August 2025

LCSC Communicator

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative
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Regional News, Views, and Information

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Glyndon

A Growing Minnesota Gem

SMALL-TOWN CHARM MEETS BIG-HEARTED COMMUNITY SPIRIT IN THIS THRIVING FARGO-MOORHEAD SUBURB

Located in west central Minnesota, Glyndon is a hidden gem that beautifully blends small-town charm with opportunities for growth in its open spaces. Situated just five miles from Dilworth and serving as a suburb to the larger Fargo-Moorhead area, Glyndon offers a friendly, safe community atmosphere that attracts new residents.

Its population is currently around 1,300 people, with an average of 6-10 new homes being built each year. Glyndon City Clerk/Treasurer, Wendy Affield, shared that she is excited to see the next census results.

The city was officially founded in 1872 with the expansion of the railroad. Officers of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company selected the city's name after "Howard Glyndon," which was the pen name of Laura C. Redden Searing, a notable poet and journalist of the late 19th century and a popular writer for Atlantic Hearth and Home.

continued on next page

Source: Justin Vogel, Glyndon Police Chief and Interim City Administrator, Wendy Affield, City Clerk/Treasurer; glyndonmn.com

Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Coordinator



Leadership and Community Spirit

Leading Glyndon's growth is City Administrator Justin Vogel. While new to this specific role, Vogel has been an integral part of the Glyndon community for five and a half years, serving as the Chief of Police. Before his time in Glyndon, he worked for the Moorhead Police Department for 15 years. Moving from law enforcement to city administration is quite a shift, but Vogel is enthusiastic about his future, stating, "Glyndon is a wonderful community." Originally from Dilworth and a graduate of Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton (DGF) Public Schools, he's happy to be staying local.

Vogel emphasizes the strength of Glyndon's city team, noting, "They work well together." A key member of this team is Wendy Affield, the City Clerk/Treasurer. Wendy began working for the City of Glyndon in 2014 as the Deputy Clerk and transitioned to her current role in 2017.

Originally from Barnesville and now living in the Baker-Sabin area, Wendy spent 24 years working at the lumber yard in Barnesville before coming to Glyndon. She shared her strong connection to the community: "When I came here, the city was looking for someone to fill the Deputy Clerk position. I walked through the door, and I knew this was where I wanted to stay."

The city currently employs nine full-time employees, including a fully staffed Law Enforcement Department with five full-time officers.



Wendy Affield
Glyndon City Clerk/Treasurer

Glyndon's police department actively engages with residents through programs like "Coffee and Cards," held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the community center. Officers, off-duty, make breakfast and play cards with residents, fostering strong relationships within the community. This contributes to the low crime rate, as people know their officers by name and feel comfortable reporting suspicious activities.

Economic Growth and Future Development

Glyndon is experiencing substantial housing growth. There are two housing developments in Glyndon. Both are located on the south side of town. There are lots for sale to be built on of spec home to be purchased in both the Southview Addition and the Charleswood Addition. This growth underscores Glyndon's appeal as a small community, allowing residents to work in the Fargo-Moorhead area while enjoying a quaint, small-town lifestyle.

A significant upcoming project is the groundbreaking this fall for a 36-bed assisted living facility by Vitality Healthcare Management. This will be the first assisted living facility in Glyndon, a much-anticipated addition for residents who wish to remain in their community as they age.

Vogel expressed enthusiasm about this, stating, "We are really excited about this for our community — especially for our residents who have lived in Glyndon their whole life and are now at the age where they need assistance and do not want to move to the Fargo-Moorhead area." This facility will also create new employment opportunities for residents.

> "We like to set up programs for our citizens and get them out engaging with each other. We like to have a good connection to our community."
> **-Justin Vogel**



Economic development is a key focus for City Administrator Vogel, especially along the Highway 10 corridor, where there's a steady stream of traffic. He shared that one of their goals is to increase commercial property in this area, and they are actively planning how to attract new businesses.

Some current businesses in Glyndon include:

· 3 Bears Honey · Andy Lake Woodworks · APEX Drainage
· Dollar General · Fuchs Sanitation
· Glyndon Storage · Green Leaf Nursery · Ivan's Drywall
· Lupe's Tacos · Morty's Bar & Grill
· Mortenson Masonry
· Oasis C-Store · Olek Services Lawn & Snow · Randall's Excavating
· Petro Serve USA · Red River Valley CDL · The Hill Bar & Grill
· UC Hope Thrift Store

Infrastructure and Community Amenities

Maintaining and upgrading infrastructure is a priority for Glyndon. When asked about challenges, Vogel and Affield both quickly responded, "The roads," a common concern for Minnesota cities. Their plan over the next five years is to replace the majority of the city's roads, adding curbs and gutters. The city is actively pursuing grants to help fund these improvements.

Glyndon also has a water treatment plant. To keep up with expansion and continue providing high-quality drinking water, the city is seeking bond approval for upgrades to its 25-year-old system.

Looking Ahead: A Community's Vision

The future of Glyndon isn't just about new buildings and improved infrastructure; it's about fostering a place where generations can thrive. The upcoming Vitality Healthcare Management assisted living facility is a testament to this, ensuring that long-time residents can age gracefully within the community they've always called home. Simultaneously, the focus on expanding commercial opportunities along Highway 10 speaks to a desire for local prosperity and a broader economic base.

What truly sets Glyndon apart is its harmonious blend of past and future. It's a city proud of its roots, named for a literary figure, yet constantly looking forward, embracing growth while cherishing its small-town identity. It's a place where the community's leadership prioritizes citizen engagement, and where the everyday challenges of city management are met with a united front.

Would you like to learn more about the City of Glyndon and their plans for growth? Visit their website at glyndonmn.com

From the

Executive Director

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



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director

Growing Stability Through Service

At Lakes Country Service Cooperative, our mission has always been rooted in service — not as a buzzword, but as a philosophy that drives every solution we offer. In a world marked by uncertainty and change, we remain focused on facilitating growth and stability for all in our region through responsive, innovative, and effective solutions.

