January 2023

LCSC Communicator

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative
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Regional News, Views, and Information

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EDUCATION-
Electronic Edition
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Lakes Country Service Cooperative

FINDING SUCCESS

in Instructional SETTING IV

Where can students with extreme emotional behaviors, autism spectrum disorder, and developmental cognitive disabilities in our region learn and feel included?

At Lakes Country Academy (LCA)!

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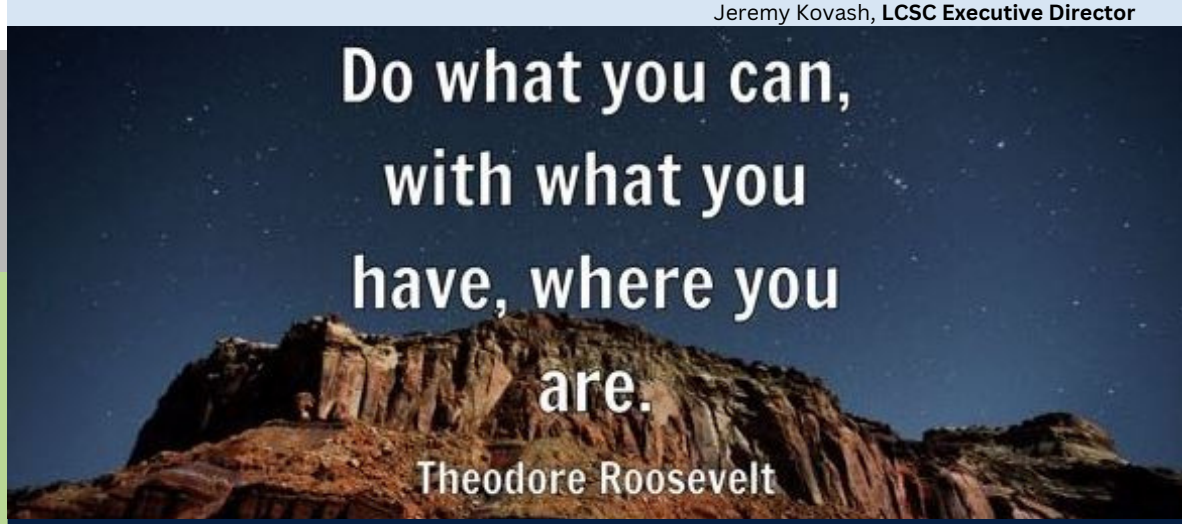
SUN Student at LCA in Fergus Falls

GREETINGS FROM LAKES COUNTRY SERVICE COOPERATIVE

The quote below hangs in my home office. I wish I could state that I was awesome at listening to these words by our 26th President. However, I often get caught up looking forward or behind. I, too often, do not do what I can with what I have.

However, I am proud to say that our team at Lakes Country does do what we can with what we have… every single day. We are proud to lead and serve and help our school communities. We listen, we innovate, and we achieve. We look forward to a wonderful 2023 filled with expectations and opportunities. Thank you for working with us. Thank you for your continued faith in our services, programs, and, most of all, our people. We hope you enjoy this edition of The Communicator. Together We Achieve…

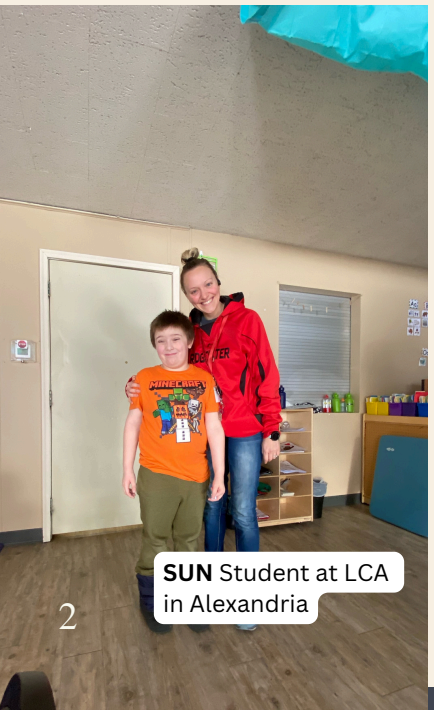
Jeremy Kovash, **LCSC Executive Director**







Student at LCA in Alexandria



SUN Student at LCA in Alexandria

Every school district wants to provide its students with the skills they need to transition into adult life successfully. Before 2017, our region's member district schools were on their own to provide customized special education services to students with unique needs. Through the partnership and commitment of 24-member school districts, Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) created a vision and planned to open three federal setting IV LCA program locations in Alexandria, Fergus Falls, and Moorhead at the end of 2017.

