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**PLEASE VISIT  
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## EDUCATION

*Electronic Edition*

[www.lcsc.org](http://www.lcsc.org)

# PARKERS PRAIRIE PUBLIC SCHOOL

## FINDING OUR NICHE

Only five of the 39 superintendents in Lakes Country Service Cooperative's service area are women. Megan Myers is one of those five women and has nearly completed her first year as the Parkers Prairie Public School Superintendent. She recalled her first day walking into the school. Myers said she felt excited to work towards improving the budget and leaving it better than how she found it.



**Megan Myers**

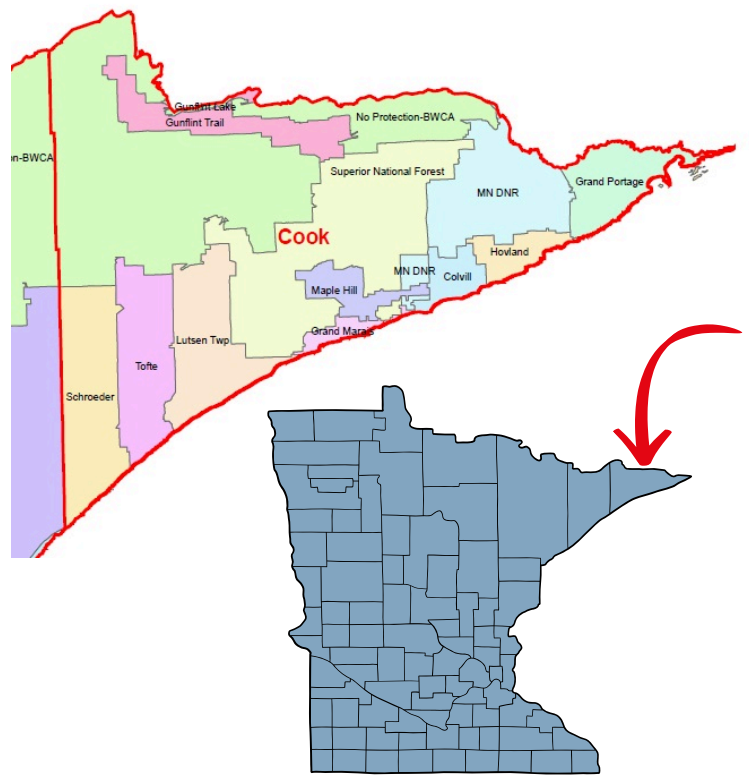
Parkers Prairie Public School  
Superintendent

Myers' upbringing as the daughter of a Special Education teacher instilled in her the importance of education from an early age.

She grew up in Park Rapids, Minnesota, where she completed her high school education before attending Cottey College, an all-girls school in Missouri. Later, she received her Bachelor's in Education from Bemidji State University, her Master's from Southwest Minnesota State, and attended Minnesota State University Moorhead's Principal and Superintendent Licensure program.

Before joining Parkers Prairie Public School, Myers worked as a teacher at New York Mills from the Fall of 2004 to the Spring of 2016. She then accepted the role of Principal at the Circle of Life Academy in White Earth, Minnesota, for two years. From there, she moved her family to the northeast community of Grand Marais and served as the K-12 Principal for five years at Cook County Public Schools. Cook County Public Schools has a similar student enrollment as Parkers Prairie Public Schools; however, Cook County Public Schools travel over the entire county to bring students to school, including the very remote Gunflint Trail. When the pandemic hit, Myers was asked to step in as Superintendent at Cook County Public Schools while the current Superintendent took a leave.

When asked about the challenges she faced while serving children in a large and remote service area, she mentioned that she had an excellent transportation and groundskeeping team that coordinated all the challenges that winter transportation could bring. According to her, this also helped the students to develop a sense of grit. Myers added that people living in Cook County live differently than those with easy access to resources in nearby towns. She shared that her family loved Grand Marais, but she wanted to return to this area to be closer to her family. Myers admitted that her first year in Parkers Prairie has been a steep learning curve, and she is thankful for her administrative team and great school board. Her immediate challenges were to reduce deficit spending and find a solution to manage the fund balance that was about to go below where their policy allowed. They are working to reduce the budget and ultimately will come out better than where they started. Unexpectedly, Myers also served as the elementary principal in Parkers Prairie while the existing Principal, Steve Radtke, was on leave. "It was an opportunity to develop a relationship with the elementary students and staff," said Myers.



