Stars attending the event will receive:

- A certificate of achievement and congratulations on stage from dignitaries
- Commemorative items and prizes honoring their selection as an “Academic All-Star”
- Discount coupons for rides in Nickelodeon Universe®, food at EATS Marketplace, Moose Mountain Adventure Golf and Underwater Adventures Aquarium
- Special Guest Star Program discounts at 50 retailers, restaurants and entertainment venues in the Mall of America

Details subject to change — updates will be posted at: www.mncae.org – click “Gathering of Champions”.

For More Information: Please contact the Center for Academic Excellence at cae@mncae.org, 507-389-2461.
From the Desk of the Director of Administrative Services

By Luther Heller, Director of Administrative Services

Reducing Energy Costs to Schools

Over the past year, we have run several articles in The Review and in the SW/WC SC Member Newsletter relative to the potential impact of high energy costs on a school district’s budget, the need to find a way to maintain some budget certainty with regard to energy costs and the partnership between the SW/WC SC and Summit Energy Services to create a cooperative venture designed to take advantage of potential opportunities for schools to purchase their natural gas from alternative suppliers at prices typically lower than the traditional utility companies.

During the past heating season, natural gas traded at a four-year low and energy costs did not generate the level of discussion that they have in previous years. Despite the year’s lower utility prices, however, we did have four districts participate in the inaugural year of the natural gas program. Summit Energy and the SW/WC SC are working on some revisions to the program that will provide a greater opportunity for current program participants and for those districts not currently participating in the program, who would like to become program participants, to fix a portion of their energy costs at a rate similar to or below today’s rates.

Under this program modification, a district would continue to stay on the same rate they are currently on with their utility provider and will continue to purchase gas from that provider, as in the past. At the end of each month, a comparison will be made between the monthly gas cost with the price that we have guaranteed and generate either a credit (if the utility price was higher) or an invoice (if the utility price was lower) to the district for the difference times a pre-determined usage estimate. We can offer this product due to the strong relationship between the utility’s monthly pricing and the prevailing monthly market pricing. Another advantage to this program is it will allow districts to include all of their district’s gas meters and not just the largest, as in the current transport program. Expect to see more on this in the next couple of months.

Planning and Training

The SW/WC SC continues to provide, at no cost to a member school district, assistance in the planning process and training opportunities. Over the past two years, we have worked with 10 districts, providing services ranging from facilitating a formal strategic planning process to providing modified planning and training opportunities to meet a specific need within a district, i.e. restructuring of grade levels, configuration of the district office, board member training and new board member orientation.

Regardless of whether we look towards a traditional strategic planning process or a modification to meet a particular need, it will be to lead the participants towards thinking more strategically. In this manner, the participants will begin to assess the future effects of outside influences as they identify and solicit input from key stakeholders and work on a plan for moving the district forward.

26th Annual Business Conference

By Darin Jensen, RMIC Manager

District office staff had the opportunity to participate in the 26th Annual Business Conference held in Marshall on April 7, 2009. The conference provided a wide range of breakout sessions which included topics covering student reporting, financial reporting, and HR/Payroll information, as well as utilizing technology to better streamline office duties. Presenters for the conference included MN Department of Education staff, SW/WC SC staff, private corporation experts specializing in actuarial valuations for GASB 45, online payment security, money management, and legal advice on electronic information storage, to name a few. This year’s conference included 173 participants from surrounding school districts. Participants had the opportunity to learn what’s new, what’s hot, and ask specific questions as they pertained to their own districts. Participants also used this time as a valuable networking opportunity to learn from each other and avoid “reinventing the wheel”. The SW/WC SC staff would like to thank all of the participants and presenters for making this year’s conference a great success.
Governor Tim Pawlenty’s most recent budget plan proposes an aid shift for Minnesota School Districts. This shift in aid will mean that school districts will have less monthly cash coming in to pay bills and fund payroll. A bill has also been introduced to mandate that school districts implement shared services and pool their purchasing power. The Minnesota Tax and Aid Anticipation Borrowing (MNTAAB) cash flow borrowing pool provides school districts with a proven method for cash flow borrowing to meet these two proposed requirements.

In 1993 the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), in cooperation with the regional service cooperatives, created the MNTAAB statewide cash-flow borrowing pool. The idea was to provide a cost-effective and administrative friendly alternative to stand-alone cash-flow borrowing. The program was designed to create economies of scale for school districts and result in lower net borrowing costs for the vast majority of districts. For over 15 years, MNTAAB has been successful in this regard by keeping upfront costs reasonable and by selling competitively in the bond market with a large, pooled issue resulting in low interest rates.