Our commitment to service is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in our long-standing leadership in Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRA/VEBA) and Health Savings Account (HSA) administration. Through these offerings, we've helped members build both short- and long-term financial security — empowering individuals and families to take control of their healthcare dollars while encouraging smart, strategic saving.

This work is backed by the strength of our collaborative efforts across Minnesota. Through our participation in the Minnesota Healthcare Consortium, our leadership in medical savings solutions is not only recognized — it's trusted.

Together, we have built one of the most robust and forward-thinking healthcare savings networks in the country, always with our members' well-being at the center.

But we're not stopping there.

To further support financial wellness for our employees, we're proud to partner with PlanMember Services, bringing even more tools and opportunities to our team. This pilot partnership represents a shared vision: to deliver flexible, accessible financial solutions that help individuals prepare for today and plan for tomorrow. We hope to bring this offering to our members in the future.

As our communities face new challenges and pursue new opportunities, Lakes Country Service Cooperative stands ready — not just as a provider, but as a partner. Through responsive action, innovative thinking, and effective implementation, we continue to live out our belief that service is the key to sustainable growth.

I hope you enjoy this edition of The Communicator and the remainder of your beautiful summer.



JANE EASTES

Deputy Executive Director

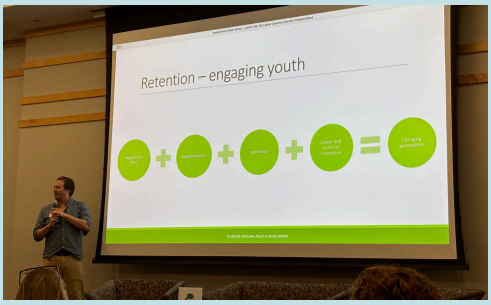
Rural COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Changing the Narrative: Keeping the Next Generation in Rural Minnesota



When Kelly Asche started his presentation at LCSC's Community Summit this summer, the researcher from the Center for Rural Policy and Development couldn't help but start with a humble brag about Minnesota. Yes, we are in the top 5 for lowest unemployment rate, top 5 highest labor force participation rate, top performing state during recessions, and the 5th most diverse economy. Right on the heels of his presentation, the US News and World Report ranked Minnesota **#4** in overall quality of life this year. We've certainly had a strange and unsettling year in many ways, so it's important to take a minute and appreciate our current state of the state.

Kelly's next slides took a deeper look into the changes we can expect demographically, and what we might do to keep our communities resilient in the face of declining population, especially in the more rural parts of the state. The slides that grabbed my attention were the ones about engaging youth for retention in our communities. Kelly described a large research project (The Journey to Meaningful Workforce Participation in Southwest Minnesota,2023) that the Center completed in the Southwest region of the state.



They found that the path after high school significantly predicts whether an individual stays in the region or moves out to another region or state.

Those who continued into career and technical training OR education at two or four-year colleges in the region tended to stay in the region. Those who left the region, and in particular those who left the region for college, tended not to return to the region for work. The narrative that kids have to move out of the region to find meaningful employment just isn't true anymore.

There are many available jobs of all types, but the old narrative still holds sway, particularly with those that choose to go to college. It's time we moved away from the old narratives if we are going to both retain and attract the future generation to our communities.

My top takeaway is to remember just how vital diverse educational opportunities are to our region's future, and how important it is to celebrate and support their continued growth and presence.

Dilworth City Administrator

L. Peyton Mastera

Named Recipient of 2025 LMC James F. Miller Leadership Award

Written by:

League of Minnesota Cities

Dilworth City Administrator L. Peyton Mastera was named the 2025 James F. Miller Award recipient by the League of Minnesota Cities on Thursday.

The award was announced at the League's Annual Conference in Duluth.

Mastera, who has served the City of Dilworth since 2014, was selected for the award in recognition of his outstanding leadership, innovative problem-solving, and steadfast dedication to public service not only in his community but across Minnesota.

Under Mastera's leadership, Dilworth has seen transformative change.

From streamlining the city's budget process to implementing curbside recycling and launching the area's first police body camera program, Mastera has consistently used innovation to elevate city services.

Mastera's proactive approach to policy and planning has modernized city operations and helped position Dilworth as a leader in municipal innovation.

"The man exudes the right thing," Dilworth Mayor Chad Olson said of Mastera. "Integrity, honesty, loyalty, dependability. If you have an opportunity to work with Peyton even once, you can see the best of qualities that you want in a person leading a city."

"When we hired Peyton, Dilworth was ready to transition, to modernize, to become more open, more accepting," Olson said. "He's led the way in terms of increased communication with the council and citizens, and has allowed for greater connectedness between the policies and the people that really exemplify why it's a great place to live."

His impact extends far beyond city hall.

He is an active member of numerous organizations, including the Minnesota City/County Management Association, the League of Minnesota Cities Improving Local Economies Committee, the International City/County Management Association, the Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo Chamber of Commerce, and the American Planning Association.

His collaborative work with neighboring jurisdictions, school districts, and state agencies has helped bring in federal funding, launch Safe Routes to School initiatives, and strengthen regional transportation planning.

"From the day we hired him, Peyton has never faltered," Olson and Vice Mayor Julie Nash wrote in their nomination letter. "He continues to set the standard for city leadership in our region and beyond."

The Leadership Award is the League's highest honor for appointed city officials and is given annually to recognize outstanding service. It is named for former League executive director James F. Miller, who retired in 2015 after 22 years of service.



Photo from left: Sarah and L. Peyton Mastera

The League of Minnesota Cities is a membership organization dedicated to helping cities throughout Minnesota build quality communities through effective advocacy, expert analysis, trusted guidance, and collective action. The League serves over 830 member cities through advocacy, education and training, policy development, risk management, and other services.


Hawley
Summer Rec
stay awhile

Small Town, Big Participation

Submitted By: Katelyn Zacher- Hawley Community Education Director

This past summer was full of energy and excitement in Hawley, where over 85% of our students took part in some form of Summer Recreation program. Whether on the ball fields, in the gym, or out in the community, there was truly something for every age and interest.