"I wasn't fully prepared for the quick decisions and long-term projects that come with being a superintendent, even with the support of our state's mentorship program for new superintendents. However, having Blaine Novak, the Superintendent of New York Mills, as my colleague has been crucial to my growth. Novak and I went from being co-teachers in New York Mills to him being my principal and, eventually, my superintendent. It's great to have that kind of shared history. When working in Grand Marais, Novak would call me monthly to catch up and see how I was doing. I've learned so much from him," said Myers.

"I have found Lakes Country Service Cooperative to be a valuable asset. I have attended several meetings for new superintendents at LCSC and the Great Starts program through MASA. Additionally, I am a Runestone Area Education District member and have found the other superintendents in that group to be valuable members of my network. I also rely on the calendars published by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), which help tremendously with meeting deadlines," said Myers.

*Continued on next page*





## The 6th grade classes have been participating in D.A.R.E.!

Myers said that she has learned that the students are the best part of the job. She shared that the students are incredibly respectful towards their teachers and constantly show appreciation towards them, even awarding them monthly with recognition. No choir teachers were available this past year, so two retired teachers came in to help fill the role. They worked alongside the instrumental music teacher, Dale Plasek. The dedication of the former teachers touched the students, and they felt they wanted to show their appreciation. Myers is proud of the students and said, "They are phenomenal. They give their all in both academics and sports." Parkers Prairie Public School provides a range of group and individual activities that cater to the diverse interests of their students. Myers shared some activities she believes offer opportunities for all students to participate and feel included.

- The Parkers Prairie History Club has been active since 2012. History Teacher Mr. O'Brien came up with the idea to coordinate field trips and do some reading and research on state history during the summer, working with students as a volunteer. Students must apply to gain membership, with an emphasis on academics, interest in history, and staff recommendations. Over one hundred students participated.
- The Parkers Prairie first-grade students go to St. William's Living Center and spend time with the residents. They play BINGO, visit with the residents, make cards for the residents during the holidays, and hand deliver the cards.
- Parkers Prairie students have a crochet club, and Art Teacher Shannon Wicklund gives her time during lunch and Panther Time to help students learn how to crochet. Students sell their projects at school activities and sporting events.

- Several students competed in the State Speech meet.
- The 6th Grade Football Team had an excellent opportunity to play at US Bank Stadium on April 16 against Wadena-Deer Creek (WDC).
- The Anatomy students fundraised to go to California to visit BodyWorks and then explore the attractions of Yosemite.



- Several teams participated in the Elementary Math Masters competition in grades 4-6 hosted at LCSC.
- Parkers Prairie students are taking advantage of an exciting, free opportunity to pursue their commercial driver's license (CDL).
- Parkers Prairie High School senior David Revering received a Minnesota National Honor Award as one of the top scholar-athletes in the State!



**David Revering**

“We are making sure that we have the college, the career, and the tech courses, but we also operate the community childcare center. We start developing children when they are six weeks old and continue helping them to learn through graduation. We have a crib-to-career mentality, a point of pride that we would like to see enhanced even more,” said Myers. Myers is proud of the school's ability to provide childcare to the community. Parkers Prairie families are fortunate to have a well-run childcare program based in the elementary school. The school cares for eight infants and 12 toddlers and has four preschool classrooms participating in the childcare program. They currently have an infant waiting list, and there are plans next year to provide four all-day, everyday preschool classes.

“

I want to find that niche here and bring it to fruition.

—Megan Meyers

Myers challenges her staff to think outside the box, so they do not get caught up in doing what has always been done. She wants them to constantly consider how they can make it even better than it is right now. “I want to ensure that Parkers Prairie has a niche,” said Myers. She added, “There are all these schools around us that have their niche in what they are doing. I want to find that niche here and bring it to fruition. There is an opportunity through the Youth Skills Training grant and a big need for trade workers, and we have a lot of interest from our student body. By refacing our Industrial Tech and Ag program, we can enhance that Career and Tech Ed piece at our school, which could be our niche.”

When asked about her most enjoyable experience since becoming the new superintendent at Parkers Prairie School, Myers said, “The students bring me the most joy. The community has been very welcoming, and I'm excited to keep improving the school's approach to learning, supporting a crib-to-career educational model.”

Want to learn more about Parkers Prairie Public Schools and the unique programs supporting their students? Visit their website.

<https://www.isd547.org/>



# FROM THE Executive Director

"Learning, Leading, and Innovating  
to Achieve Vibrant, Inclusive Communities."



