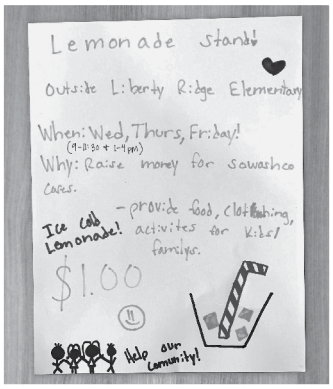
Issue 2 • August 2023

CONNECT

Sharing stories and information that connect our families, schools and communities.

Be seen. Be heard. Be bold.



Kids Club Lemonade Stand Earns $1,000 to Donate to SoWashCo CARES

Lemonade stands are a summertime staple for kids. Not only do they get to have fun selling a refreshing drink on a hot day, but they also learn a number of valuable skills.

A group of big-hearted kids participating in South Washington County (SoWashCo) Community Education's summer Kids Club at Liberty Ridge Elementary School (LRES) built on those skills and also learned another very important one; how to give back to their community.

The kids shared their idea of having a lemonade stand with the Kids Club supervisors and said they wanted to donate any money they made to SoWashCo CARES Education Foundation, a community-led nonprofit that supports the SoWashCo Schools community.

"SoWashCo CARES is 'Our community helping our community!' This lemonade stand is the perfect example of that," gushed Cheryl Jogger, the founder of SoWashCo CARES.

"It was fun making a lot of money to give back to the community," said 9-year-old Aiden, who will be going into fourth grade at LRES this year.

"These kids are shining examples of what it takes to be amazing! It makes me so proud to see our students wanting to not only do a fun summer activity but to be so selfless and donate all of their earnings to a foundation that will, in turn, help their peers," said SoWashCo Schools' Superintendent Julie Nielsen.

The kids led the whole project from making signs and lemonade to setting everything up and selling cups of lemonade to community members.

"My favorite customers were the ones that donated $20 to SoWashCo CARES," said 10-year-old Ibrahim who will be going into fifth grade at LRES.

"My parents came and then I came once because I had the day off," said 8-year-old Mila who is going into third grade at Middleton Elementary School (MES).

They all said working at the lemonade stand was so much fun, but each had something different as their favorite part.

"I liked giving change back to people," said 7-year-old Laila, who is going into second grade at MES.

"My favorite part was knowing that you are doing it for something good," said Ibrahim.

"Filling the cups was my favorite," explained Mila.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Introducing SoWashCo Schools' New Strategic Plan

SoWashCo Schools is unveiling a new strategic plan developed last school year with input from students, staff and families.

The strategic plan is rooted in five core values:

Connections | Integrity | Equity | Excellence | Educational Innovation

The mission of SoWashCo Schools is to educate students for success.

Learn more about the new strategic plan at **sowashco.org/strategic-plan**.

Fill Your Fall with Learning and Fun

SoWashCo Community Education's fall registration is open. Discover a wide-variety of classes, camps and activities for youth and adults.

Browse our interactive virtual catalog at **commed.sowashco.org/catalogs** or register online for adult and youth classes at **sowashco.ce.eleyo.com**.

Have an Amazing School Year

There is nothing more exciting than welcoming students to a new school year. I'm reminded of the feelings of a new beginning – a fresh box of crayons, empty notebooks, a new school planner, and of course, the first-day-of-school outfit.

As I begin my 31st year in public education and my 28th year with South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools), I could not be more proud of the profession that works every day to provide a safe and welcoming space for students to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. The mission of SoWashCo Schools is to educate students for success.

SoWashCo Schools will be welcoming back about 18,727 students starting on Tuesday, Sept. 5. Please be sure to keep your eyes open for our big, yellow school buses. They are holding our most prized commodities and we want to make sure that they are safe at bus stops, as well as, on their ride to and from school. We also ask that residents of our communities are patient during arrival and dismissal times as we know our parking lots extend out onto some of the main roads.

Our district's theme this year is "Be Amazing!" We define amazing as being true to yourself and going above and beyond ordinary expectations to help, support and care for others. We are fortunate to have amazing staff members in all roles within our school district.

