June 2023

LCSC Communicator

Regional News, Views, and Information

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative
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HITTERDAL



A Rural Community Offering a Different Experience

The short drive from Fergus Falls to Hitterdal is scenic, with breathtaking farmland, clear blue skies, and rolling hills. Located 31 miles east of Moorhead and 30 miles west of Detroit Lakes, it offers affordable housing options for families who commute to the Fargo Moorhead area and seek weekend getaways in the lakes region. “Housing is affordable in Hitterdal, and when a home becomes available for sale, it does not stay on the market for very long, “ said Melody Okke, Hitterdal City Clerk.

Okke has served as City Clerk for over a year and expressed her fondness for the job, which perfectly suits her. Okke revealed that she is a cowgirl and owns a beef ranch alongside her spouse, located west of Hitterdal. The part-time position allows her to interact with city residents while still having time to help on the ranch. She discovered the job posting in the newspaper and felt that it was ideal for her in terms of the hours and job description.

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Source: Melody Okke, Hitterdal City Clerk, Minnesota Historical Society, Lakes&woods.com
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC's Communications Generalist

When I arrived at Hitterdal City Hall, a retired resident was there to collect flags for Memorial Day. Okke says City Hall is the go-to place for all the community's needs. Hitterdal is a close-knit town where neighbors know each other and are always willing to lend a hand. Despite its small population of just 199 residents, it is a flourishing farming community. The town's vitality depends heavily on the main street, which still offers several amenities that benefit the predominantly retired farming population. These include a Senior Center, US Post Office, State Bank of Lake Park, and Hitterdal Bar and Restaurant. While these businesses help keep the community alive, Okke believes there is still room for growth. A coffee shop and convenience store would make great additions to the town, in addition to also providing more employment opportunities for residents.





Melody Okke

Hitterdal City Clerk

Hitterdal also has a regional distribution center for Legend Seed and the NLS Tree Service operation on the town's border. One of the most significant contributors to the city's needs is the local Lions Club, which has generously supported various initiatives such as holiday lights and a city tractor through its charitable gaming. "We are so fortunate to have a strong Lions Club in our community," shared Okke. Val Johnson, a local member of the Hitterdal Lions Club, donates her time to check in on her neighbors and provides rides to medical appointments when needed. "That is the attitude of our community members," said Okke. "If you need help, someone in our community will be there for you and checking in to ensure you are doing well." Regarding events, Hitterfest is the city's largest summer event that brings outside communities and city residents together.

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Interested in learning more about Hitterdal, including its events and opportunities? Reach out to Melody Okke at 218-962-3357.

The June 24th fest includes a parade, a pig roast, a car show, and children's activities. Children's activities will occur at Hitterdal's former elementary school, which closed in 2002. This large, repurposed building provides a gathering space for the community and serves as an event center. The following day, June 25th, Salem Lutheran Church will celebrate its 150th Anniversary with a program and lunch at the community center.

As job opportunities, larger schools, and improved quality of life draw families away from rural communities, these areas often face a population decline. However, Hitterdal offers a different experience. Okke highlighted the numerous school options through open enrollment, a safe community, lower cost of living, less traffic and pollution, and a simpler, more peaceful lifestyle. Making it an ideal location to raise a family.



Minnesota Compass

Come and be a part of the June networking luncheon for nonprofit leaders in Lakes Country's nine-county region.

We are excited to Welcome Sheri Booms Holm, Senior Communications Specialist with Minnesota Compass. Ms. Holm is excited to share the Minnesota Compass resource with area nonprofits. You'll also enjoy a light lunch, and connect with other leaders in the nonprofit sector.

REGISTER NOW

From the

Executive Director

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



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director

Greetings and Happy Summer!

My uncle Curt sent me the book "When" by Daniel Pink. This book explores the science of timing and how it affects our daily lives, productivity, and decision-making. It opens the door to great thinking about our agencies and how we serve our communities. Here are a few examples:

Chronotypes and Scheduling: "When" delves into the concept of chronotypes, which refers to our preferences for certain times of the day. Some people are early birds, while others are night owls. Understanding the chronotypes of employees and citizens can help governmental agencies optimize scheduling and make more informed decisions about when to schedule important meetings, events, or tasks.

Circadian Rhythms and Productivity: The book discusses the influence of circadian rhythms on our productivity and performance. Our agencies can consider this when designing work schedules and determining the timing of demanding tasks. Aligning work schedules with employees' natural energy peaks can enhance productivity and effectiveness. Pink also introduces the concept of a "nappuccino," which involves taking a short nap followed by a cup of coffee.