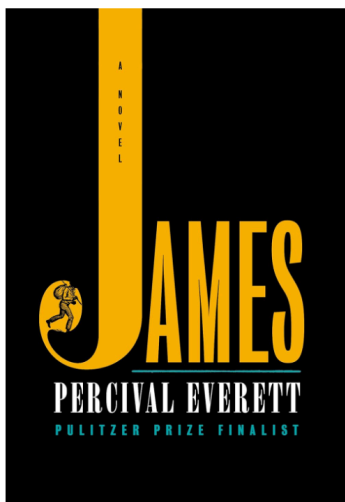
**Jeremy Kovash**  
*Executive Director*



Dear Friends in Education,

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Communicator. As we embark on summer and end another school year, we remain excited and optimistic about the future... the future of our children, our schools and our communities.

My wife Deanna and I, now that we're empty nesters, are on our own learning journey. I'm doing my best to keep up with her in the number of books she's read in 2024 (listening counts too). I just finished book number 13, but I'm slowing down a bit due to the Twins baseball season, LCSC hiring, and the beautiful Minnesota outdoors.



My favorite book of 2024 to date is "James" by Percival Everett.

This brilliant book of fiction provides a different perspective to the great American novel "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain. It is written from the viewpoint of the enslaved Jim.

I hope the end of the school year and summer of 2024 allows you time to reflect and relax. Thank you for all you do for our children.

**Together We Achieve...**





## The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs)

Welcomes **Jeremy Kovash** as the New President of its Executive Council



Jeremy Kovash, Executive Director of Lakes Country Service Cooperative (MN), has been named President of the Executive Council of the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs).

In that capacity, Jeremy will preside over all meetings of the AESA Executive Council, call special meetings when necessary, and help achieve the vision for the organization. AESA is a national organization that supports almost 500 regional educational service agencies in 45 states. Educational service agencies assist schools in their regions with services such as staffing, professional development, and various other resources.

“AESAs is extremely fortunate to have Jeremy in this critically important leadership role. He has been an extraordinary leader for school districts in his region and ESAs across the country,” said Dr. Joan Wade, AESA Executive Director.

Jeremy is the Executive Director of Lakes Country Service Cooperative, which provides innovative support to schools and government entities. Originally from Moorhead, Kovash earned his bachelor’s degree from Concordia College and his master’s degree and superintendent’s licensure at Moorhead State University. He was formerly a teacher of psychology, history, and political science and an administrator in Perham.

Kovash has served on the board of directors for the United Way, the Minnesota Rural Education Association, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, AESA, and as the Legislative Chairperson for The Minnesota Service Cooperatives. He is a Humphrey Policy Fellow with the University of Minnesota and serves on hospital and bank boards. Kovash has been instrumental in passing legislation to assist communities and schools in Minnesota. Additionally, Kovash worked to pass federal legislation to aid employees and public entities across the United States. AESA welcomes Jeremy to the position of President and looks forward to his leadership.



# School Finance Workshops

**INSTRUCTOR: DR. BRUCE JENSEN**

**LOCATION: LAKES COUNTRY SERVICE COOPERATIVE**

**1001 E. MOUNT FAITH, FERGUS FALLS, MN**

## Dates & Times:

**Monday, July 15, 2024**

**9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

Intro, Pupil Units, Taxes

**Monday, July 22, 2024**

**9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

Revenue Sources

**Monday, July 29, 2024**

**9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

Revenue Continued, UFARS, Budgets,  
Audits, Miscellaneous

**Friday, September 20, 2024**

**9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

Levy Sheets

## Who Should Attend:

- **Superintendents**
- **Aspiring Superintendents**
- **Principals**
- **Business Managers**
- **Bookkeepers**
- **School Board Members**
- **Anyone interested in learning the fundamentals of Minnesota School Finance.**



## About the Instructor

**Dr. Bruce Jensen**  
Director of  
School Administrative  
Services  
Northwest Service  
Cooperative

## Registration

All four sessions: \$400

Per session: \$125

**REGISTER**





# Ulen-Hitterdal Public School



Source: Therese Vogel, Communications Director, Ulen-Hitterdal Public School

## REFERENDUM 2024 RESULTS: COMMUNITY SUPPORTS CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN SCHOOL

On Tuesday, April 9, 2024, voters in the Ulen-Hitterdal School District considered a two-question special election addressing facility and learning environment improvements.