This year we will be implementing our new Strategic Plan that is rooted in five core values: connections, integrity, equity, excellence and innovation. We will also be asking our community to approve two bond questions relating to safety and security, and addressing growth in our district with expansions and renovations of some of our existing sites. Please watch for more information in our next newsletter.

As the sixth-largest school district in the state, we could not be more excited to begin another year. We ask for your support and help related to safety and security of our schools and buildings.

We have established procedures when people are visiting our schools. For the safety of students and staff, it is important to remember that during school hours, community members should not be on district property unless they have checked in at the school office. Should you have any questions, please contact the school or call the district office.

Our schools are spaces where students are encouraged to express themselves, explore their passions and develop the critical-thinking skills needed to become leaders of tomorrow.

Educating our youth takes all of us. Thank you for partnering with us as we kick off a new school year!

Julie Nielsen

Julie Nielsen,
Superintendent

Back to School

Immunizations and Physicals for the Upcoming School Year

The State of Minnesota requires all students enrolled in school to be protected from childhood diseases by receiving immunizations. This includes all students enrolled in PreK-12 schools and/or programs, Kids Club, preschool and alternative programs. Medical exemptions must be signed by a healthcare provider. Non-medical exemptions must be signed by a parent/guardian and notarized.

All students participating in middle school, high school and/or Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) sports are required to have a physical exam on file that was performed within the last three years. SoWashCo Schools encourages all students to have periodic physical exams. It is recommended that students see their healthcare provider for physicals before entering kindergarten, grade 4, grade 7 and grade 10.

All forms can be found at **sowashco.org/health** and can be turned into your child's school health office.

School supply lists for grades K-5 and 6-8 are available at sowashco.org/schoolsupplies

NOTE: High school students will be informed during the first week of school of any supplies needed for class.

Age 3 Time to Screen

Early Childhood screening is recommended at age 3 and is a quick and simple check of how your child is growing, developing and learning. Screening can connect families to early learning opportunities and resources.

If your child has not yet been screened and is between the ages of 3 and 5, please call the Early Learning office to schedule an appointment at 651-425-6175 or visit **sowashco.org/screening**.

Early Childhood screening is required by the State of Minnesota for any child entering kindergarten in a public school and is provided free of charge.

Submit an Educational Benefits Application Today!

Every South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) family is encouraged to submit an Educational Benefit application, formerly known as Free and Reduced Meals. **Families must submit a new application every year.**

Although school meals are now free under state law, Educational Benefits offer so much more to families such as reduced or free field trip fees, athletic and activity fees, school fees, device protection plans, instrument rentals, Community Education classes and more. **A completed application could also provide funding to your child's school, even if you don't qualify for the above benefits.**

The Educational Benefits application can be completed in your **School Café** account. Learn more at **sowascho.org/edbenefits**.

Benefits In School

- Field Trips
- Athletics
- Student Fees
- Kids Club
- Device Protection Plans
- Instrument Rentals
- Community Education
- School Funding

Benefits Out of School

- Some Energy Providers
- Some Internet Providers
- Some Phone Providers
- Public Transportation
- Theatres
- Zoos
- Museums
- More

SoWashCo SCHOOLS

Family Calendar | 2023-2024 School Year

AUGUST 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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SEPTEMBER 2023

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OCTOBER 2023

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NOVEMBER 2023

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DECEMBER 2023

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JANUARY 2024

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FEBRUARY 2024

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MARCH 2024

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APRIL 2024

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MAY 2024

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JUNE 2024

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JULY 2024

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28	29	30	31			

First or Last Day of School | No School for Students (K-12) | Important Date

IMPORTANT DATES

Event Information			Grades
SEPTEMBER			
	5	**First Day of School**	6, 9
	6	**First Day of School**	K-5, 7-8, 10-12
	25	**No School**	K-12
OCTOBER			
	6	No School - Elementary Preparation	K-5
	18	Pre-ACT and Practice ACT Testing	10, 11
	18	Asynchronous Learning Day	9, 12
	18	No School	K-5
	19-20	**No School** - Fall Break (MEA)	K-12
NOVEMBER			
	7	**No School** - Election Day	K-12
	21	**End of Trimester 1**	K-12
	22	**No School** - Teacher Workday	K-12
	23-24	**No School** - Employee Holiday	K-12
DECEMBER			
	22-29	**No School** - Winter Break	K-12
JANUARY			
	1-2	**No School -** Winter Break	K-12
	15	**No School** - MLK Jr. Day	K-12
	29	**No School** - Professional Development	K-12