LCA Mission Statement
Lakes Country Academy exists to serve students with educational and behavioral challenges by providing transformational support and skills (through evidence-based practices) in a highly individualized environment.

What exactly is a setting IV program? Students in instructional setting IV programs qualify for special education services. They need to access those services in a separate public school facility for more than fifty percent of their school day. Students with disabilities receiving services in instructional setting IV need more intensive special education and related services than can be provided in a less restrictive public school setting. Some setting IV programs have specific programs for students who meet eligibility under Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD], Emotional Behavioral Disorder [EBD], and Developmental Cognitive Disabilities (DCD).



ANGELA DOLL
LCA Special Education Director

Today, under the leadership of Special Education Director Angela Doll, LCA continues to provide unique programming to our region's most challenging students with locations in Alexandria and Fergus Falls. Doll began her career in education as an Emotional and Behavior Disorders (EBD) and Learning disabilities (LD) teacher. "I find happiness in working with students who struggle in the traditional classroom," said Doll.

Doll stated that there are two types of students who are able to attend LCA. Some students cannot tolerate a 45-minute classroom period. They may attempt to leave the classroom, building, or school grounds. These students may lose control and use offensive language or gestures. Doll also noted that many students displaying these behaviors may have experienced trauma. For this group, there is a high level of teacher-to-student ratio.

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Source: *Angela Doll, LCSC's Special Education Director; Cheryl Hirst, Fergus Falls Site Administrator, Kendra Roob, Alexandria Dean of Students and Behavioral Analyst; Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Construction Codes and Licensing Division; Josh Nelson, Deputy Director of Educational Programs*
Author: *Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Generalist*

The second group is Students with Unique Needs (SUN). Students in this group are on the Autism Spectrum. The SUN program supports students with cognitive, communication, and behavioral challenges. The STAR curriculum is utilized for the SUN program and teaches children with autism critical skills. Research indicates that students with these needs require a quiet, structured space with specialized materials to make progress within a school setting. At times, our member districts could not support this level of service. Originally the SUN program was only located at the LCA site in Alexandria. However, discussions with member districts made it clear that this program was needed at the Fergus Falls LCA site. Currently, both sites have the staff, and facility requirements met to offer SUN programming.

"Our goal is to get the students back in the resident district," said Doll. The LCA has successfully provided programming to transition students back to their home district, and Doll was eager to share a recent success story of an LCA student. Doll described this student as a "runner" and detailed how the student would frequently exit the classroom. There were often extremely aggressive behaviors and the inability to set appropriate boundaries with people. With the work of the LCA's highly trained teachers and caring paraprofessionals, the student is back in their home district; the student can follow a schedule and remain in a classroom without disruption and with almost no aggression.

The current enrollment at the LCA in Fergus Falls is 21 students with a capacity of 25. Eleven students are at the Alexandria LCA site, and this site is currently enrolled at capacity. Alexandria has students from first through sixth grade, and Fergus Falls has students enrolled through twelfth grade.

Doll shared that one of her challenges is the number of referrals received versus the capacity to serve the referrals. For the current school year, there have been thirteen referrals. LCA needs more room to accept more students, and age level plus specific needs of the students of the referrals affects capacity as well. The LCA could also use a list of substitute teachers to pull from when the need arises.



SUN Student at LCA in Alexandria

Additional challenges lie in the ability to find licensed teachers. "The licensing system is archaic for our current needs," said Doll. "Moving a tier one or tier two teacher to tier three can be difficult. Candidates may have the background and unique training needed to teach at LCA. Still, the licensing process is often too cumbersome for a working professional to complete in a timely manner."