### Following the vote, the unofficial election results are:

**Question 1** (GO Bonds for Roofing):  
211 YES (65%) and 116 NO (35%)

**Question 2** (GO Bonds for Security and Facility Improvements):  
182 YES (56%) and 141 NO (44%)

District Superintendent Dustin Flaten expressed his gratitude to the community for their support: "I extend my sincere appreciation to the entire community for taking the time to learn more about the needs of the district. The passing of these special election questions is an exciting vote of confidence in our collective vision for education at Ulen-Hitterdal School District."

Flaten continued, "This community investment will provide a new school roof that will promote a healthier environment for students and staff. By incorporating safety standards such as ADA accessibility and improved security systems, we are ensuring a secure environment for our students, staff, and the entire community. We are deeply thankful for this invaluable support."

In the coming weeks, the District will work with their project partner SitelogIQ to begin finalizing the details of the facility improvements. We will continue to communicate with our school community regarding these exciting developments.

## Lakes Country Academy

Fergus Falls



Source: Cheryl Hirst,  
Lakes Country Academy  
Site Administrator

## Celebrates Earth Day

On Friday, April 19th and in celebration of Earth Day...LCA students had a community outing to the recycling center. It was a great tour, and it was amazing to see how they make it work - separating plastics, office paper, cans, cardboard and so much more!



Check out those "bales" - they are large and weigh a lot! Here is a fun fact...if you need paint, varnish/paint stripper thinner, or chemicals for your yard, please stop by the recycling center they may have what you are looking for and it is free! It can all be given back to the community. So, if you have a project in mind, don't hesitate to stop by to see what they may have for you to use.





# Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom

## Workshop at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center June 24 – 27, 2024

**Source:** Elizabeth Anderson, Administrative Assistant;  
Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center



This Educator workshop is for all who teach children.

- **Explore innovative ways to use the outdoors as a classroom with an integrated curriculum.**
- **Strengthen your outdoor teaching and reflection skills and apply them to your indoor curriculum.**
- **Benefit from the immediate opportunity to apply workshop content with a small group of motivated youth.**
- **Gain knowledge and real-world experience in the prairie pothole ecosystem with direct carry-over to any geographic location, age, and season.**

For \$40, each participant receives a certificate for 23 clock hours, hands-on practice using field equipment, a printed copy of The Compass to Nature booklet, and much more—lodging available in the PWLC dormitory for \$35 (for the length of the workshop). For more information and to register, visit the [Friends of the PWLC website](#).

## “BETTER TOGETHER”

**June 10, 2024**

**Where:** Lakes Country  
Service Cooperative  
1001 East Mount Faith  
Avenue  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota.  
56537

**To register:** send an  
email to:  
[Deb.Keena@nlln.org](mailto:Deb.Keena@nlln.org)

- No cost to attend
- 6 CEUs
- There will be free books from Adell Bridgeford to bring home with you.

**Who should register?**  
Librarians and Educators

**8:30 a.m. – 9 a.m.** Registration - Coffee, tea, and caramel rolls

**9 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.** Conversations and discussion among colleagues with Lynette Schwagerl and Glenn Heinecke

**10 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.** Management policies discussion with Gina Drellack, Northwest Service Cooperative

**11 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.** Conversation with Mark Mindt, creator of Native American superhero KODA Two Hearts and author of young adult books about KODA

**12 noon – 12:50 p.m.** Lunch (no charge)

**1 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.** Presentation and conversation with Nick Lero, PBS, about LearningMedia and Indigenous resources

**2 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.** Presentation and discussion with Louie Lauer about new children's books

**3 p.m.** Break out sessions on Makerspaces from Emily Thomas, Storytelling from Glenn Heinecke, and Book repair from Karen Breach

**NLLN**



**Northern Lights  
Library Network**





## Otter Tail County and High School Welding Student

# Collaborate to Create Culvert Cleaning Tool

**Source/Author:** Shannon Terry,  
Otter Tail County Public Information Officer

The Otter Tail County Highway Department's Ditch and Drainage Inspector, Colby Palmersheim, joined forces with the Fergus Falls Kennedy High School (KHS) welding class. Together, they launched Otter Tail County's Culvert Grapple Hook innovation, a winch-powered tool to clean out culverts. With a grant from the University of Minnesota Local Operational Research Assistance (OPERA) Program, the County was able to purchase a winch to power the hook. This collaborative effort has resulted in an innovative solution that saves time, enhances worker safety, and highlights the talent of local youth.

Palmersheim's idea addressed the challenge of clearing clogged culverts, particularly those located beyond the reach of conventional equipment. The challenge of welding inspired a partnership with Mr. Dennis Wutzke, the welding teacher at Kennedy High School, who enlisted the talents of Micaiah Abramson, a sophomore student, to bring the concept to life. Abramson enthusiastically accepted the challenge and began working on the mockup.