At the heart of the action were our ball programs. From Peewee Knothole and Little League baseball to Ponytail Softball, the diamonds stayed busy with practices and games. Babe Ruth baseball players kept a packed schedule, sometimes playing up to five games a week, and both 14U and 18U softball teams competed in multiple tournaments throughout the region. A special congratulations goes to our 18U softball team for winning the State Championship title, and to the Babe Ruth Gold team for earning a trip to the State Tournament.

Younger athletes got their start in T-Ball and Pitch & Hit, practicing twice a week and playing friendly matchups with neighboring towns. Soccer was another highlight, with K–6th graders participating in regular practices and game nights against other community programs.

Beyond the ball fields, June and July offered a wide variety of enrichment activities. The weekly youth golf league continued to draw strong numbers, and basketball, volleyball, dance, and Speed & Strength sessions kept athletes in top form for the upcoming school year.

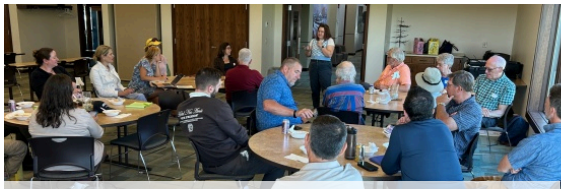
Specialty camps and classes gave students even more opportunities to explore new interests—this year's offerings included Reader's Theater, Kids in the Kitchen, Summer Theater, Junior Ranger Camp, Summer 4-H, Imagination Station, and a hands-on robotics camp. Preschool Fun sessions were filled with eager learners, while archery continued to grow as a popular skill sport. Summer AR (Accelerated Reader) participation also reached record numbers, with students actively working toward their reading goals. Field trips to Clay Your Way, Skate City, Four Star Ninja Academy, Sky Zone, and Detroit Mountain added even more fun and variety to the season. None of this would have been possible without the tremendous support of our local sponsors, coaching staff, high school summer staff, and bus drivers. Their time, energy, and commitment helped make each program a success, creating experiences our students will remember for years to come.

Summer in Hawley proved that a small community can offer big opportunities—and with this kind of momentum, we're already looking forward to next year!

The New Morris Model Coordinator

Talitha Anderson

Submitted by: Talitha Anderson, Morris Model Coordinator



Talitha Anderson, Morris Model Coordinator and Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Morris, talking at a listening session on extreme weather and property insurance on July 8th at the West Central Research and Outreach Center, Morris, Minnesota.

My name is Talitha Anderson and I am thrilled to be the new Morris Model Coordinator. Since starting last month, I have already met so many people and am in love with this community. It is such an honor to work with and serve Morris!

I graduated this past May with my B.S. in Environmental Science, Policy, and Management and a double minor in Climatology and Sustainability Studies. I believe that real change starts at the ground level, in small, local communities like Morris, and that community engagement and involvement is key to successful initiatives. During my studies, I learned a lot about clean energy, environmental justice, and how sustainability goes beyond rain gardens and composting (though these are super important!). Sustainability starts with addressing community needs, and that is what I hope to do in my new role. I also had the opportunity to study abroad for a couple of weeks in Germany with Troy Goodnough, Sustainability Director at the University of Minnesota Morris. I had the chance to visit Saerbeck, Morris's sister city. I am excited to use the lessons we learned in Saerbeck to further the sustainable rural community model we have here in Morris.

Before coming to Morris, I was the Program Coordinator for the Upper Midwest Association for Campus Sustainability, an organization that works to advance a more just and sustainable Upper Midwest (University of Minnesota Morris is a member campus!), and interned with the City of La Crescent, Minnesota on sustainability initiatives and community engagement around energy efficiency, solar incentives, and heat pumps through the Clean Energy Leader & Sustainability Corps programs at the UMN Institute on the Environment.

While I am not originally from Minnesota, I have lived in the Twin Cities suburbs for more than a decade now. Before that, I lived from coast to coast, and up in northern North Dakota for three years.

I'm not the only one excited about the opportunity to be in Morris – my great-grandma lived here her whole life and is buried here, my grandpa grew up here, and my dad lived here until third grade – so I think my family might be more thrilled that I have returned to their old stomping grounds than I am. When I am not at the Met Lounge on Wednesday nights for trivia or meeting with people on the job, you can probably find me playing Quadball (Quidditch from Harry Potter) with the summer Quadball league in Minneapolis, curled up on the couch with my roommate's dog and cat watching a show, or baking lemon bars.

Want to connect or get involved with the Morris Model work? Feel free to email me at talitha@ci.morris.mn.us or stop by my current office at the University of Minnesota Morris Welcome Center, Room 213.