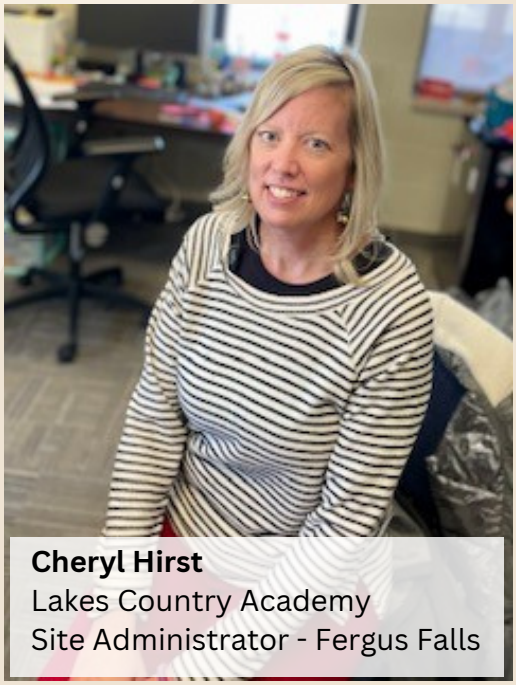
LCA has onsite Board-Certified Behavior Analysts through a contract with Southwest Service Cooperative. The LCA provides Social Workers onsite to help parents and caregivers of students navigate services they may need. Doll stated, "There is so much pressure on schools to solve many problems. We find ourselves having to be everything to everyone, which takes many resources."

With Doll's passion for helping students who do not fit within the public school setting, it is concerning to her that some kids do not have access to this programming in their communities.

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SUN Student at LCA in Alexandria



Cheryl Hirst
Lakes Country Academy
Site Administrator - Fergus Falls

At each of the LCA sites, an individual oversees the daily operation. In Fergus Falls, Cheryl Hirst serves as the site Administrator. Hirst has spent most of her career in special education and has always been compelled to help those students who struggle, especially behaviorally.

"The team in the Fergus Falls site has such a positive mindset," said Hirst. In Fergus Falls, Hirst has an open-door policy and philosophy regarding managing the staff and working with students. The LCA in Fergus Falls uses a "team teaching" approach to find more balance with the staff in their workload. The LCA site in Fergus Falls has seven licensed teachers and 11 paraprofessionals to support the students.

Hirst shared that the most significant challenges are motivating students to make good choices and attendance. To help provide a positive program and emphasize teamwork between students and staff, the site has been coordinating building-wide activities students and staff enjoy, such as the September tailgating party, October Halloween Bingo, a pie day before Thanksgiving, and community meals. Staff are also getting out of the building more this year with their students. Whether through field trips or community outings that support their Individual Education Plan (IEP). For example, during the last election, the students went to the polling sites to experience how the voting process works. These experiences allow our students to participate in some events they may not have had a chance to do before, contributing to their social/emotional learning since behavior is a must on the field trip, along with functional activities that assist with our student's transitional skills.



GYMNASIUM
Lakes Country Academy
Fergus Falls

In Alexandria, Kendra Roob works as the Dean of Students and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Roob began her career as a Special Ed Teacher in Big Lake, MN. "I always wanted to be in education," said Roob. When she started searching for opportunities in a level four setting, she found the perfect opportunity at LCA, where she began as a teacher in the Fergus Falls and Moorhead sites and then relocated to the Alexandria site, where she has since remained. In Alexandria, Roob served as a Behavior Specialist for three years before acquiring her master's in special education and becoming a Board-certified Behavioral Analyst. She enjoys her leadership role and helping the staff when working with the students' challenging behaviors.

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Student at LCA in Alexandria

> We are making a difference in children's lives!
>
> *– Kendra Roob, Lakes Country Academy Dean of Students - Alexandria*



Roob shared that over the last three years, the team in Alexandria has made some staff changes which has helped them develop into an even stronger and more positive team. "Working at a setting IV school is physically and mentally challenging, but having the support of a team makes working at LCA Alexandria very enjoyable. Our team works to ensure we are taking a positive approach with students, and we start each day fresh. Especially when they have a rough patch and struggle at home," said Roob. "We want to ensure we provide the resources for the students to be successful. Due to our small environment and high staff-to-student ratio, we can connect with students and develop positive rapport, a key element to success."

With an ever-growing list of referrals, Special Education Director Angela Doll knows that the exceptional work of the teams at Lakes Country Academy is critical for children in our region, and the future of expanded services is inescapable.

If you want to stay updated on news and information about Lakes Country Academy and the program's growth, visit our website at LCSC.org and click on Lakes Country Academy. You can also contact Angela Doll at adoll@lcsc.org.