Abramson reviewed Palmersheim's handwritten mock-up and used scrap pieces of metal from the KHS welding shop to weld the prototype. Once he was satisfied with the mockup, he began to create. Using advanced welding techniques, Abramson dedicated over 45 hours to meticulously crafting the Culvert Grapple Hook. The final product features a heavy-duty post with retractable fins that can be connected to a winch-powered mechanism used to clear culverts of various sizes.

*Continued on next page*





Reflecting on his experience, Abramson shared, “I had finished my project, and Mr. Wutzke asked if I would like to make a culvert cleaner tool for the County. I had to make a few adjustments, add to the post, and weld two hooks at the top of the design that weren’t included in the original design. It was a fun project.”

Palmersheim and Abramson recently tested the hook in a mock demonstration. Branches were stuffed into two different-sized culverts, and the hook was connected to the winch on a pickup truck. The hook pulled all the tightly packed branches out of the larger culvert. Before it is used this spring, a few minor adjustments will be made for smaller culverts. Overall, the Culvert Grapple Hook was a success.

“Working with the high school shows the talent that will be in the workforce soon, shows students what types of positions are offered in County employment, and what types of problems county workers solve every day,” remarked Inspector Palmersheim. “This project highlights our ability to tackle challenges, thanks to the ingenuity and dedication of our local talent.”

Students and employers are encouraged to use the K12 Navigator to make connections and partner on engaging career exploration experiences. More information is available at [k12navigator.org](http://k12navigator.org). Otter Tail County also offers summer employment opportunities.

# Breckenridge Public School Early Childhood Team

Source/Author: Molly Olson, LCSC Early Childhood Coordinator



**Back row from left:** Kim Wiertzema, School Readiness Educator; Molly Olson, Early Childhood Coordinator and Parent Educator; Beckie Haug, Breckenridge Elementary Employee/Para)

**Front Row from left:** Anastashia Edwards, Preschool Teacher; Barb Odens Breckenridge Elementary Employee/Para

## HOSTS CHILDREN'S SPRING EVENT

The Early Childhood team at Breckenridge Elementary hosted their annual Easter event in March. The event saw a total of 216 children and 204 adults in attendance.

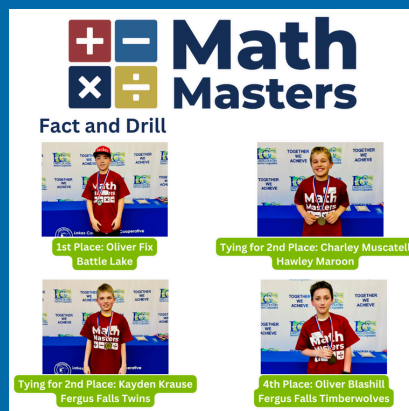
The children were greeted by the Easter Bunny who posed for pictures with them. Later, an Easter egg hunt was organized where each child got to find five eggs hidden in large piles of Easter grass.

Additionally, a bounce house and several exciting Easter crafts were available for the children to enjoy and take home.



# Math Masters

**5th GRADE**  
**REGIONAL**  
**Competition**  
**April 18, 2024**



Lakes Country Service Cooperative enjoys having the energy of students in our building, and on April 18, Lakes Country Service Cooperative, in collaboration with Math Masters, hosted a 5th Grade Regional Math Masters Competition.

Seventy-five students from Battle Lake, Brandon-Evansville, Fergus Falls, Hawley, Morris, St. Mary's-Morris, and Pelican Rapids participated in the event, competing individually and in teams across eight rounds of mathematical problems.

## MATH MASTERS

5th Grade Regional Math Masters Competition  
April 18, 2024

### Fact and Drill:

1. Oliver Fix- Battle Lake
2. Charley Muscatell- Hawley Maroon
2. Kayden Krause- Fergus Falls Twins
4. Oliver Blashill-Fergus Falls Timberwolves
5. Gustavo Vazquez-Carmona- Morris
5. Aspen Lomsdal- Hawley Maroon
7. Kaylee Kerzman-Battle Lake
7. Cameron Jacobson- Battle Lake
9. Natalie Graunke-Hawley Maroon
9. Emma Kraemer- Battle Lake
9. Jared Stich- Fergus Falls Timberwolves