The Power of Timing: "When" explores how the timing of certain events can significantly impact outcomes. For member cities, counties, and governmental agencies, this can involve considering the best times for public meetings, community engagement events, or public announcements. Understanding the timing preferences and constraints of the target audience can help maximize participation and reception of important information.

Temporal Landmarks: The book highlights the significance of temporal landmarks, such as the start of a new year, month, or week. Perhaps we can leverage these temporal landmarks to initiate changes, launch campaigns, or set goals, as they often provide psychological fresh starts and can increase motivation and commitment.

These insights from "When" might be helpful to us as we plan our futures. We hope you enjoy this edition of The Communicator and your next “nappuccino.”



THE YOUTHS OF PELICAN RAPIDS

Source: Staci Allmaras, Director, Western Lakes Regional Center of Excellence
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC's Communications Generalist



Our mission is to lift the YOUTH voices of Pelican Rapids as valued members of the community. We want to see ourselves in the spaces, activities, and events of Pelican Rapids to continue amplifying the power of the YOUTH'S voices to transform our future in the community.

One step at a time, a group of young people came together with a long-term vision for a youth center and short-term goals to provide monthly activities for teens and young adults in the Pelican Rapids community. "The Youths" is a group of adolescent and teen students from Pelican Rapids, formed from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The Youths was established in the summer of 2022 in response to Minnesota Student Survey results revealing a need for a feeling of belonging among students who weren't involved in sports or school activities. Nearly 50 percent of student enrollment in Pelican Rapids are students of color. This group meets weekly, uses their voices in decision-making spaces, hosts activities, and is learning civic leadership skills.

The Youths have already made waves in the Pelican Rapids community, attending multiple city council meetings to introduce their mission of having a voice in community decision-making processes regarding their demographic.

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Staci Allmaras, Director of the Regional Center of Excellence at Lakes Country Service Cooperative, supports the developing group and is their liaison to the Pelican Rapids City Council. She provides attentive listening and guidance only when needed. The Youths have received a $7,000 grant from West Central Initiative to work on developing their individual civic engagement skills. They are not yet a registered 501c3 with the state of Minnesota and are seeking the support of a fiscal sponsor, which will enable them to receive grants.
During their first presentation on January 10, The Youths' spokespersons requested the Pelican Rapids City Council's assistance in creating a task force to establish a center where teenagers and adolescents can safely gather. The council's response was positive and receptive. Mayor Frazier stated, "We hear your voice and appreciate you coming. That's how you are heard, by coming to the public square, and speaking and letting people know that you are here, that you have needs, and would like to see them fulfilled." Several Council members also acknowledged the Youth's voice. They expressed a desire to provide support through a small fund for community center development, helping to form a task force and assisting with grant writing recommended by The Youths' advisor, Staci Allmaras.
At the January 31st council meeting, The Youths presented a follow-up example of how the Frazee community worked together to provide a safe space for their youth. Allmaras shared that the group is exploring various grant opportunities, working on fundraising plans, developing communications and marketing, and has a long-term vision of a youth center. The next task is to form a community task force to begin strategic visioning.

"WE ARE A COMMUNITY COALITION OF YOUNG ADULTS TRYING TO BRING ALL ASPECTS OF THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER.
WE ARE COMING TO LIFT UP OUR VOICES TO BE HEARD."
- THE YOUTHS

Mayor Frazier stated about their attendance at City Council, "We are glad you are here. You are our future!" In small rural communities, the youth play a vital role in shaping the future. They bring in new ideas, energy, and talents that can help the community prosper and expand. For small communities like Pelican Rapids, The Youth can help shape their planning for future economic development.
Allmaras is pleased with the group's outreach to their community and the encouragement from the Pelican City Council Members. She expressed that her personal and professional values, beliefs, and passions are intertwined. Allmaras believes that young people possess the power to change the future for the better. "If we value their input in decision-making, create spaces where they feel valued, and help them develop as learners and leaders, our communities will positively impact outcomes for each of our young people," said Allmaras.

The Youth

touring the Frazee Youth Center



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WHY DID ALLMARAS BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE YOUTH?

Allmaras shared that in her role at Lakes Country Service Cooperative as the Regional Center of Excellence Director, she lives this out in her professional work through the LCSC mission, vision, and values and vision at the Western Lakes Regional Center of Excellence:

LCSC M I S S I O N:

"We Advocate for Strong Communities Through Service and Leadership."