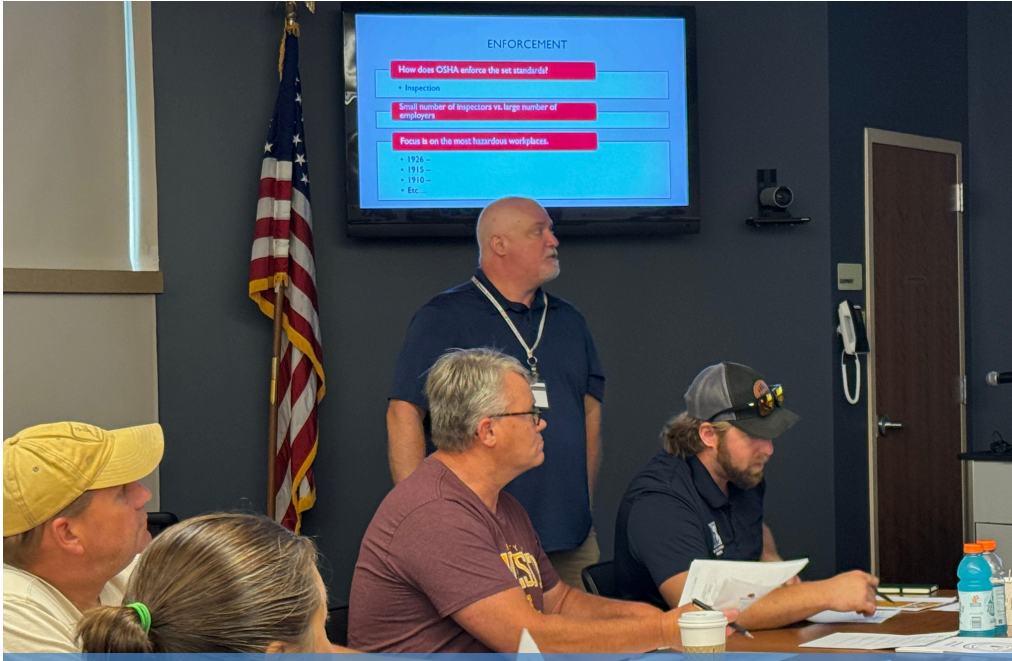


Talitha Anderson stands in a team huddle with her collegiate Quadball team, Minnesota Quadball, during USQ nationals, April 2025.

Expanding Our Safety Service

LCSC's Jeff Preuss is Now an Authorized **OSHA** Instructor





Source: Jeff Preuss, LCSC Senior Health and Safety Facilitator; msc.imiscloud.com

Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Coordinator

Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) is excited to announce that Senior Health and Safety Facilitator Jeff Preuss is now authorized to provide OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 training.

The Training Behind the Certification

To earn this certification, Preuss completed two rigorous, week-long sessions at the Minnesota Safety Council. The first session, OSHA 511 - Occupational Safety & Health Standards for General Industry, focused on identifying common workplace hazards and applying OSHA standards to improve safety programs.

The second week of OSHA 501 training focused on effective instruction. Preuss's training emphasized the importance of clear communication, especially when it comes to the "machine guardian"—the person responsible for eliminating machine hazards. "The mission of OSHA is to help save lives and prevent injuries," Preuss says. "By spending time on how OSHA was created and what their standards are, participants understand the reasons behind the regulations."

This philosophy, that regulations aren't meant to be a burden but a life-saving tool, is at the core of Preuss's training and LCSC's Health and Safety department's philosophy.

Inside the First OSHA 30 Class

LCSC's first OSHA 30 class, held from July 28-31, brought together a diverse group of participants, including Career Tech Ed (CTE) teachers and grounds and maintenance personnel. This training is essential for supervisors and those with safety responsibilities, equipping them with the knowledge to perform their jobs safely while eliminating hazards for employees and students.

A significant component of the training is Lockout/Tagout (LOTO), a critical procedure that prevents machinery from starting up unexpectedly during maintenance. LOTO protects workers from serious injuries by isolating hazardous energy sources.

Preuss creates a highly interactive training experience. Preuss encourages participants to share their own experiences, which helps everyone better understand and appreciate the standards. For information on future OSHA 30 training opportunities, please keep an eye on our calendar. LCSC's Health and Safety Department provides consultation services supporting member agencies' occupational health and safety programs.

To learn more about how LCSC can help you, email Rick Brynildson or call 218-737-6555.



Simple, Low-Cost Ways to Protect Your Organization from Cyber Attacks

Authors: Scott Wendorff, LCSC Program Director of Information Technology
Matt Holtberg, LCSC Assistant Program Director of Information Technology

Cybersecurity isn't just a concern for big corporations—it's a real threat to local governments and nonprofits, too. A single cyber-attack can compromise sensitive data, disrupt services, and lead to costly consequences. The good news? You don't need a big budget or an IT department to improve your organization's security. Here are some simple, low-cost steps you can take today:

1. Use Strong, Unique Passwords
One of the easiest ways hackers get in is through weak or reused passwords. Use long, unique passwords for each account and consider a password manager to keep them secure. If remembering complex passwords is difficult, try using a passphrase, like "FergusFallsWinter2024!", or something with spaces such as "My Dog Abby Is 7 Years Old".

2. Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)
MFA adds an extra layer of security by requiring a second form of verification, such as a code sent to your phone, or more modern methods such as a rolling code on an app or a hardware key. This simple step can prevent most hacking attempts, even if your password gets stolen.

3. Keep Software and Devices Updated
Hackers exploit outdated software to access systems. Regularly update your operating system, antivirus software, applications, and network devices to stay protected. Most devices offer automatic updates—turn this feature on to stay ahead.



Discover the wide array of services offered by our Technology Services Department at Lakes Country Service Cooperative—explore how we can support your needs today!

4. Beware of Phishing Emails
Phishing emails are designed to trick you into clicking malicious links or giving away sensitive information. Think before you click—verify unexpected emails, check for spelling errors, and be cautious of urgent requests for personal or financial information. When in doubt, check with the sender through different method of communication, such as a phone call or in person if you can.

5. Limit Access to Sensitive Data
Not everyone in your organization needs access to everything. Restrict access to sensitive information based on job roles. This reduces the chances of accidental leaks or intentional breaches.

6. Back Up Your Data Regularly
Ransomware attacks can lock you out of important files. Keep secure backups of your data on an external hard drive or cloud service. Test your backups occasionally to make sure they work.

7. Train Your Team
Cybersecurity isn't just an IT issue—it's a people issue. A quick training session on recognizing threats and following best practices can go a long way. Encourage staff to report anything suspicious right away.

8. Stay Vigilant, Stay Secure
You don't need a big budget to protect your organization from cyber threats. Implementing these simple, cost-effective measures can significantly reduce your risk. Start today—because a little prevention now can save a lot of trouble later.

COOPERATIVE *Purchasing* CONNECTION

Learn more about all of CPC's contracts



DEX imaging

CPC provides you with a broad portfolio of cooperative purchasing contracts. Recently, we awarded a contract to Dex Imaging for Copy and Print Solutions.

CPC's Contract with Dex Imaging



Dex Imaging provides document imaging solutions, specializing in multifunction printers (MFPs), managed print services (MPS), and workflow automation.