### Individual Awards

1. Henry Petsinger-Hawley Gold
2. Kayden Krause- Fergus Falls Twins
3. Brynn Petsinger- Hawley Gold
4. Tova Ronnevik- Fergus Falls Lynx
5. Oliver Fix-Battle Lake
6. Caydn Wagner- Evansville Blue
7. Charley Mustcatell-Hawley Maroon
8. Samuel Haarstad- Fergus Falls Timberwolves
9. Landon Morris- Fergus Falls Twins
10. Emma Kraemer- Battle Lake

### Team Awards

1. Hawley Gold
2. Hawley Maroon
3. Fergus Falls Twins
4. Fergus Falls Lynx

# Math Masters

**4th GRADE**  
**REGIONAL**  
**Competition**  
**April 19, 2024**



Lakes Country Service Cooperative hosted a 4th Grade Regional Math Masters competition on Friday, April 19th. A total of 95 students participated from various schools including Battle Lake, Brandon-Evansville, Clara Barton-Fargo, Chokio-Alberta, Fergus Falls, Morris, Parkers Prairie, Oak Grove-Fargo, St. Mary's-Morris, Ulen-Hitterdal, and West Central Area. These students engaged in both individual and team competitions, tackling seven rounds of challenging mathematical problems.

## MATH MASTERS

4<sup>th</sup> Grade Regional Math Masters Competition  
April 19, 2024

### Fact and Drill:

1. Ivan Sullivan- Evansville Blue
1. Ira Lavu- Oak Grove Grovers
3. John Niemann- Clara Barton
3. Jace Foslie- WCA North Knights
3. Lucas Pekarek- St. Mary's Morris
3. Grayson Elmer- Evansville Gold
7. Haley Gillespie- Evansville Blue
7. Brayden Olson- Battle Lake
9. Onezime Wiedenman- Clara Barton Huskies
10. Jarret Zierden- Parkers Prairie
10. Eli Richter- Evansville Blue

### Individual Awards:

1. Ira Lavu- Oak Grove Grovers
2. Onezime Wiedenman- Clara Barton Huskies
3. Kellen Kwapinski- Fergus Falls Mathematic Monkeys
4. Truman Steinbrenner- Fergus Falls Math Machines
5. John Niemann- Clara Barton
6. Jace Foslie- WCA North Knights
7. Lucas Pekarek- St. Mary's Morris
8. Liam Jensen- Fergus Falls Little Einsteins
9. Timothy Uggerud- Fergus Falls Little Einsteins
10. Henrik Gustafson- Fergus Falls Big Brainers

### Team:

1. Fergus Falls Math Machines
2. Fergus Falls Mathematic Monkeys
3. Clara Barton Huskies
4. WCA North Knights



# 2024

## State Knowledge Bowl

Source/Author: Monica Thompson, Coordinator of Technology Integration and Academic Challenges

This year about 900 Senior High teams eagerly took part in Knowledge Bowl across the state. The top 48 teams got the chance to compete at the 2024 State Knowledge Bowl meet, held on April 11-12 at Cragun's Resort near Brainerd. Students had the opportunity to showcase their knowledge and critical thinking skills in this engaging academic competition.

The competition included a written test of 60 multiple choice questions and five oral rounds with 45 questions each. Teams answered questions on a variety of topics, including history, math, literature, science, and pop culture challenging students to think quickly and problem-solve on the spot. The atmosphere was filled with excitement as teams competed to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Congratulations to the Knowledge Bowl teams from Region 4 who competed at the State Meet: Ashby, Hancock, Park Christian, Perham, and Moorhead. They all did great facing some tough competition! Ashby took the 13th spot in the A division, closely followed by Hancock in 14th place. Park Christian impressed with a 4th place finish in the AA division, while Perham secured 12th place. Moorhead Orange achieved 7th place in the AAA division, with Moorhead Black following in 16th place. For more information and updates, be sure to check out the [State Knowledge Bowl website](#).







**Audrey Erickson**

Moorhead Public School

I believe I have been coaching for 28 years. I took over for Ken Tangen, who was one of the original founding members of Knowledge Bowl in Minnesota.

Trivia games have always been one of my favorite pastimes, and reading thousands of Knowledge Bowl questions has really improved my knowledge base! I love learning new things, and being surrounded by kids who share that passion has been so much fun. Knowledge Bowl is an activity where it is "cool" to be curious and to know a lot of facts and I am glad to have been a part of creating that atmosphere in our school.