Updated: Feb. 1, 2023

Event Information			Grades
JANUARY			
	1-2	**No School -** Winter Break	K-12
	15	**No School** - MLK Jr. Day	K-12
	29	**No School** - Professional Development	K-12
FEBRUARY			
	16	**No School** - Elementary Preparation	K-5
	19	**No School** - Presidents Day	K-12
MARCH			
	1	**End of Trimester 2**	K-12
	4-8	**No School** - Spring Break	K-12
	11	**No School -** Teacher Workday	K-12
	29	**No School** - Employee Holiday	K-12
APRIL			
	TBD	MCA/MTAS Testing	10, 11
	TBD	Complete Schoolwork at Home Day	9, 12
	TBD	Complete Schoolwork at Home Day	Various
	TBD	Science MCA and ACT Testing	Various
	26	**No School**	K-12
MAY			
	27	**No School** - Memorial Day Holiday	K-12
JUNE			
	4	**Last Day of School**	12
	5	**Last Day of School**	K-11

Calendar dates are subject to change. Please visit **sowashco.org/calendar** *for updates.*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

After a few days of hard work, these amazing kids, along with others that helped at Kids Club, made more than $1,000 to donate to SoWashCo CARES and they say it has inspired them to do more.

"I want to try doing this during the school year," said Ibrahim.

"We could sell hot chocolate because it's usually cold outside when we're in school," said Laila.

"I want to try doing the little free library at our school," said Aiden.

"Our kids are arguably the most important members of our SoWashCo community and they organized this lemonade stand to give back in the sweetest way," said Jogger.

100% of the money raised from this lemonade stand will support SoWashCo Schools students and staff. Thank you to our students for being AMAZING!

Liberty Ridge Elementary Kids Club students with officers from the Woodbury Police Department.

generations CAFE

Scan to view the menu and order online

Check out what's brewing.

Serving coffee, espresso, tea and homemade baked goods.

Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

District Program Center, 8400 E. Point Douglas Rd. S in Cottage Grove
commed.sowashco.org/gencafe

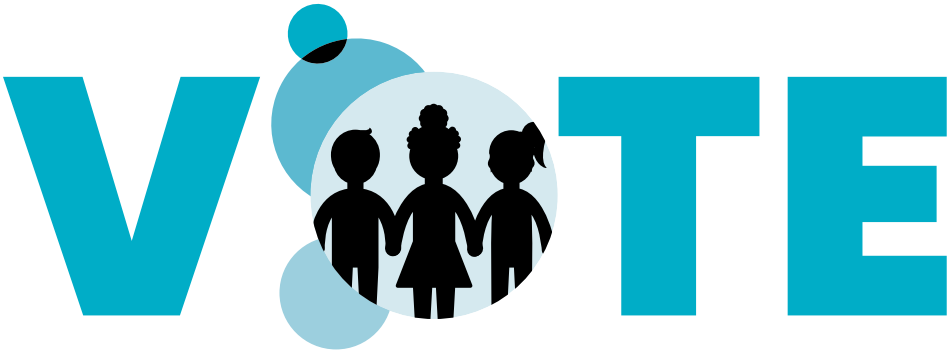
Generations Cafe is a Great Rivers Adult Education Consortium initiative, providing essential job training for English language learner interns and Next Step program young adult students.

Eagle Scout Grows Vegetables to Donate to Skoolie

Robert Denesen partnered with South Washington County (SoWashCo) Community Education to give away homegrown vegetables to community members at summer Skoolie events. Denesen, who will be entering 10th grade at Woodbury High School, was inspired by his church's slogan "Growing Goodness" to help community members who may be suffering from food insecurity. Last year, as his Eagle Scout project, he began planning and developing a vegetable garden with the intent to donate fresh produce. "Even if it's not a lot I want to help and inspire others to help," said Denesen.