LCSC V A L U E S:

Leadership: Transforming the Future for ALL

Collaboration: Together We Achieve a Culture of Learning and Growth

Service: Responsive, Innovative, Effective Solutions

LCSC V I S I O N:

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

Western Lakes Regional Center of Excellence Vision:

Equitable school systems where all students are valued, heard, and inspired to see themselves and be themselves while on their journey to become engaged global citizens.

Also newly elected to the Pelican Rapids school board, Allmaras values the school's philosophy that education is a partnership between students, families, schools, and the community. Pelican Rapids Public Schools places a high priority on their students and ensuring community engagement. The district focuses on educating the whole child, which Allmaras appreciates.

Whether in her personal or professional life, there is a strong emphasis on developing systems that enhance outcomes for young people. Allmaras was reviewing the 2019 MN student survey data for their region when she observed patterns regarding student perceptions of caring adults in their communities. This sparked her curiosity, leading her to examine the 2022 MN student survey, which revealed similar findings. In response to the 2022 results, the executive director of the Minnesota Children's Cabinet, Erin Baily, emphasized the need for the prioritization of children, youth, and families, along with a coordinated budget and policy development across state government that advances the needs of every child and young person in our communities. Although Allmaras has used this data to work with school systems, it is not meant to be confined to public education. "It takes a village" is a well-known phrase, so let's begin discussing this matter within our community spaces," said Allmaras.

Pelican Rapids is a remarkable community that embraces diversity in rural areas. While diversity is a fact of life, inclusion is a conscious decision. A group of young individuals is now leading in defining inclusiveness in their community and taking action to enhance outcomes for future generations.

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Staci Allmaras

Director, Western Lakes Regional Center of Excellence

For over four decades, the need for a space where young people can see themselves and be themselves has been a pressing topic in the Pelican Rapids community. Allmaras shared, "It's time to take action. Our youth have so much to offer, and I believe that if adults can relinquish some of their power and control tendencies, we can work together with our future leaders.

By listening and learning from them, we can provide the necessary support to enable them to lead with confidence and the assurance of caring adults by their side."

If you would like to learn more about The Youths, their mission, goals, and plans in Pelican Rapids, message them on their Facebook page at **The Youth on Facebook**.

Lakes Country Service Cooperative's

Featured Business Partner

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ORB Management is a mission-driven owner's representative and commercial real estate firm, serving non-profit clients across the region for 20 years. We equip clients with objective, experience-based information to facilitate smart decisions while navigating the acquisition, development, planning, design, and construction processes for real estate and facility projects.

We bring trusted project leadership from an objective and key coordination role - helping clients achieve their goals by optimizing the physical, functional, and financial metrics that affect the outcomes of every project.

Over the past four years alone, ORB has been engaged as the Owner's Representative for Sourcewell, Southwest West Central Services Cooperative, Mid-State Education District, Freshwater Education District, and the Walker-Hackensack-Akeley School District to help plan and develop seven mental health/behavioral disability Learning Centers (totaling more than 200,000 SF) across the region, with two more facilities in the planning stage. These facilities collaborated with multiple school districts, municipalities and EDA's, higher education, and the State of Minnesota to provide health and education services for students and adults with moderate to severe behavioral disabilities.

ORB also provides Owner's Representative services on multiple YMCAs, affordable/workforce housing, critical access hospital, and health/wellness facilities across the upper Midwest.

We have a passion for what we do and a desire to work with mission-aligned organizations that serve community needs.

ORB is ready to serve the members of LCSC and has collected feedback from clients to answer the question,



Why ORB Management?

- "Mission alignment."
- "We knew that when faced with challenges, our value-alignment would carry the day … we were right."
- "I'd trust ORB with my last nickel."
- "On a scale of 1 to 10, I'd give ORB an 11 … they could teach project management."
- "There were no surprises along the way."

Would you like to learn more about ORB and LCSC's other business partners?

Visit our website at **LCSC BUSINESS PARTNERS.**



IT TAKES A TEAM TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN

Source/Author: Rick Schara, West Central Initiative's Community Engagement Specialist

There are many ways to describe Battle Lake's Steve Nelson: husband, father, grandfather, cancer survivor, former business owner, consultant, retiree, and storyteller. We'll call him a philanthropist to tell this particular story.