CPC Member Benefits:

- 67% average discount on MFP
- 49% average discount on printers
- 45% average discount on Accessories

Your DEXclusive Benefits:

- Not limited to just one manufacturer's brand, Dex offers the best equipment from the world's leading manufacturers, tested to their stringent specifications.
- Service for all makes and models of imaging equipment, not just one manufacturer's line of products, making us a one-stop shop for service.
- Custom-built regional headquarters fully stocked with supplies to keep you up and running.
- Vast in-house service expertise with high employee retention across the country.
- In-house R&D developing industry-defining technology exclusively for their customers.
- Proprietary document management and MPS solutions help you control costs, leverage efficiencies, and better manage your workflow.
- Dedicated pricing for CPC members



COUNTIES PROVIDING TECHNOLOGY

Inside Counties Providing Technology

A Client-Owned Business Serving Local Governments

Front: Mike Koehler, CPT Executive Director
Back left: Gwen Gillespie, CPT Development Director, and Erica Swenson, CPT Human Resources/Technical Support Director



Source: Erica Swenson, Human Resources/Technical Support Director; Gwen Gillespie, Development Director; and Mike Koehler, Executive Director; cptmn.us
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Coordinator

On the main street of Morris, Minnesota, there is a distinctive building featuring a prominent blue awning and a sign that reads "CPT - Counties Providing Technology." Within the Morris community, CPT continues to be somewhat of a mystery. What goes on inside, and what services do they offer? In 2022, CPT became a member of Lakes Country Service Cooperative, and we are excited to share their fascinating story with you.

Counties Providing Technology (CPT) has over 36 years of experience providing an affordable and flexible solution to local Minnesota governments. CPT's emphasis is on serving the needs of county governments with primary software packages, including Real Estate Tax Services, Integrated Financial Systems, solutions for Highway Cost Accounting, Human Resource Information Systems, and payroll.

History and Structure

CPT started as a private company called Computer Professional Unlimited Inc. It was initially a part of Stevens County before becoming a private company and later returning to a county government agency. In 2018, CPT's owner was ready to retire and was looking at selling options. CPT's clients did not want the company to become a national entity and lose the personal service they received. As a result, 24 counties chose to purchase CPT, and it is now governed under a joint powers agreement. The counties involved have the opportunity to serve on CPT's Board of Directors, vote on decisions affecting services, and receive dividends.



"We are profitable. It's nice to bring money back to our counties."

Erica Swenson
CPT Human Resources/Technical Support Director

For a long time, the company was in an unmarked building. Swenson noted that when people asked her where she worked, she would reply, “We are in the nameless building on Main Street, with the blue awning, next to the music store.” CPT has only had signage on the building for the past two years. CPT now owns the entire building and is considering a new layout, with construction hopefully to be completed within the next year.

Services and Expertise

CPT's focus is on providing services to county governments. "Our expertise is in county government," said Koehler. "We don't have a national scope where we are serving all different types of organizations with varying program needs."

All of CPT's software is developed and programmed in-house, and ongoing programming is also handled internally. Their largest module is the real estate tax program. The company also supports several counties in North Dakota and aims to expand its presence there. In North Dakota, they have created an in-house financial module because the state lacks a consolidated financial system like that of Minnesota.

CPT is currently not looking to move into a new market; however, they are constantly focused on developing and improving their existing programs. Several of their current programs are "Green Screen" or AS 400 I Series-based, and they are looking to move these to web-based programs.

The Team and Their Approach

CPT employs 22 people who provide software development and customer service, including nine software developers. CPT is fortunate to receive many software developer interns from the computer science program at the University of Minnesota, Morris campus, which helps bring young people and families to the area.

The team is dedicated to providing personalized service. "You talk to a small group of people," Swenson said about the support services clients receive. “You are not talking to a different person each week and getting routed around.” Koehler added, “We know all our users by name. Our customers appreciate getting a live person who knows them by name.”

The Leadership Team Includes:

- Erica Swenson, Human Resources/Technical Support Director, who has been with CPT for over 12 years.
- Gwen Gillespie, Development Director, has been with CPT for over 30 years.
- Mike Koehler, Executive Director, who has been with CPT for over 20 years.



"Our emphasis is on our customers because we are the customer!"

Mike Koehler
CPT Executive Director

The developers serve as second-tier support, working with the support liaison and client only when necessary for troubleshooting. Swenson stated that sometimes solving a client's issue is like working in the ER: “You have to be able to juggle, it’s fast-moving, and you have to be able to understand the problems.”

Culture, Training, and Security

CPT’s employees are offered the flexibility to work remotely if needed, a great recruitment tool that was fully utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We have a really great group of people who are team-focused and helpful to one another," shared Swenson, emphasizing the positive work culture.

CPT also provides extensive training for county employees, both on-site and virtually. They also schedule twice-a-year user meetings to train clients on recent legislative updates that affect program developments.

Protecting clients from hackers and malicious actors is a constant priority. They use firewalls, VPNs, monitoring systems, and attack-prevention products. A staff member is currently studying for a degree in cybersecurity, highlighting CPT's commitment to staying ahead of threats.

Ultimately, CPT's success is rooted in its people and its unique mission. The deep expertise of its long-serving staff and the team's commitment to personalized support create a culture where every client feels known and valued. Koehler emphasizes that they are excellent stewards of funding, a principle that strengthens their role as a government-owned entity. CPT proves that in an increasingly impersonal world, a local, specialized, and relationship-driven approach can provide a level of service and trust that national competitors can't match.

If you’re interested in CPT’s programs and services, we invite you to explore their website at **cptmn.us**. Should you have any questions or require assistance, feel free to reach out to **Erica Swenson**, the Human Resources/Technical Support Director, at 320-589-2110.

Minnesota nonprofits: no-cost legal help is here!

MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS



Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and LegalCORPS are teaming up to help nonprofits answer their legal questions through the pro bono Nonprofit Legal Services Initiative. With funding freezes, executive orders, and court rulings, we know this is a difficult time for nonprofits, and they're here to help.