MSBA and the Service Cooperatives are proud of their sponsorship of MNTAAB, which clearly has benefited Minnesota school districts. The pool has demonstrated over time that most school districts have been able to borrow less to achieve their net cash-flow target, pay lower interest costs on the debt, realize a lower net cost per day for cash-flow borrowing and process the transaction with less administrative time. In addition, the MNTAAB pool provides a convenient Guaranteed Investment Contract (GIC) option, which is 100% collateralized, convenient and safe. When you are planning for cash flow borrowing in 2009, remember that focusing on issuance costs alone tells only part of the story.

Client representatives from Springsted are prepared to assist school clients to execute pooled and individual cash flow borrowing transactions. For more information about the MNTAAB statewide cash-flow borrowing pool or other cash flow borrowing needs, please contact one of the following client representatives at Springsted.

DeeDee Kahring, 651-223-3099 or dkahring@springsted.com
Don Lifto, 651-223-3067 or dlifto@springsted.com
Jim Schmitt, 651-223-3028 or jschmitt@springsted.com

Nelson Auto Center offers SW/WC Service Cooperative members discounted pricing on passenger cars, vans, SUVs, trucks, severe duty (law enforcement) and other fleet vehicles. Some fleet discounts are as high as $6,000 off the dealer invoice!

The agreement with Nelson Auto Center offers competitive pricing, convenience, and flexibility. They offer Ford, Dodge, Chrysler, Pontiac, Chevrolet, Buick, Lincoln, Mercury and GMC vehicles all at a reduced cost.

You can purchase a vehicle from Nelson Auto Center and they can arrange to have your local dealer complete the delivery. Both purchase and lease options are available.

To discuss your vehicle needs and obtain a quote, call Gerry Worner at Nelson Auto Center.

Nelson Auto Center Contact
Gerry Worner
800-447-3013 ext. 8866
218-998-8813 (fax)
gerryworner@nelsondodgegme.com

SW/WC SC Contact
Shareen Neumann
888-739-3289
218-739-0326 (fax)
shareen.neumann@swsc.org
The Pipestone Service Center has been continuing this year with supporting our member districts in implementation of Response to Intervention. (Minnesota sometimes refers to this process by another term: SRBI or Scientific Research-Based Intervention). This support comes in the form of providing the AIMSweb system as a data gathering and analysis tool, holding workshops, employing a consultant, and furnishing ongoing support to district teachers and administrators. Districts have been able to make individual choices about which subject areas and grades to begin with. Several districts have added RtI intervention specialists to their staffs, and school psychologists are also playing critical roles in assisting with implementation.

Cosmos Learning Center

For the past two years the SW/WC SC has provided Setting IV services to students in Glencoe. As we have re-evaluated the needs of students, the needs of school districts, and the space available, the decision was made to move the programs to the school building in Cosmos, MN.

The programs currently service two groups of students:

- Students with a cognitive impairment benefiting from a customized staff-to-student ratio. This program provides customized space, environment, and strategies not available in most school districts.
- Students with emotional and behavioral disorders which significantly interfere in school programming may be eligible. Individual and group social skills are an important component of this program.

The Cosmos Learning Center will service students in kindergarten through grade 12. Most of the students attend the program full-time, but many students attend part-time as they transition back to their resident district. Any school district is able to send students to the Cosmos Learning Center, if the student demonstrates needs appropriate for this environment.

The Cosmos school building provides facilities for the special needs students serviced by SW/WC SC. One classroom will be a studio apartment allowing students the opportunity to work on functional living skills. This building will allow students to have separate classrooms and bathroom space away from general education students; yet allow for a traditional school environment optimal for student learning.

Watch for additional information about these programs in the future. If you have questions, please contract Sarah Mittelstadt at 320-905-8011 or sarah.mittelstadt@swsc.org.

Staff Inspired by Marty at Redwood Area Schools

Wednesday, March 4 was beyond a normal day for the Redwood Area School District. It wasn’t a holiday or a snow day... but rather a district-wide staff development day. Professional speaker, V.J. Smith traveled from Brookings, South Dakota to present an amazing story and lesson, to all of Redwood Area’s staff members.

As students were dismissed for the afternoon, all staff personnel headed to the Redwood Area Community Center for what most thought to be just another professional development presentation. Instead, Mr. Smith spoke about The Richest Man in Town, a true story of a wonderful man named Marty who...
Willmar Transition Assessment

By Darwin Dyce, Physical/Health Disability & Traumatic Brain Injury Consultant

Willmar middle school and high school special education staff were looking for a better tool to assess transition needs of students who had unique transition planning needs. They found numerous tools for students with significant cognitive challenges but not the kind of tool they wanted for higher functioning students. They decided to design a practical data driven tool that would work for them. Utilizing grant support and hard work the Willmar Transition Assessment (WTA) was created. Below is a brief description of some of the WTA’s key features.