Steve worked with many others in the Blanche/Otter Tail Lake area a few years back to raise the necessary funds to save 58 acres of woods and paths between the two lakes. The site was initially developed as a DNR walleye rearing pond that leaked water! Project supporters turned to West Central Initiative to help raise funds to save the land from being sold at public auction. Now, outdoor recreation opportunities from the Rearing Pond Trails are available to current and future generations.

"Working with Steve Nelson on the Rearing Pond Project was sheer joy," said Rebecca Petersen, West Central Initiative Director of Development. "Watching someone so informed and passionate about something is truly an inspiration. And, to quote Steve, who enlisted the help of others and rallied the Blanche and Otter Tail Lake communities, 'It was the right thing to do,' so they did it!"

Steve and many others, as he's quick to say - it's not about me, it's about we – are anticipating a groundbreaking this spring on some impressive significant improvements to nearby Glendalough State Park. The construction of a new trail center and an expanded trail system wouldn't have been possible without donations from individuals, businesses, and corporations who embraced the vision of a better experience for future park visitors.

Such "place-based living" enhancements make the region more attractive to visitors, people looking to relocate, and even businesses that can tout our quality of life.

So why get involved in such projects? Steve shrugs, "Some of the dues you pay for living in a small town or rural area are getting involved in your community."

Steve's roots are in this region, having grown up in Wadena. He graduated from Minnesota State University Moorhead, worked a few years in the corporate world, owned John Deere stores in Wadena and Henning, and spent 25 years in the management consulting industry. In 2015, Steve and his wife Jan retired to their home on Lake Blanche.

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He is still asked to do a little consulting occasionally, but four primary areas of interest have kept Steve busy during retirement. Number one, his family, and especially his ten grandchildren. Two and three, his involvement with the Rearing Pond Trails and Glendalough. And four, together with other members of his family, advocates on behalf of cancer patients and their caregivers, focusing on the benefits of genetic testing and regular screenings. He's a two-time survivor and active with national organizations fundraising, lobbying, and giving hope to others afflicted with cancer. So, he keeps busy. "I have all kinds of stuff to do in my retirement.

I don't have time to sit and look out the window," he laughs. But he does admit he likes his Lake Blanche view!What are some of his keys for successfully taking on fundraising for community projects?

For one, he says don't go in with enthusiasm without anything to back it up. "You need to know what you're talking about; you need to do your research," he said. "You have to be prepared. And you need to be willing to ask others for help, without concern for who gets the credit when you're successful."

When asked whether his background in sales helps in fundraising, Steve takes a different approach. "These (his projects) are pretty easy stories to tell. Yeah, it's selling. It's presenting the case. But if you believe, really believe in what you're selling (or advocating or raising money for), you're not selling; you're sharing. Do so with integrity and enthusiasm, and you will ultimately be successful."

Would you like to know more about West Central Initiative's Community Engagement Initiative? Contact WCI's Community Engagement Specialist Rick Schara at rick.schara@wcif.org

COOPERATIVE Purchasing CONNECTION

PLAYGROUND SURFACING SALE

Enhanced Wood Fiber Sale

CPC has partnered with SafetyFirst Playground Maintenance for an Enhanced Wood Fiber sale! The promotional discount runs from 5/1/2023 until 10/31/2023. Please find additional details and the online order form below:

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World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Source/Author: Becki Jordan, Communications Specialist, Someplace Safe

Abuse in later life and elder abuse are terms used to describe harm to older adults. Abuse in later life and elder abuse can happen to any older adult and occur in any setting and across all communities and backgrounds. Often, offenders are spouses, partners, family members, caregivers, and others in a relationship where the victim expects compassion and caring.

Sometimes, older adults are targeted because of perceived or actual disabilities or vulnerabilities. Strangers may also commit other crimes against older adults, such as scams.

Abuse often occurs in the person's home, including private dwellings or facility settings. Some forms of abuse, such as stalking, intimidation, and harassment, can also occur publicly. Researchers are still exploring risk factors for abuse later in life. However, there are a growing number of studies that suggest the following can be key risk factors:

- continuing to live with an intimate partner who has been abusive throughout the relationship;
- personal problems and dependency of the abuser;
- social isolation; and,
- physical and cognitive limitations or perceived limitations of potential victims.

Unfortunately, too many individuals are hurt in later life by spouses, partners, family members, caregivers, and others. However, help is available. Someplace Safe can provide confidential support, services, and information. Crime victims' services, such as those offered by Someplace Safe, are vital in helping older adults recover in the aftermath.