The project has taught Denesen important lessons in leadership and project management. He independently researched suppliers, created a timeline and organized a volunteer team to build, plant and maintain two raised garden beds. Denesen sold flowers, wreaths and popcorn to raise money to help fund the project. He also presented his plan to his troop committee and district troop leader for approval, as well as seeking permission from The Grove Church in Woodbury to build the garden on their grounds.

Garden volunteers help water and harvest the vegetables, which include lettuce, bell peppers, tomatoes, green beans, cucumbers and zucchini. In July, the first harvest was ready and Denesen began supplying vegetables to Skoolie on Monday evenings at Royal Oaks. When summer Skoolie events end, he plans to donate the remaining harvests to a local food shelf. Next year Denesen hopes to expand the project to grow even more goodness.



Securing Our Future

Supporting Our Students.

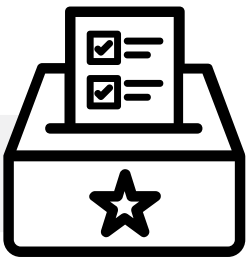
A Look at What's on the Ballot for SoWashCo Schools in November

South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) is holding a special election on Nov. 7, 2023.

Taking staff and community feedback and input into consideration, the School Board in June approved a plan to present the district's new 5-year facility plan (Securing Our Future. Supporting Our Students.) to the community with two bond questions on the November ballot.

Pending School Board approval, a third request will ask the community to approve a Capital Projects Levy (Technology Projects Levy) to address safety and security relating to technology. At the time of this publication, the School Board had discussed the question during the July business meeting and August 3 workshop meeting. The School Board voted on whether or not to include a levy question on the ballot during the Aug. 17 business meeting. The Technology Projects Levy would ask voters to increase the current $2.8 million levy to $5 million.

If all three questions are approved by voters, it would result in a tax increase of about $10 a month for families living in a median valued home ($409,000) within the SoWashCo Schools boundary.



More information can be found at **sowashco.org/facilityplanning**.

School Board Election

Three seats for the SoWashCo School Board are also up for election this fall. A candidate forum hosted by the League of Women Voters is set for 7-8:30 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 19 at the District Service Center, 7368 East Point Douglas Road S. in Cottage Grove. The forum will also be livestreamed. More information about the School Board and the 2023 Elections can be found at **sowashco.org**.

Bonds for Buildings

What is a bond election?

- A bond referendum gives voters the opportunity to authorized the district to raise construction funding through the sale of bonds.
- Bonds allow the district to borrow money that it then pays back over time.
- This is the only method to raise enough funds for new construction.

QUESTION 1

Safety and security enhancements and expansions and renovations at secondary schools. ($160 million)

- Construct new secure entry at Park and Woodbury high schools, and Cottage Grove, Lake and Woodbury middle schools
- Planned addition at East Ridge High School and renovations at Park and Woodbury high schools
- Planned expansion of Oltman Middle School and renovations at Woodbury Middle School

QUESTION 2

Addresses elementary school space at schools projected to exceed capacity; renovations for bathrooms at five elementary schools. ($40 Million)

- Elementary school additions at Bailey, Grey Cloud, Pine Hill and Red Rock elementary schools
- Construction of additional bathrooms at schools only containing a single set/four stalls (Crestview, Hillside, Pine Hill, Pullman and Royal Oaks elementary schools)

The second bond question addressing elementary school space and bathroom renovations is contingent on the passage of Question 1, meaning Question 2 cannot pass without the approval of Question 1. If Question 2 fails, elementary school attendance boundary changes will be implemented for the 2024-25 school year.

Visit **sowashco.org/facilityplanning** to view information about boundary changes if the second bond question does not pass.

VOTE

Securing Our Future

Supporting Our Students.

Technology Projects Levy

As SoWashCo leaders connected with community members for feedback about the upcoming bond referendum, safety and security rose to the top of the list of priorities. The proposed Technology Projects Levy that may be on the ballot be on the ballot in November addresses safety and security relating to technology.