It has been fun to see where my former Knowledge Bowlers end up in life. Many have gone on to great things after exemplary college careers and now we are Facebook friends so I can follow their progress. Watching one of them compete on Jeopardy was especially exciting! It is always a fun day when we bring in teachers to a practice session and they "compete" against our student teams. The teachers are AMAZED at how much the students know, and I think it is gratifying for them to see that the kids were listening in class and learned a lot!

# Two Longtime Knowledge Bowl Coaches Retire

**Source/Author:** Monica Thompson, Coordinator of  
Technology Integration and Academic Challenges



**Bob Tangen**

**Perham Public School**

I had two stints of coaching. The first run was from 1990 to 2000. The second stint was as an assistant, from about 2017 through 2024.

I thoroughly enjoy seeing the Knowledge Bowl competitors in a different light than in the classroom as students.

A memorable moment was from the mid 1990s, when my team competed against my father's team from Moorhead in the final round. We both lost.

# MINNESOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

## RECOGNIZE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING

### MNAFEE

#### INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING AWARD

## 2024

**Deb Berry**

EARLY CHILDHOOD  
TEACHER

Congratulations on your achievement and the positive impact on Early Childhood Literacy in the Brandon-Evansville community!



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 Initiative Coordinator.

**Photo 1 :** Deb Berry, LCSC Early Childhood Teacher, Acceptance Speech

**Photo 2:** from Left: Betty Uehling, MNAFEE Board of Directors; Deb Berry, LCSC Early Childhood Teacher; Beth Achter, ECFE Regional Coordinator; Nancy Wallace, MNAFEE Board of Directors

The Raising a Reader Early Literacy Program from the Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) Brandon-Evansville Pilot was chosen as a winner of the MNAFEE Innovative Programming Award for 2024. Based on a national model, the program involves reading take-home book bags and school-based parent-child activities.

Raising A Reader takes a family, school, and community collaborative approach, involving children starting at birth and continuing through second grade. The official launch was in the fall of 2021, with a trial run involving a few home—and center-based childcare centers in the summer of 2021.

Currently, there are 165 students involved; factoring in other family members, it's estimated that the program impacts approximately 735 people, more than half of the local population of roughly 1,300.

The research clearly shows that strong, engaged families significantly impact children's educational and life outcomes. When families read together, they share more than stories.

Reading together strengthens bonds between children and the caring adults in their lives.

**Do you want to learn more about the Raising A Reader program? Visit our website at [LCSC.org](https://LCSC.org) and click on programs.**

**Source/Author:** Deb Berry, LCSC Early Childhood Teacher





# Troy Haugen

Receives

## Minnesota FFA

### 2024 HONORARY STATE DEGREE



#### MINNESOTA FFA 2024 HONORARY STATE DEGREE RECIPIENT

*Troy Haugen*

Lakes Country Service Cooperative's  
Director of Career & College Readiness

Congratulations on being recognized  
for your support towards Ag Educators  
and Ag Education programs!

Congratulations!



Troy Haugen was recently recognized as a Minnesota FFA 2024 Honorary State Degree Recipient at the Minnesota State FFA Convention. Troy's nomination stated that he has been a catalyst and champion for Ag Education over the past decade in supporting Career and Tech Ed (CTE) programs. His tireless efforts have elevated programs through numerous Perkins grant cycles and streamlined many aspects of CTE to increase the number and efficacy of Ag Educators statewide. Troy's advocacy for Career and Technical Student Organizations (including FFA) at the state and national levels has ensured their continued support and growth. His leadership in the development of numerous legislation developments, both in the state legislature and in Congress, including assisting in the language of the previous round of Carl Perkins legislation, has had a profound impact on the Ag Education community. Troy has developed the cleanest and most accurate process for both Ag Education Program approval (including the FFA components of program approval) and in utilizing Carl Perkins funding, as the legislation is intended to help provide the highest quality, industry-standard equipment for Ag Ed programs. These efforts have collectively uplifted Ag teachers, who, in turn, uplifted all Ag Ed students and FFA members.

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# BRINGING TECHNOLOGY TO THE LITTLEST OTTERS

## 544 FOUNDATION AWARDED GRANT TO OTTER PRESCHOOL

Source: Karrie Carlson, Daily Journal Media

Lincoln School houses a number of programs: ECFE, School-Readiness-Otter Preschool and the United Way/ECFE Child Care Visitor Program. All of these programs are designed to support the development of children from birth to five years of age. Sarah Velde, ISD 544 Early Childhood Education Interim Coordinator, stated that, “A key component to ECFE programs is School Readiness-Otter Preschool. This component is aimed at ensuring that children enter formal schooling equipped with the necessary skills, confidence, and readiness to succeed academically and socially.”