Target population: Students (low average to average ability) beginning process of looking towards life after HS.

How tool is utilized: Specific transition areas are targeted for staff and student to complete as well as parents. Example: Information is collected based upon a rating of independent, with assistance, doesn’t do or no experience. The data provides the numerical information to be used in the evaluation process. Teachers can use a hand scoring sheet or an excel spreadsheet to compute scores. The second piece, a Transition Interview, collects information in a narrative format utilizing a student interview. Students complete the Transition Interview yearly. For this segment each of the IEP 5 transition areas are targeted. The last question in each section asks what the student wants to do after HS in relation to the specific transition areas.

Impact on student participation in IEP and transition planning: The WTA interview provides students who may be new to the concept of transition a user friendly tool to look towards life after high school while increasing student participation. It engages students prior to IEP planning by helping them identify where they are at this time in life planning as well as what needs to take place to plan for successful futures. It helps students place their interests on a map of what needs to take place in school as they work towards their hopes and dreams. This tool is available to other teachers, with the stipulation that those who use it provide credit to the authors. Design team: Tammy Knapper, Brenda Jergenson, Amber Johannes, Jill Wotzka, Mary Sawatsky, Lori Vadnais, Wendy Nelson, and Laurie Holtz.

For more information contact: Tammy Knapper at Knappert@willmar.k12.mn.us.
From the Desk of Teaching & Learning Services

By Bob Braun, Director of Teaching and Learning Services

NWEA Services

Each Region has certified facilitators to consult with you on your NWEA needs. To receive these services through the Minnesota Service Cooperatives, you need to have had a Stepping Stones Training prior to the consultation.

The Minnesota Service Cooperatives has two trained NWEA facilitators who can provide you with Stepping Stones to Using Data and Climbing the Data Ladder. These trainings will be provided to you at a reduced cost. Please contact your Regional Facilitator for further information: Michael Koranda (507)537-2245 or Michael.koranda@swsc.org.

School Improvement Project

School Improvement Project is pleased to announce a partnership with Collaborative Learning Inc., the leader in curriculum improvement. This partnership allows our member schools to take advantage of discounted pricing on the Curriculum Mapper tool as well as professional development opportunities. Even if you are not interested in using Curriculum Mapper at this time, you are invited to participate in the professional development sessions supporting the Curriculum Mapping/Improvement process. Sessions will begin in May and will be offered throughout the coming school year.

For additional information, please contact: Jen Mahandeitte (507)537-2291 or jen.mahandeitte@swsc.org

Shared Services Project

For the past year, three schools have been participating in the shared service project: Lynd, Pipestone, and Edgerton. They participated in the sharing of the following services:

- Curriculum coordination
- Development of professional learning communities
- Staff development coordination
- Curriculum mapping
- Alternative school calendar
- Guided reading

We are currently working with six schools to expand the shared services project for the 2009-2010 school-year. We have had two planning sessions involving numerous districts and the following needs have been identified as a part of the shared services project for the upcoming school year:

- Curriculum writing
- Cooperative purchasing of curriculum
- Development of curriculum review cycles
- Create improved staff development activities
- Complete test analysis of districts
- Complete district state curriculum reports

For additional information, please contact: Jen Mahandeitte (507)537-2291 or jen.mahandeitte@swsc.org

Upcoming AYP & School Improvement Events: (see back page of The Review for June-August 2009 workshops)

- 5/12 SIOP with Marshall - will include more schools in future
- 5/18 Guided Reading Training
- June or August 2009 - Curriculum EXPO - TBD
- Curriculum Mapping 101 - by request, with some training and the process already beginning in several area districts
- Curriculum Mapper - cooperative purchasing of the product was completed this spring

Willmar Jr. High Student Places 1st

At the Willmar Jr. High National Geographic Geography Bee, Nicholas Hulstrand placed 1st in the competition. He had to take a 100 point written test to qualify for the State Geography Bee. Nicholas was successful and on April 3rd competed in the State Geography Bee held at St. Cloud State University. There were 104 contestants. Nicholas answered the 8 preliminary questions correctly. There were 15 students that had perfect scores, so they had to compete in a tiebreaker round. Nicholas placed in the top 10 to compete in the final round of the State Geography Bee. In the final competition, Nicholas placed 7th. He was the first student from Willmar to place in the top ten. Congratulations, Nicholas!
Emerging Renewable Energy Training Offered

By Gail Polejewski, Career Development Coordinator, MN West & SW/WC SC

Minnesota West Community and Technical College recently received a grant from the Minnesota Renewable Energy Marketplace to host an intensive two-summer training opportunity in emerging and existing renewable energy technology. The grant is intended for high school Agriculture, Science, Math, and Technology teachers to provide talent development in southwest Minnesota as youth consider growing job markets like biomass, solar energy, hydroelectric, geothermal, and wind energy.