- Do you have a legal question that's specific to your nonprofit? Request a no-cost call with the legal help desk; you'll get support for your nonprofit, with referrals to vetted resources and counsel.

- Or maybe you need to do some research on evergreen or emerging legal considerations. The free resource library will help ensure compliance and protection of your nonprofit's rights.

- Plus, stay tuned for pro bono one-on-one legal counsel, coming soon.

Access the resource library, request help, and learn more: https://minnesotanonprofits.org/minnesota-nonprofit-legal-services-initiative

WELLNESS



Personify Health ~My Health Rewards

Steps to Sign Up:

① Download the free Personify Health app from the App Store or Google Play.
② Open the app & click on "Create Account" under the "Sign In" button.
③ Search for & choose **Minnesota Healthcare Consortium** on the sponsor organization list. Spouses & Dependents Ages 18+ search for & choose **Medica My Health Rewards** on the sponsor organization list.
④ Follow the steps to sign up. Members will need to enter "**Medica Wellness**" in the Enrollment Passphrase section during registration process. Enter your name exactly as it appears on your Medica ID card.

UPDATE

Prefer to sign up online? Go to **Medica.com/MyHealthRewards** to create your account.

WAYS TO EARN	POINTS	REWARDS CASH	REWARD TYPE
EARN PROGRAM POINTS	2,000	$10	E-gift card or other options
	10,000	$20	E-gift card or other options
	25,000	$50	E-gift card or other options
	40,000	$80	E-gift card or other options
	$160 per year		
20-DAY TRIPLE TRACKER	Track any combination of the following activities on 20 or more days in a calendar month to earn a bonus reward: • 7,000 steps a day and/or; • 15 active minutes a day and/or; • 15 workout minutes a day.	Contract Holders: $15 per month Spouses/ dependents ages 18+: $5 per month	E-gift card or other options
PREVENTIVE CHECKUP	Complete your annual preventive checkup and earn a bonus reward. Go to My Care Checklist in the Health tab and enter your preventive checkup completion date.	$5 per year	E-gift card or other options
Point-based rewards + 20-day triple tracker + preventive checkup =		$345 in potential rewards per year (Contract Holders) $225 in potential rewards per year (Spouses/dependents ages 18+)	

Sign Up

$225–$345 in Rewards!

My Health Rewards by Medica

This program is available to individuals enrolled in the LCSC/MHC/Medica Insurance Plan.



Join us for an upcoming gathering of nonprofit leaders and government agencies in the region.

September 12, 2025 - 11:30 - 1:00 p.m.
We cordially invite you to join us for a luncheon featuring informative sessions, networking opportunities, and the chance to connect with fellow leaders from our nine-county area. LCSC generously sponsors this event and will include a light lunch.

REGISTER NOW

Guest Speaker: Kelly Asche, Senior Researcher, Center for Rural Policy and Development.

Kelly's work at **Center for Rural Policy and Development** is focused on data analysis, busting myths related to the rural narrative, and attempting to become knowledgeable in whatever rural issues are considered important at the time.

2-1-1: Your Community's Connection to Help.

211

Get Connected. Get Help.™



When residents face challenges like job loss or needing senior support, 2-1-1 is a free, confidential service providing 24/7 access to essential health and human service programs via phone, text, and online chat.

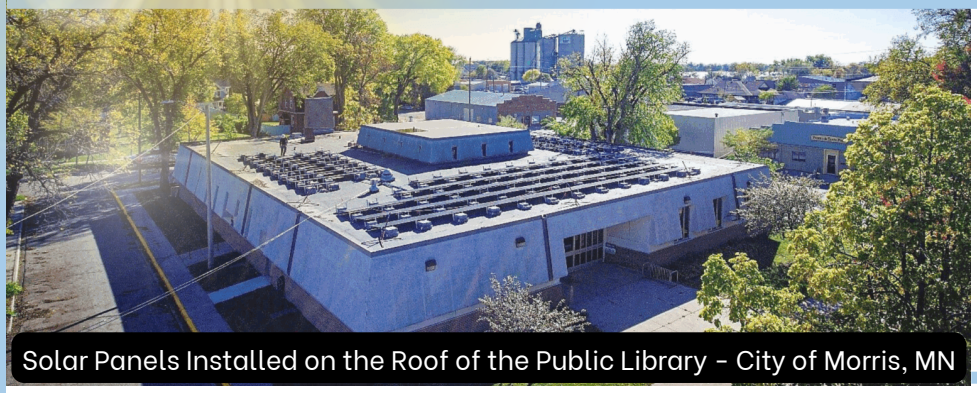
For our cities, counties, government agencies, and nonprofits, 2-1-1 streamlines access to your vital resources, ensuring residents find the help they need easily.

By promoting 2-1-1, you empower your community with a single point of contact for food, housing, healthcare, employment, and more. Let's amplify this lifeline together.

UNITED WAY | 211 Get Connected. Get Help.™

West Central Initiative

Powering a Brighter Future for Rural Minnesota



Solar Panels Installed on the Roof of the Public Library - City of Morris, MN

Source: Cedar Walters, Director of Climate and Sustainability Programs, West Central Initiative; Melissa Mattson, Director of Administrative Services, Lakes Country Service Cooperative

Author: Jane Eastes, Deputy Executive Director, LCSC & Mary Phillipe, Communications Coordinator, LCSC

Cedar Walters, the Director of Climate and Sustainability Programs at West Central Initiative (WCI), is leading a groundbreaking effort to bring solar energy to rural communities in west-central Minnesota. Her work is part of the larger WCI Region 4 Climate Action Plan and focuses on helping small towns save taxpayer money by tapping into available financial incentives and energy savings.

When Walters joined the WCI team a little over a year ago, one of her first goals was to help small towns access financial incentives for installing solar panels on community buildings like fire halls, community centers, or even municipal liquor stores. She quickly realized that simply providing information wouldn't be enough to spur action.