Thanks to a \$9,827.86 grant awarded by the 544 Education Foundation, Lincoln School now has three interactive panels in Otter Preschool classrooms to aid in curriculum and development programs.

Velde said, “With the acquisition of a new curriculum this year at Lincoln School, and several of its components having the ability to use technology, our request revolved around the increased need for interactive panels in our classrooms.”

The new curriculum has an online component that will now be accessible to the teachers and students. Velde said that the panels will help the teaching staff use the curriculum to its full potential.

According to the Department of Education, “Early learners can use technology to explore new worlds, make believe, and actively engage in fun and challenging activities. They can learn about technology and technology tools, and use them to play, solve problems and role play.”

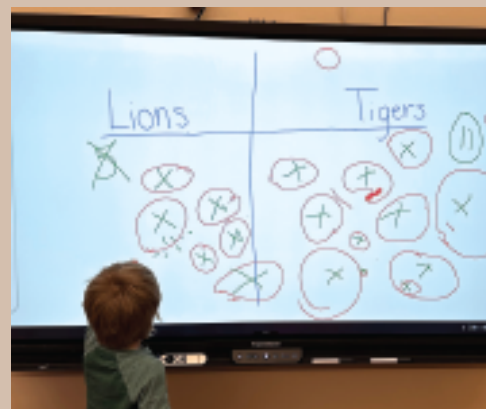
With the grant, Otter Preschool educators have the ability to use more technology in the classrooms to provide age-appropriate enrichment material and further the development of the youngest Otters, Velde explained.

The interactive panels are not going to replace the superior preschool teaching experience that has always been a staple in the district. Velde said, “Incorporating technology into our Otter Preschool programs offers many benefits, but it’s essential to do so thoughtfully and purposefully.” She goes on, “We want to use technology as a tool to enhance learning experiences rather than replace traditional hands-on, interactive experiences. It’s important to ensure that the technology we use is appropriate for the children’s development and accessible to everyone involved in our program.”

Every year, the 544 Foundation approves thousands in grants to different departments and schools. At an October 2023 meeting, over \$38,000 was awarded throughout the district.



According to Velde, the interactive panels were initially a complement to the new curriculum, but they have also been versatile tools in the classroom. “Teachers have discovered a wide range of uses, from utilizing them as interactive whiteboards to aking virtual field trips, enriching music experiences and incorporating STEAM activities,” she said. “We are incredibly thankful to the 544 Education Foundation and their generous donors’ continued commitment to the students of Fergus Falls.”





# CPC Team

**Receives Association  
of Educational  
Purchasing Agencies  
(AEPA) Innovation  
Award.**

Congratulations to the Cooperative Purchasing Connection (CPC) team for winning an innovation award from the Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies (AEPA). CPC is a joint powers program of eight of the nine service cooperatives in Minnesota and the North Dakota Educators Service Cooperative in North Dakota. Our service cooperative home is LCSC! The CPC contracts are used by schools, government agencies and nonprofits across multiple states. Fees generated by the program help to support ALL of the work of the cooperatives. We're happy to be recognized for our work in innovating online platforms for procurement, from bidding to buying!



**From Left:** Julia Dangerfield, CPC Program Representative; Mary Juliot, Marketing and Design Generalist; Jane Eastes, Deputy Executive Director; Amy Lohse, Procurement Specialist; Lori Mittelstadt, Cooperative Purchasing Program Assistant; Melissa Mattson, Director of Administrative Services; Rosemary Dahl, North Dakota Educators Service Cooperative Program Representative; and Jerome Evans, CPC Program Representative



## Olympus Lockers - 40% Off

CPC vendor Olympus Lockers and Storage Products offer athletic and custom lockers at a competitively negotiated discounted price. They have reached out to offer a set of lockers at a discount that extends beyond their standard CPC Contract price.

Learn more about CPC's contract with Olympus Lockers and Storage Products







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### CONTACT US

**Phone:** (218) 739-3273  
(800)739-3273 (toll free)

**Fax:** (218) 739-2459

**Email:** [communicator@lcsc.org](mailto:communicator@lcsc.org)

**Executive Director:** Jeremy Kovash



### COMMUNICATOR STAFF

**Editors:** Jane Eastes: [jeastes@lcsc.org](mailto:jeastes@lcsc.org)

Mary Phillipe: [mphillipe@lcsc.org](mailto:mphillipe@lcsc.org)

### Address:

Lakes Country Service Cooperative  
1001 E. Mount Faith  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

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