Participants in the Emerging Renewable Energy Program Training (EREPT) will receive two weeks of free, intensive training during the summers of 2009 and 2010 in renewable energy technology. Added benefits of the program include free training units from NEED (National Energy Education Development project) for the first 15 schools who register, twelve credits of graduate education credits through the SMSU education department, scholarships for Graduate credits, and assistance throughout the 2009-2010 school year to integrate the new curriculum to meet State standards. This summer’s training will take place June 8-19 on the Granite Falls campus.

For more information about this unique opportunity, contact John Joosten at 1-800-657-3247.

We would like to ‘Thank’…

By Bob Braun, Director of Teaching and Learning Services

We’d like to express our appreciation to all who attended the 25th Annual Special Education Day of Excellence Conference – March 16, 2009.

Keynote Presentation: Fines Double in Road Construction
Deandra Stanton – Creative Communications

Participant comments about this powerful session:
• “Her stories will be remembered. I would love to hear her again, and I know others who also enjoy listening to her.”
• “She is a breath of fresh air! I need to remember her message. Learn, Live, Laugh”
• “She added a new approach of helping and dealing with my students.”

The conference ended with a combination of 32 presenters, 13 vendors and service agencies, 50 breakout sessions, and over 170 participants. There were many wonderful comments concerning the Day of Excellence and the experiences that the attendees feel they received.

It was an excellent conference, with a fantastic attendance and lots of excitement. We look forward to seeing each of you next year. Tentative 2010 Date: March 8th
Staff Art Show in Sleepy Eye

By Mary Van Roekel, Art Teacher, Sleepy Eye Public School; photos taken by Doreen Tyler, Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch Newspaper

The High School Art Club at Sleepy Eye Public School sponsored a Staff Art Show. All staff members were invited to submit artwork that they had created. Current pieces, as well as, pieces from their childhood were all welcomed. The response was amazing. Over 80 entries were displayed in the High School Media center.

The students were asked to vote on their favorites. Students’ Choice Awards were given in three categories. The two-dimensional category included drawing, painting, photography and printmaking. In the three-dimensional category there were such things as wire sculpture, wood sculpture, and pottery. The final category was crafts. It contained a wide variety of items from quilts and knitting to stained glass.

On February 11, 2009 a “Gallery Event” was held to present the awards.

Students in the Art Club served punch, crackers and cheese. Students’ Choice Award trophies made by the students out of old art supplies arranged in a sculpture and then spray painted gold were presented to the winners.

It was great fun to see the students and the staff interact in this casual environment. Our students were given the opportunity to see that art is important throughout life.

The Photos show the winners:

Custodian, Gabriel Calderon’s wire scorpion was chosen by the students as winner of the three-dimensional category. (Pictured below)

The students honored Superintendent’s Administrative Assistant, Pam Wendt, above, for her pheasant drawing in the two-dimensional category. (Pictured above)

The dolphin latchhook by teacher Mindy Berkner was the winner in the craft category of the Students’ Choice Awards. (Pictured at left)

Minnesota Farm-to-School Develops Toolkit for Food Services

By Jerry Kjergaard, Superintendent, Willmar School District

Farm to school programs are receiving a lot of attention these days. Concern about a rise in obesity and diet-related metabolic disorders among children combined with increased interest in supporting local economies have lots of people thinking hard about the food that kids get in schools. Placing locally-grown food on school lunch plates can help spark students’ interest in a healthier diet, get school food service dollars reinvested in the community, and provide concerned parents and administrators with a short, transparent, traceable route that the food traveled from farm to plate.

According to a recent survey of food service directors by the Minnesota School Nutrition Association (www.agobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=105219), many school food service directors are interested in farm to school programs, but lack time to explore options or implement new strategies. This can be an overwhelming obstacle to a food service director who is already under enormous time and budget constraints. A toolkit of ready-to-use materials could go a long way toward increasing participation in farm to school programs.