"Our goal was to figure out how we can help small rural communities capture these incentives and save taxpayer money in towns that really need those savings," Walters said. With that in mind, she and her team began planning a program to help communities develop projects together. They provided technical assistance, guidance on cost savings, and coordination with solar developers to guide cities through the process before they signed a contract.

The Municipal Solar Cohort

Walters's team aimed to get 10 communities to join them in a Municipal Solar Cohort, a free program that supports communities in developing project proposals for small-scale solar projects.

Over the last year, they visited communities, attended council meetings, and presented their idea. The team included Walters, who has expertise in project development and program planning; Ben Schierer, WCI's Director of Civic Partnerships, who has a background in rural leadership; and Griffin Peck, WCI's Energy and Adaptation Planner, who specializes in clean energy. Walters shared that this team worked well together, and their diverse skills were key to their success.

Walters was happy to report that they reached their goal of ten communities, with projects set to be installed this fall. Perham was the last community to commit, and the complete list includes:

WCI's Municipal Solar Cohort Team



Cedar Walters
WCI's Director of Climate and Sustainability Programs



Griffin Peck
WCI's Energy and Adaptation Planner



Ben Schierer
WCI's Director of Civic Partnerships

1. Ashby
2. Battle Lake
3. Frazee
4. Hoffman
5. New York Mills
6. Ogema
7. Parkers Prairie
8. Pelican Rapids
9. Perham
10. Vergas

Inspired by the Morris Model

The initiative was inspired by the Morris Model, which is often regarded as an exceptional example of climate and sustainability leadership in the region. The Morris Model emphasizes energy conservation, clean energy, and community resilience. Griffin Peck, who previously served as the Sustainability Coordinator for the Morris Model, shared with Walters that their success came from tackling one project at a time and actively engaging in the planning and implementation. "Our hypothesis was, can we create some of that energy, enthusiasm, and progress in other small towns?" Walters explained.

Replicating the Morris Model's success required finding resources and eliminating as many barriers as possible for the small communities. For example, Otter Tail Power Company (OTPCO). OTPCO recently hired staff to complete energy audits and increase their capacity for solar projects. They assisted the cohort by providing energy audits for the buildings looking to add solar. Walters shared that for a small town of under 2,000 people, the energy savings of $3,000 a year could be reallocated to other significant budget items like parks and trails.

Walters also recognized that towns with a population of only a few hundred people may not have the capacity to manage the complex bidding process for these projects. Another promise of combining projects under one umbrella was the potential for cost savings when bidding.

Better Together – WCI and LCSC Partner to Complete the Project

Government procurement is a specialty of Lakes Country Service Cooperative. Also, LCSC has the legislative authority to go out to bid on behalf of the cities participating in the project. "This was the next logical step to ask Lakes Country Service Cooperative to partner on, because we are not the experts on cooperative purchasing," said Walters.

The LCSC procurement team, operating under the program name The Cooperative Purchasing Connection (CPC), was happy to work with the WCI team on behalf of our members. CPC's procurement team was able to create a plan for the cooperative solar cooperative RFP process quickly.

"It really was what each person on the team brought that made this project successful."

Cedar Walters
WCI's Director of Climate and Sustainability Programs

> “We did not want rural Minnesota left out of this opportunity. We wanted to see this investment come to rural Minnesota, and I think it’s important to underscore that it can have a lot of benefits for small rural communities. We need to show these tax credits are having an impact.”
>
> **Cedar Walters, Director of Climate and Sustainability Programs**

The CPC team defined the project specifications, scope of work, and proposal response documents in accordance with Minnesota procurement law. After that, they released the solicitation and shepherded the process through award and contract completion.

The teams worked together to craft the responses to questions from the vendors and assembled an evaluation team from interested cities to evaluate the responses. The evaluation committee, facilitated by the CPC team, reviewed the responses and recommended awarding the contract to one company. WCI and the awarded company, will now work with each city to ensure the projects align with their individual timelines and needs. Melissa Mattson, Director of the CPC program, observed, "I think what this process shows is how regional entities can come together and support our communities."

Resilience and the Road Ahead

Walters noted that an important selling point for the project is that recent legislation, paired with local utility incentives, has made it possible for communities to have 70 to 90 percent of a solar project paid for with incentives, with the remainder paid off over time with energy savings. This means that within just two years of completing a project, the towns can save money on their utility bills.

Walters also pointed out that more extreme weather, like intense summer storms, can lead to power outages and strain critical infrastructure. She noted that if communities can pair solar with a battery storage system, it could provide the resilience needed to weather these events. "We want to deepen this work for the communities that have already come along with us, but we also want to offer this out to more small communities that really need more resilience," Walters said.

Looking ahead, the next step is to determine which cities will be in the next cohort. Walters would like to repeat the program two more times or add more projects in the communities that have already signed on, as federal tax credits will be available through the end of 2027.

As the initial group from the Municipal Solar Cohort gets ready to launch their solar projects, the cohort's success clearly highlights the value of regional collaboration. It demonstrates how a common objective, combined with the right skills and partnerships, can effectively address challenges and deliver tangible, long-term benefits to small towns and the people in their communities. As Cedar Walters and her team work to expand the cohort to more cities, they continue to establish a foundation of resilience and sustainability for communities across Minnesota.

For more information on the Municipal Solar Cohort and other climate and sustainability initiatives, contact Cedar Walters, Director of Climate and Sustainability Programs, at **cedar@wcif.org**, or visit the West Central Initiative website at wcif.org.



The Pesch family of Pelican Rapids has been named Otter Tail County's

"2025 Farm Family of the Year" by the University of Minnesota.

Submitted by: Shannon Terry, Otter Tail County Public Information Officer/University of Minnesota Extension

Ryan and Maree Pesch did not come from farming backgrounds. Their inspiration began when Ryan found the organic food movement in college. After two years apprenticing at Foxtail Farm near Osceola, Wis., they struck out on their own as tenant farmers in Lake Elmo, selling produce at the Northeast Minneapolis Farmers Market. In 2004, they launched Lida Farm with just a half-acre in production. By 2014, they were growing vegetables on seven acres while raising three kids.