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Ulen-Hitterdal

2022 Teacher of the Year

ERIC LEE



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

The Ulen-Hitterdal Education Association (UHEA) recently selected 4th-grade teacher Eric Lee to receive their Teacher of the Year award. He recently received a certificate in recognition for this achievement.

After graduating from St. John's University in elementary education and earning his master's degree in K-6 math from Western Governors University, Eric worked for two years at Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop and then one year at Perham. In 2015 Eric took a teaching position at Ulen-Hitterdal School. He is currently in his fourth year of teaching 4th grade but has taught various other grades, including 1st and 6th. In addition to his teaching duties, Eric coaches junior high football and girls' and boys' basketball and serves on the school's Instructional Leadership Team and Curriculum Committee.

When asked about what he likes at UH, Eric states that he enjoys interacting with the students as he gets to know them. "At Ulen-Hitterdal, the smaller class sizes allow the teachers to build a meaningful connection with the students. UH has great students, staff, and community support that all strive to provide the best education possible for students."

In his leisure time, Eric loves spending time outdoors, especially at his parent's cabin. He also enjoys attending his nephew's football, basketball, and baseball games.

A BIG WELCOME TO NEW TEACHER AT ULEN-HITTERDAL SCHOOL

Steven Ranweiler - Art Teacher



After graduating from MSUM with a Bachelor of Fine Art in K-12 Art Education, Steven taught at Kindred Elementary and Sheyenne High School as a long-term substitute. He has also worked as an art installer and assistant to the Gallery Director at MSUM. Steven is excited to be a part of the UH community. "Being the sole K-12 art teacher is a fantastic opportunity to build connections with students and see them build their skills year after year." With a college minor in ecology and evolutionary biology, he spends much of his volunteer time on environmental advocacy, sharing food, and restoring native habitats.

He enjoys hiking, camping, trying out new plant-based recipes with my partner, and distance running in his free time. Instead of pets, Steven cares for a collection of high-maintenance plants, including staghorn ferns, fruiting cacti, and a banana plant. He started this new position a few weeks ago and stated, "Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me and helped me get settled in already!"

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

CPC in 2023!

COOPERATIVE *Purchasing* CONNECTION

Whatever your priority for 2023, CPC has your back!
Get familiar with how CPC can support your projects and priorities next calendar year! And remember - our contract satisfies state procurement guidelines, so when you use the CPC contract, you can just get started. Cooperative Purchasing Connection is dedicated to providing our members extraordinary service and value. Here are a few ways that we demonstrate that commitment:



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Express, brings efficiencies to your purchasing process! Through Express, your team can shop across multiple contracts simultaneously to secure the products they need, whether you ring from multiple schools, across departments, or in a centralized procurement office! The entire process is convenient!

CPC TEAM
Every member of the CPC Team is a public, nonprofit procurement professional. We are always thrilled to help you work cooperative purchasing into a project plan, select the best vendor for a product or service, or better understand online eProcurement through an Express training!

SOLICITATIONS
CPC goes through the competitive sealed solicitation process, saving you the time and cost of running the solicitation yourself. We award contracts to vendors who bring exceptional value to our members. That value can be in product and service discounts, shipping discounts, consultation services, and more.
Examples:
ServiceMaster - During a natural disaster, CPC members will be taken in as a priority clients and moved to the top for priority response.
Bluum Technology - Members have a dedicated email address for easy and efficient transactions on the CPC Contract; cpc@bluum.com





A POINT OF PRIDE

Parkers Prairie Public Schools

Developing Leaders in the Parkers Prairie School District

SOURCE: PETER HAAPALA, PARKER PRAIRIE SCHOOL DISTRICT INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT; PARKERS PRAIRIE ISD 547 WEBSITE
AUTHOR: MARY PHILLIPE, LCSC COMMUNICATIONS GENERALIST

Interim Parkers Prairie Superintendent Peter Haapala has an hour to plan his day during his morning commute from Menahga to Parkers Prairie. Haapala spends some of his morning drive time dreaming of what he will do in retirement. At the same time, taking precedence are his plans to positively impact the school district during his short assignment in Parkers Prairie. Haapala decided to accept the interim role following the resignation of former Superintendent Dean Yocum this past August. He looks to his years of experience to serve the students best and ensure the school district is financially stable before he leaves the school in June.