The Willmar School District in western Minnesota has gradually incorporated locally purchased food into its cafeteria menu over the last four years. In response to requests to share their information, Annette Hendrickx Derouin (Willmar’s Director of Food and Nutrition Services) and Lynn Mader (U of M Extension, Family Development) have been working with the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and

Toolkit continues on page 13
A Winning Team

Submitted by: Jason Swenson, Principal, Lynd Public Schools

It isn’t always easy for a person to step out of his or her comfort zone. Sometimes, however, a small risk can pay huge dividends.

Here at the Lynd School, two teachers have taken a chance on big changes in the classroom with the students reaping the benefits.

This year first grade teacher Caryn Douglas and ELL (English Language Learners) teacher Roshawn Sook have joined forces to implement a co-teaching system that has been very successful. The pair have teamed up to teach math to the 1st graders.

Typically, students learning English as a second language would be pulled out of the regular class, but Sook and Douglas felt it might be better for the students if the teacher came to them. “The program just kind of evolved,” said Sook. “I had half of the class as second language learners.”

“We kind of came up with it and tossed some things around,” said Douglas. “We may move into other classes next year.”

The concept has students rotating to different groups right in their home classroom. “I teach the language portion of math,” said Sook. “Caryn Douglas teaches the hands-on concept of the lesson.” A third section of the class reviews what they have learned with paraprofessional Jessie Plunkett-Cash-Bero. “Ms. Jessie” reviews the lesson the students have just learned from Sook and Douglas.

The students receive a more personal teaching experience. “It is a real benefit to the students to be taught in smaller groups,” said Sook. “We get to see better what each student needs.”

Sook says that research shows that students also learn better with teachers coming into the class, rather than pulling the student out for special instruction. “All of our students benefit from language learning,” Sook explained. “I am a licensed elementary teacher also. If I was strictly an ELL teacher, I couldn’t teach math. When we avoid pulling students out of the class, we avoid labeling of students.”

Douglas says the program has gone even better than expected. “It works wonderfully,” said Douglas. “We had some training in Minneapolis, where co-teaching is getting a bigger audience. We just had to figure out how it would work for us also.”

Douglas sees expansion of the program in the future. “We hope to implement even more co-teaching next year,” Douglas explained. She said it is like having two teachers in her section of first grade at Lynd School.

“We are both the teachers.”

Toolkit (Continued from page 12)

an advisory team to develop an online toolkit for Minnesota school nutrition programs. The toolkit contains information and materials to assist in planning a farm to school program; sourcing, preparing, and serving local foods; and promoting the food to students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Ready-to-use items include cafeteria menus and recipes complete with nutritional information, sample newsletter and announcement pieces, posters, and tested methods for getting students to sample the food.

While most of this website toolkit is intended specifically for food service, the website also provides links to resources to learn more about farm to school programs, including classroom and community connections. Check out the website, www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu. For more information, contact Lynn Mader, made0036@umn.edu, 612-708-8635.
Jump Rope For Heart

By Patti Machart, Principal, Cedar Mountain School

On March 27th the students at Cedar Mountain Elementary participated in the 30th Anniversary of Jump Rope for Heart which was organized by the Physical Education teacher, Jeremy Sather. Students in grades 1st through 6th grade spent the two weeks leading up to the event raising money to help fight heart related illnesses and learning various styles of rope jumping. On Friday March 27th the students joined their teachers to celebrate their efforts to raise money to jump rope together. Teachers, students and their principal, Patti Machart, jumped short ropes, long ropes and jump bands in celebration of the $6,942.81 that was raised. It took the combined efforts of 110 students that participated in the fundraising to raise the money. The top fundraisers were: fourth graders Blake Hamoning $150, Brett Berberich $165, Jesse Ahrens $175, third graders Abby Jemmings $185, Josh Wolling $210, Jordan Kevlin $305 and the schools top fundraiser, sixth grader Dalton Hacker who raised $500. Great job Dalton Hacker and all the students who took time to help raise money. Cedar Mountain put a great effort together for a great cause and had a fun time doing it.

Staff Inspired (Continued from page 8)

ran a cash register at Wal-Mart. ‘Marty’ was considered rich because he was loved and respected, had no regrets, and cherished all of life’s gifts. His simple philosophies included all you give, you will get back and to always take the time to be kind and compassionate. Smith advised, “Heed the words of a cashier who had an eighth-grade education but a Ph.D. in life. In life, you get what you give. To be a friend, you got to do a little bit more, but those good things will come back to you.”

“And that,” Smith said, “is the true way to find happiness in life.”