Today, Lida Farm is a 20-acre operation focused on high-quality, sustainably grown vegetables. The Pesch family grows over 100 varieties on three acres and two high tunnels, with another three acres in cover crops. They use only natural and certifiably organic inputs across a mix of traditionally cultivated fields and biointensive permanent beds. Their produce goes directly to customers through a CSA, farmers markets, a roadside stand and wholesale accounts.

Their kids all play a part in the operation. Sylvia, now studying at the University of Minnesota-Morris, put in many hours weeding and planting during her teenage years. Willem handles the farm's building projects. Graham is just beginning to help out this summer.

Ryan and Maree are active in local food and farming organizations, from the Minnesota Farmers Union to the Lake Agassiz Sustainable Farming chapter. Ryan, who is an educator for University of Minnesota Extension, helped start the Pelican Market in downtown Pelican Rapids and serves as treasurer of Manna Food Co-op, where Maree manages daily operations as general manager.

The families will be officially recognized in a ceremony Thursday, Aug. 7 at the annual Farmfest near Redwood Falls. Profiles of the 2025 honorees are featured at https://extension.umn.edu/farm-families.

Honored families are chosen, one per county, by local University of Minnesota Extension committees based on their demonstrated commitment to their communities and to enhancing and supporting agriculture. Honorees cover a wide spectrum of farming, from traditional crops and livestock to community-based ventures and operations producing an array of fruit, vegetables, and flowers.

"This year's 86 Farm Families of the Year reflect the breadth and variety of agriculture in our state," said Extension Dean Bev Burgan. "The University of Minnesota is proud to honor these families and their innovation and dedication to Minnesota agriculture."

Along with Farmfest, the program is sponsored by three University of Minnesota units focusing on agricultural research, education and outreach – University of Minnesota Extension, the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences and the College of Veterinary Medicine. More information on Farmfest is available at www.farmfest.com.

Otter Tail County



Submitted by: Shannon Terry, Otter Tail County Public Information Officer

CELEBRATES GROUNDBREAKING OF OTTERTAIL CITY CHILD CARE PROJECT

Otter Tail County celebrated a groundbreaking ceremony for the Ottertail Family Center on July 7, marking the beginning of a project that will enhance the county's child care infrastructure and support local families and the economy. The project includes the construction of four child care sites on Maple Avenue South, south of the Community Park in the City of Ottertail. The Ottertail Family Center represents an investment of $1.4 million in the community, increasing the supply of child care by 35-40 slots.

Otter Tail County understands that access to quality and affordable child care is needed for people to live and work in our region. The County has supported the community-driven project with technical assistance and financial resources to address the shortage of child care.

Funding from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Child Care Economic Development Grant Program was awarded to Otter Tail County. This $240,000 award and $10,000 of matching funds will support the construction and start-up equipment costs for the child care sites.

When completed, the four special family child care sites will give family child care providers the option to operate outside their homes in facilities that will be specifically built to suit their needs.

Founders Alex and Tyler Rupe have established a local non-profit that will own and manage the child care sites, creating spaces that will provide support to families in need of affordable, high-quality child care.



The completion of the Ottertail Family Center will be followed by a community center project that will also provide an indoor play space, gyms, and community engagement space.

Both projects will be supported by individual and corporate donors making significant contributions.

“Congratulations to all the partners who said ‘Yes’ to taking on this project,” said Senator Jordan Rasmusson (R-Fergus Falls). “I’m excited for this project not just for the number of new child care spots it will create, but for the stories about the impact these providers will make on the lives of children and families they serve.”

Otter Tail County Commissioner Robert Lahman shared at the groundbreaking, “Otter Tail County sees child care as critical infrastructure to support families living and working here, and this project is a great solution to the child care challenges in our communities.”

Alex and Tyler Rupe shared, “We’ve been working on this idea for almost three years, so today is a really exciting day. We are grateful for all the support we’ve received and can’t wait to see the impact this project will have.”

More information about the Ottertail Family Center project is available at ottertailcommunityproject.com/. Child care resources for providers, communities, and caregivers can be found on Otter Tail County’s website at ottertailcounty.gov/childcare.

Conference or Meeting Room Reservations at Lakes Country Service Cooperative

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative
Together we achieve

You can now effortlessly reserve any of our meeting or conference rooms using our simple online form!







BOOK NOW

CERTS Seed Grants Available

FOR MINNESOTA CLEAN ENERGY PROJECT

The Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) is accepting community-led project proposals related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, electric vehicles, and energy storage projects within Minnesota. In particular, CERTs seeks proposals for projects that:

- Help people learn about clean energy.
- Build community by engaging a variety of partners.
- Remove barriers, making clean energy more accessible for everyone.
- Are highly visible in the community and can be an example for other communities.

Grants are available for up to $5000 - $10,000. The deadline is noon at October 1, 2025. **Explore CERTs Seed Grants and apply today at cleanenergyresourceteams.org/seedgrants.**

In our region, the City of Detroit Lakes is using a seed grant to work towards its goal to become more energy efficient by upgrading the lighting in the library.

There are many examples on the website and CERTS staff are ready to help you with any questions you may have. CERTs Seed Grants fund the labor it takes to get these projects started and act as an incentive for funders to support the remaining needs of the project. The grants strive to ensure all Minnesota communities have access to clean energy, including those with high energy burdens, where households spend more than 5% of their annual income on energy costs (compared to 2% for the average Minnesota household).

Local residents who make up the seven CERTs Regional Steering Committees will select the projects to be funded in their region.

Awarded projects will be notified in December 2025, with a public announcement in January 2026.

CERTs Seed Grants encourage projects that help people see clean energy working in their own communities. Since 2006, over $1.98 million in CERTs Seed Grants has been awarded to over 500 projects across Minnesota. Financial and programmatic support comes from the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Conservation and Optimization Program and the U.S. Department of Energy State Energy Program. Additional financial support is provided by the Carolyn Foundation.



LCSC

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