Nearly 100 survivors, aged 60 and older, accessed crime victim services from Someplace Safe over the past year. These survivors received assistance with safety planning, emergency resources, legal advocacy, and other services for elder abuse, domestic violence, harassment, identity theft, and other crimes.

"Thank you for helping me. I didn't know where to turn. My advocate was so helpful and helped turn things around. I felt like I could ask her anything without judgment. Having the support of Someplace Safe was so important to me."

– ***Survivor of Crime***

There is hope and help for those experiencing abuse in later life. Support is also available for families and loved ones who want to learn more about how they can help. Visit www.someplacesafe.info for more information or ways to get involved. Trained Someplace Safe advocates may be reached at 800-974-3359.

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ENHANCE
ALEXANDRIA



Source/Author: Heather Molesworth, Director of Family and Community Services and Operations, West Central Communities Action

West Central Minnesota Communities Action (WCMCA) is pleased to announce that it is one of ten Enhance Alexandria grant program recipients and has been awarded $75,000 by the Alexandria City Council. This funding will assist us in the supplementation of our Family Homeless and Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP), the Emergency Shelter Hotel Voucher Program, and the startup costs for a third Launch Pad unit.

Our Family Homeless and Assistance Program assists households with prevention rental assistance so they can remain housed or may provide assistance to homeless households with the first month's rent and/or deposit to secure housing.

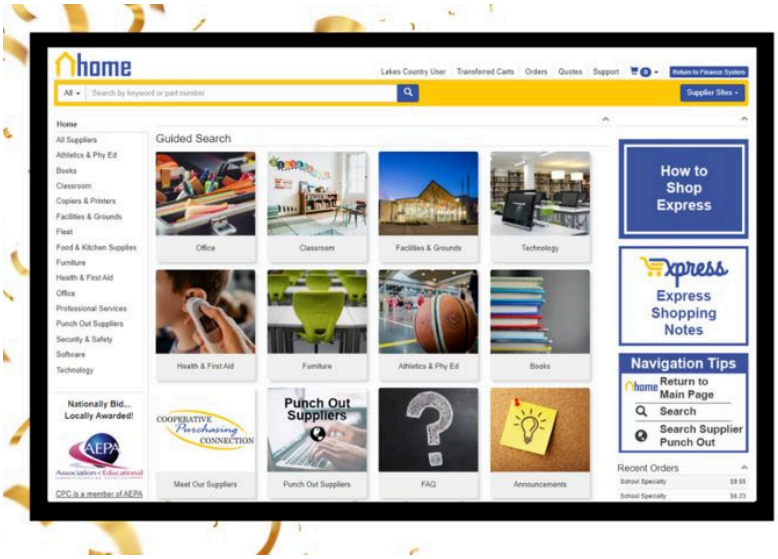
Since the off-ramp of the Eviction Moratorium, we have seen substantial increases in our Emergency Housing application numbers. Our FHPAP grant runs in a Two-year cycle that began on October 1, 2021, and will end on September 30, 2023. As of March 31, 2023, we had already received 557 applications across our five counties, with Douglas County holding the majority of those applications. With six months left in the grant, we have already received 71 more applications than the prior grant. The Enhance Alexandria grant will fill the gap in our FHPAP program for those within the Alexandria area.

There is no shelter within any of the five counties WCMCA serves and, at minimum, 60 miles from each of our communities. Our Emergency Hotel Voucher Program provides homeless households with a short-term hotel voucher and housing navigation services so that households may have a safe place to sleep and assistance in securing safe, permanent, and affordable housing. Due to increased needs, we utilized all our hotel vouchers six months before the end of the grant. Enhance Alexandria will supplement our funding to provide additional household shelter.

Finally, Enhance Alexandria will assist with the start-up costs of a third Launch Pad unit in Alexandria. Launch Pad is a shelter program in which we rent both units of a twin home from Alex HRA and provide shelter to one household at a time in each unit. Since the beginning of the program in June 2020, we have served 38 households in Launch Pad. Upon each opening of Launch Pad, we consistently have several homeless households at a time who are eligible. To assist more households, we will begin leasing a small, two-bedroom home in Alexandria from Alex HRA to utilize as a third Launch Pad unit.

Safe, stable, and affordable housing is a human right everyone deserves. With the support from Enhance Alexandria, we will be able to provide shelter and rental assistance to additional low-income households in hopes of ending their period of homelessness, along with assisting other households in sustaining their current housing.

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE? VISIT WCMCA AT WCMA.ORG.



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