The entire staff was captivated by Mr. Smith’s inspiring message. The district-wide presentation was made possible with the generous donations from Taher Food Service and Wold Architects.

Other staff development trainings at Redwood Area include a presentation of RtI by the Reading Coordinator and training by SW/WC SC Staff on ‘Positive Behavior Strategies’ for all teachers and paraprofessionals. The middle school math team has also been involved in the math and science teacher academy through the SW/WC SC. In addition, all teachers and paraprofessionals attended a presentation on the essential instructional practices of Marzano’s Classroom Instruction That Works. This year the district implemented a new teacher induction program providing training to our mentors and new teachers throughout the year.
Chippewa River Day Program

By the Chippewa River Day Treatment Staff

The Chippewa River Day Program (CRDP) is a day treatment program created from the combined efforts of Benson Public Schools, KMS Public Schools and Swift County Human Services. We are located in the basement of the Benson Junior High building. In September 2009, we will be starting our 4th year.

CRDP is a small day treatment program with two full time special education teachers and paraprofessional support. We also have two full time mental health staff. CRDP accepts students between the grades of kindergarten and 12th grade. Our program normally has between 10-15 students total. The program consists of daily therapy group and daily skills group. Additional individual therapy and individual skills training is available. Funding for our program comes from third party payers. Outside school districts are not assessed additional fees for admitting students to our program. Our environment focuses on teaching and encouraging students to use their individual calming strategies, cognitive therapy, and meeting their educational goals. Being located in the public school allows for easy access for students to transition into mainstream classes. Staff focuses on creating therapeutic relationships with the students which help to create a safe, calm environment enabling the students to learn the tools they need to be successful.

Students who attend our program have difficulty controlling their behaviors in a mainstream school environment. To be eligible for our program students need to have an IEP, and a current statement of a serious emotional disturbance given by a mental health professional, and a recommendation for day treatment from the mental health professional. We offer year-round mental health services.

Referrals are generally made by the IEP team or the county mental health case manager. We are continuing to take referrals, especially for those students who may benefit from mental health services through the summer to prepare for next school year. For more information, individuals can call Melina Simonson, MSW, LICSW or Lynn Lundebrek, MS, EBD/LD at 320-842-2719.

Author Presents to Willmar Junior High

By the Chippewa River Day Treatment Staff

Students and staff at Willmar Junior High are highly committed to family literacy. This year we have had a family reading project centered around the book Touching Spirit Bear by author Ben Mikaelsen.

Students and parents who signed up for the book project attended an introductory meeting on December 2nd. To promote interest in the book, a mock circle justice demonstration was held by the Restorative Justice Panel of Kandiyohi. Students and parents then received the book to begin reading.

Early in March all Communications teachers used another of Mikaelsens’ books, Sparrow Hawk Red, as a read aloud.

On March 17, author Ben Mikaelsen gave three presentations at Willmar Junior High. The first two were addressed to grades 7 and then 8 on “writing your own story”. That evening, Mikaelsen culminated the book project with a program for parents and students.
Glencoe-Silver Lake High School’s Project DiRT

**By Lon Jorgensen, Principal, Glencoe-Silver Lake High School**

Sometimes bad things happen. Tornadoes hit small towns, rivers overflow their banks. Because of these two reasons and the several others we can’t predict, GSLHS has created a Disaster Response Team or (DiRT) for short. This team is completely voluntary. National Honor Society Members and Seniors are eligible. Students will have the opportunity to help their fellow being by using one day a year to help out in a community where a natural disaster has occurred.

Example: Hoboken, MN gets hit by a tornado. I will then call FEMA, the American Red Cross, or Hoboken and see if they want or are accepting volunteers to aid with cleanup. Let’s say that this disaster happens on a Monday and I place the call on Tuesday. The result of the phone call is that they could use us Thursday. I notify the students that have filled out the “Project DiRT” form that we will be leaving at 6:30 a.m Thursday morning for Hoboken with a return around 7:00 p.m. that night. Students load the bus with Jeff Jenson (EMT/Fireman), Pam Wiest (RN), Dan Pagel (Fireman), myself and other adults to help lead the aid effort. When we arrive in Hoboken we will work at or on anything FEMA or the other agencies want us to work on. This happens all day. The example I’ve shared with the students is walking fields picking up debris or sandbagging.

This opportunity teaches many valuable lessons. The biggest being helping our fellow person in their time of need. NHS members received 10 hours of community service for their participation. All seniors that decided to volunteer covered their “Random Act of Kindness” just by signing up. The Random Act was needed to get their Senior Privileges. Thank you goes out to Chartwell’s Food Service, 4.0 Bussing, Seneca Foods, and Glencoe Community Schools, as all costs for travel, food and water were covered by these businesses.