When the Parkers Prairie School board looked at filling the opening for the superintendent, the qualities deemed necessary were that the candidate was a veteran superintendent and strong in finance and communication. Before accepting the position in Parkers Prairie, Haapala worked as a Superintendent in Warroad, MN, and in Carlton, MN. It was in Carlton where Haapala had great success taking a school district out of statutory operating debt.



PETER HAAPALA,
Interim Superintendent

Parkers Prairie School District employs 120 plus individuals to support 570 students. When asked what makes the school unique, Haapala said, “The strength of this community makes this school unique. The Parkers Prairie community is incredibly generous and supportive of their hometown school district.” Haapala shared that one example of this generosity is the annual funding from Parkers Prairie supporters to help eighth-grade science students travel to South Dakota for their week-long science trip. In a town with a population of a little over 1,000 residents, this is incredible!

continued on next page...

In addition to this annual support, the recent construction of a new football and baseball field was funded through local community support. The school district also operates a childcare facility in the elementary school, which is in its second year. It is open to the public and supports staff members in the school district who need care for their children while at work. The childcare center cares for 44 enrolled children aged birth to five. These partnerships are great examples of how a community and its school can work together to support each other and build a stronger community.

Haapala shared that a particular point of pride for the school is the staff and administration using the FranklinCovey Leader in Me program to help develop students into leaders. This program has been used in the elementary school for several years and is now in place at the high school. The program allows teachers and students to work together to develop the skills and self-confidence they need to lead their lives and succeed in school and beyond. Haapala stated, "This program brings people together to work collaboratively, giving a common direction and language when dealing with kids." He also indicated that at the elementary level, the kids are stepping up and accepting leadership roles, they treat each other better, and there is a reduction in the reports of student bullying incidents.



> **Covid forced a shift in how we deliver education.**

When asked where Parkers Prairie School District can improve, Haapala said, "Covid forced a shift in how we deliver education. Large schools have lost students to online learning programs. The school district is losing students to the post-secondary programs, and they are leaving to attend PSEO classes which are more flexible at Alexandria Tech with their work schedules. Students can take courses at Alex Tech in the morning and work in the afternoon. Our school needs to be more flexible for our students' needs."

Haapala also shared that the school needs to shift what is available to students to keep the students in the smaller schools and draw families to the community. Attending a small school and living in a small community can help parents and caregivers feel at ease about sending their children to school in the morning. Parkers Prairie Public School is a small school. Still, to its advantage, it allows for more one-on-one communication where teachers and staff can connect in meaningful ways with their students and their parents or caregivers—helping to create a collaborative approach to educating students in the classroom.

Do you want to learn more about the Parkers Prairie Public Schools and how this small community supports its children? Contact Interim Superintendent Peter Haapala at 218-338-6011 or check out the Superintendent Saga blog at isd547.org.



CONGRATULATIONS!
WADE NIBBE
MASMS 2022 FACILITIES PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Author: MASMS - The Messenger Newsletter

Wade Nibbe, Alexandria Public Schools, is the 2022 MASMS Educational Professional of the Year.
To receive this award, the individual is an innovator, natural leader and consistently exhibits professionalism, service and integrity. A $1,000 scholarship is given to the Alexandria Schools in the name of Wade Nibbe.
Thank you to Hillyard and Johnson Controls, who provide the funds for this award.

MASMS - Minnesota Association of School Maintenance Supervisors -An association committed to promoting excellence in the operation and care of educational facilities.

2022 MASMS $1,000 SUSTAINABLE GRANT
AWARDED TO THE DILWORTH-GLYNDON-FELTON HIGH SCHOOL

Author: Katie Oman, DGF Middle & High School Assistant Principal

Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton High School has a courtyard that has never been maintained. This courtyard is centrally located, with classrooms surrounding the space. As you can see, this space is currently full of weeds and wasps. It has been a goal of mine to revitalize this area into a learning and aesthetically appealing space. Before applying for this grant, I visited with different teachers to see how their curriculum could align with helping to maintain this space. A usable courtyard could provide cross-curricular collaboration and opportunities across different grade levels. The goal of the space would be to have grass along with plants, flowers, and a small spring/fall-producing garden. Additionally, we would like to provide some seating in this space for outdoor learning. Eventually, we would also like another access point to this space as there is only one door through our chemistry classroom.