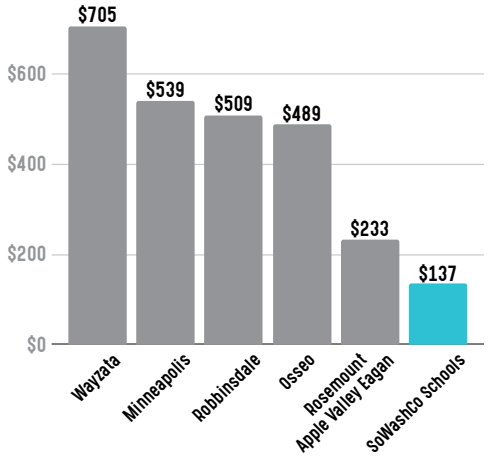
If approved, the Technology Projects Levy would:

- **Enhance Cybersecurity**
- **Maintain technology infrastructure** (wifi, server hardware, firewall hardware, data storage, email security, network equipment, etc.)
- **Upgrade security cameras**
- **Expand digital access** to curriculum and learning tools
- **Update educational and business** software licensing
- **Maintain the devices** distributed to students and staff during the pandemic with a refresh cycle to keep devices updated

If approved, the technology levy would have a tax impact of $3 per month on a median valued home in the district.

How We Compare

Capital Projects Levy amounts among the top 6 school districts by student population



ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, Nov. 7, 2023

Regular polling locations are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 7. Find your regular polling location at **mnvotes.org**.

Vote Early in Person

Early in-person voting begins Friday, Sept. 22 and ends Monday, Nov. 6 and is also available from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 4.

In-Person Early Voting Hours	Location	Address
Sept. 22-Nov. 6: • Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. • Saturday, Nov. 4: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.	**Washington County Government Center**	14949 62nd Street N. Stillwater, MN 55082
	Cottage Grove Service Center	13000 Ravine Pkwy. Cottage Grove, MN 55016
	R.H. Stafford Library (Lower Level)	8595 Central Park Place Woodbury, MN 55125
	Headwaters Service Center	19955 Forest Road N. Forest Lake, MN 55025
	Oakdale City Hall	1584 Hadley Ave. N. Oakdale, MN 55128

Vote Early by Mail

Early voting by mail-in ballot is available via **mnvotes.org** or by calling 651-430-6790.

Independent School District #833
7362 East Point Douglas Rd. S.
Cottage Grove, MN 55016
www.sowashco.org

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- South Washington County Schools
- Sign up for our e-newsletter at **sowascho.org/news**

For more information visit sowashco.org

SoWashCo Voices

In July, Woodbury Magazine announced the winners of their 2023 reader's choice survey. South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) is honored to be recognized by our community for the following awards:

- **Best Place for Family Activities:**
  SoWashCo Community Education
  Learn more at commed.sowashco.org
- **Best Language Immersion Program or School:**
  Nuevas Fronteras Spanish Immersion
  Learn more at nfsi.sowashco.org

Thank you to those who voted!

"What's your favorite thing about the first day of school?"

"Meeting everybody, seeing returning and new faces, getting to know everyone and welcoming them back, and getting everyone excited for a year of Kids Club!"
Heidi Cadalbert
Kids Club Supervisor, Bailey Elementary

"Seeing how much the kids have changed over the summer."
LaKendra Berger
Lunchroom Paraprofessional, East Ridge High School and Kids Club Paraprofessional, Royal Oaks Elementary

"Seeing the kids from last year that I missed all summer."
Barb Kovacs
Kids Club and Lunchroom/Recess Paraprofessional, Red Rock Elementary

"Getting to meet your teachers, seeing friends I haven't seen in a while, and the first recess!"
Will Lamberson
Grade 5, Bailey Elementary

"Meeting everyone in my class."
Bennett Ksicinski
Grade 2, Liberty Ridge Elementary

"Meeting my teacher and seeing my friends."
Madelyn Wheeler
Grade 5, Red Rock Elementary

"Seeing your best friends."
Riley Glanz
Grade 4, Woodbury Elementary