At the writing of this article, Project DiRT is on call for Fargo. They currently are not taking volunteers as the Red River is predicted to recryst at the end of April. However, if they call we go. At 6:00 a.m. 60 students and chaperones will load buses and head for what many will call, the largest disaster they’ve been involved with. After 8 hours of cleaning up sandbags, and helping the city of Fargo in any capacity they need, the busses will reload and head back to the safety of Glencoe. A 16 hour day is nothing to sneeze at and I’m sure the bus ride home will be much more quieter. A big thank you to all who participated in this year’s Project DiRT!

If you have questions concerning contact Lon Jorgensen, Principal of GSLHS at (320) 864-2401 or ljorgensen@gsl.k12.mn.us.

Lynd Teacher Presents at ASCD National Conference

**By Jason Swenson, Principal, Lynd Public Schools**

For most college students, completing an action research project is one of the most difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming aspects of their college careers. For me, however, it was an eye-opening experience that resulted in a trip to a national conference.

In the fall of 2007, I completed an action research project on the topic of boys’ attitudes toward reading. In my study, I allowed a group of third grade boys to pick their own reading materials based on their interests and personal preferences. I observed them and surveyed them to gauge their attitudes toward reading and found that when given the choice to select their own literature, boys’ interest and engagement in reading increased dramatically.

My presentation won the library award at the Undergraduate Research Conference in December of 2007. My professor for the class, Wendy Claussen-Schoolmeester, asked me to present with her about the value of undergraduate action research programs since most universities do not offer this course. I accepted, and she submitted a proposal to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) National Conference. Last summer, we received word that we had been accepted.

Lynd Teacher continues on page 17
Human Brain Visits Cedar Mountain Fourth Graders

By Patti Machart, Principal, Cedar Mountain Public Schools

Fourth graders at Cedar Mountain Elementary in Franklin recently got a taste of just how cool science really can be. Suzanne Espenson, a medical student at the Duluth campus of the University of Minnesota Medical School, is currently participating in a preceptorship program. As a part of her program, Suzanne is required to visit an elementary school to present on Brain Awareness. Lucky for us, she picked Cedar Mountain Elementary for this once in a lifetime experience.

A main point made in the presentation was focused on learning about the very important concept that brain cells cannot be replaced. Students learned about how we should be careful in what we do with our body, such as using harmful substances including drugs and alcohol, as well as being aware of what we eat, which both have direct impact on our brain and brain cells.

Students also participated in various activities with Suzanne in which they learned about the numerous and complex brain functions. Experiments with goggles which alter how we see allowed the students to learn how our brain helps us adjust, learning about how our eyes have a blind spot, and testing our nerve endings in our arms compared to our fingertips, are just a few of these tests.

Probably the most awesome part of the experience, as the students would say, was seeing what a human brain really looks like. Along with viewing the human brain, students got up close and personal with a mouse brain. Throughout the presentation, students inquired about numerous questions they had. Thanks to Suzanne, these fourth graders not only got answers to their questions, but an opportunity they will never forget.

Lynd Teacher (Continued from page 16)

In the following months, Wendy and I prepared an hour-and-a-half presentation entitled, “Undergraduate Research at a Glance.” We prepared a slide show, scripts, and activities for our session and I practiced my action research poster presentation, which I would be giving as an example of the “end product” of an action research program.

We left for Orlando on Thursday, March 12 in the middle of a cold snap to arrive in 85-degree weather. At the conference, we attended sessions on character development and classroom management, listened to a former astronaut, and attended an exhibit fair. In our spare time, we visited Universal Studios, explored Orlando, and enjoyed the sunshine and warm weather. On Sunday, we gave our presentation to a small crowd. Goldie Hawn was presenting at the exact same time as us just downstairs, so we had tough competition! However, our presentation went as planned and our attendees left with ideas on how to implement action research projects in their own schools and colleges. Presenting at a national conference was a much less daunting task than I had anticipated. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and hope to present again in the near future. Next time, though, I hope to not have to compete with a famous actress!
Semifinalists Chosen for Art Contest

By Sue Gorecki, Student Activities Coordinator

Four students were chosen as semifinalists in the 2009 Water is Life Art Contest at a Reception and Awards Ceremony on April 1 in Marshall. The contest, sponsored by the Freshwater Society in collaboration with the SW/WC Service Cooperative, encourages Minnesota high school students to create artwork that expresses the relationship of water to life, its value and the threats it faces. The semifinalists from our area are:

- Aaron Grafing – Worthington High School (video)
- Matt Gruenenwald – Dawson-Boyd High School
- Rebecca Malecek – Dawson-Boyd High School
- Sean Solheim – Murray County Central High School

The semifinalists will compete against other art students from across Minnesota for six $500 scholarships. A reception and announcement of the scholarship winners will take place May 6 at the Gray Freshwater Center, home to the Freshwater Society, in Excelsior.