ZERO TO ONE PROGRAM FOR RURAL INNOVATION



Greater Fergus Falls (GFF) is pleased to announce a partnership with ILT Academy to launch a hybrid 6-week program that brings together students and community leaders interested in identifying opportunities and areas for growth and development to attract and retain residents in Fergus Falls. Have you ever thought about what types of retail, restaurants, services, or recreational activities might be missing from the Fergus Falls business ecosystem? GFF is looking for participants to pitch ideas and collaborate with other local high school students (16+) and community leaders to identify, refine, and explore opportunities through a guided design thinking and innovation process.

Participants will learn how to unpack and refine ideas, explore alternative opportunities, understand the market potential and validate their idea. Additionally, participants will learn how to use lean canvas, create elevator pitches and 30-second pitches, and develop a 5-minute presentation to pitch to investors and stakeholders.

ILT Studios Founder and CEO Nick Tietz said, "Unlocking the talent in our rural communities is a critical success factor to thrive in the 21st century. Communities like Fergus Falls are leading a new wave that seeks to engage youth and community leaders to launch initiatives and programs that support innovation, entrepreneurship, workforce development, and community development," he continued, "ILT Academy is proud to partner with GFF to launch the Zero to One Program for Rural Innovation."

This community-based cohort-styled initiative is limited to 12 residents, half of whom are local high school students. There is no cost to participate but it will require half and full-day Saturday workshops starting January 21st and wrapping up March 25th, 2023.

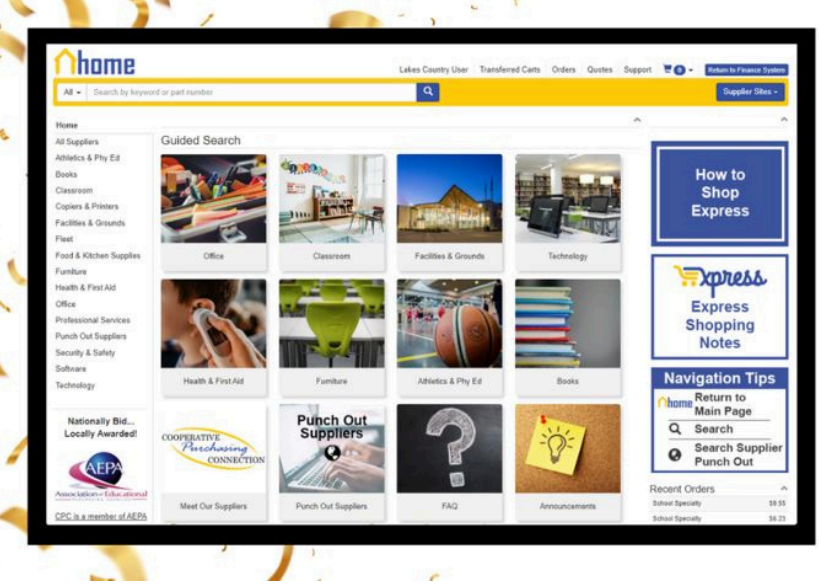
An introductory workshop is scheduled for Saturday, January 21st, from 9 am - NOON at The Foundry at 101 W. Lincoln Ave. Interested community members are invited to attend this initial workshop before applying.

"Whether it be a retail store, an indoor roller skating rink, or an arcade, we receive countless inquiries and suggestions from the community as opportunities to expand the quality of life for young people. This is an opportunity for residents to come together, learn about the process, and bring actionable ideas to the table," said GFF"s CEO NeTia Bauman.

ILT Academy is funded by economic development organizations throughout Greater Minnesota with support from Launch MN to coach, support, and boost entrepreneurs and soon-to-be entrepreneurs on their startup journeys. Over the past year, ILT has facilitated 20 cohorts and trained 380 entrepreneurs focusing on Greater Minnesota.

For more information and to apply, visit https://bit.ly/ZerotoOneFF.

Author: NeTia Bauman, CEO, Greater Fergus Falls Corporation



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CONTACT US
Phone: (218) 739-3273
(800)739-3273 (toll free)
Fax: (218) 739-2459
Email: communicator@lcsc.org
Executive Director: Jeremy Kovash

COMMUNICATOR STAFF
Editors: Jane Eastes: jeastes@lcsc.org
Mary Phillipe: mphillipe@lcsc.org
Address:
Lakes Country Service Cooperative
1001 E. Mount Faith
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
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