2009 is the fifth year the Freshwater Society has offered this successful scholarship contest to Minnesota high schools students and the first year in the SW/WC Service Cooperative area. Each year’s winning art pieces are displayed at various events and locations throughout the state, including the Minnesota State Capitol, University of Minnesota, Pollution Control Agency and other locations.

Congratulations to the semifinalists and good luck in the state competition!
18 Schools Attend 5th Annual Culinary Skills Challenge

By LeaAnne Bot, Culinary Skills Challenge Event Coordinator

On March 25, 2009, approximately 250 students in grades 9-12 from 18 high schools throughout Southwest Minnesota cooked, baked, designed, garnished and learned new culinary trends and techniques at the 5th annual Culinary Skills Challenge at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU). Areas of competition included:

- Baking
- Culinary (Cooking teams)
- Cake Decorating – beginner, fondant and advanced levels
- Garnishing
- Place Setting
- Menu Design

Michael Cheng, Associate Professor of the Hospitality Management Program and the Director of the Culinology Program at Southwest Minnesota State University, once again served as the host for this year’s competition, which is funded in part by a Minnesota West Carl Perkins Consortium grant from the SW/WC Service Cooperative.

Thanks go out to the event host, Southwest Minnesota State University, as well as the significant sponsors for this year’s event: Arbonne, Minnesota Pork Board, Hy-Vee Marshall, Aramark, General Mills and the SW/WC Service Cooperative.

Along with the competitions, several interactive sessions were available for students to participate in. Sue Fritz of Hy-Vee in Marshall had students try some basic techniques in cake decorating; Manjit Harrison demonstrated working with fondant and students decorated their own cakes. Dawn Vlaminck, interior designer, had students try their hand at napkin folding and demonstrated basic place setting techniques. Other presenters included: Executive Chef Tim McCarty, of the Mayo Foundation House/Sodexo sponsored by the MN Pork Board. Chef McCarty is the 2006 National Celebrated Chef for the national pork board, Chef Francisco “Cisco” Silva from Le Cordon Bleu, Katie Baier of Avera Marshall Hy-Vee, and Ross Kuchta, SMSU Culinology Department demonstrated some of the ways today’s chefs are playing with their food and had students make gummy worms and sample carbonated fruit.

The entire RA Facility at SMSU was filled with competitions, interactive sessions and displays throughout the day and culminated with the Food Bowl “Trivia Challenge” followed by the student competition awards ceremony at 3:00 p.m.

For information regarding next year’s Culinary Skills Challenge, check the website: www.lifetimeoflearning.com or contact LeaAnne Bot at 537-2289.

State Knowledge Bowl

By Sue Gorecki, Student Activities Coordinator

The top forty-eight teams, out of over 800 across the state, competed at the Minnesota Service Cooperatives’ State Knowledge Bowl Meet held at Cragun’s on April 22-23, 2009. Seven teams from area schools represented our region with results listed below:

- AA Tier (large schools) - Glencoe-Silver Lake - 5th
- A Tier (small schools) - Redwood Area (pictured) - 2nd, Montevideo - 4th, Windom - 9th, New London-Spicer - 14th, Adrian - 17th, Mountain Lake Christian - 22nd.

Adrian won the Heritage Award for qualities and conduct becoming to a champion competitor. This award was voted on by the officials (readers and judges), coaches, and other teams.
Upcoming Professional Development

To register for any of these workshops, please visit our website at www.swsc.org, click on Workshops, find the workshop you are interested in, and complete the registration information. If you have any questions about the registration process, please contact Dawn Christensen at dawn.christensen@swsc.org or 507-537-2278.

### June 2009

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<td>Emerging Renewable Energy Program Training (EREPT), Granite Falls</td>
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<td>6/8</td>
<td>SIM-Content Enhancement, Slayton</td>
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<td>Math Retreat, Redwood Falls</td>
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<td>6/9</td>
<td>SIM Strategies-Word ID &amp; Word Mapping, Slayton</td>
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<td>SIM-Content Enhancement, Olivia</td>
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<td>Handwriting Without Tears, Marshall</td>
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### July 2009

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