October 2025

LCSC Communicator

Regional News, Views, and Information

LAKES COUNTRY Service Cooperative
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Driving Stability

in West Central Minnesota

Source: Kris Chisholm, Executive Director, Car Care; carecareprogram.org
Author: Mary Phillipe, LCSC Communications Coordinator

A new non-profit is making a difference in Fergus Falls by removing transportation barriers for individuals and families. Car Care of Alexandria, Minnesota, opened its second location and started operations in Fergus Falls in April 2025.

The organization's mission is to help people move forward—literally and figuratively—by providing reliable transportation. This can mean getting a working car, having their current vehicle repaired, or participating in a youth training opportunity. For clients, this support means being able to get to work, attend critical medical appointments, and safely transport their children to childcare.



Car Care Executive Director Kris Chisholm emphasizes that the program's goal is not just to get people back on the road, but on the road to a more stable life.

A Client's Story

Chisolm provided a recent example of a referral for a Car Care client. A woman diagnosed with throat cancer needed to travel to Fargo, North Dakota, and Rochester, Minnesota, for her regular medical appointments.

Unfortunately, her car required a new water pump and timing belt—repairs that were beyond her limited budget. Car Care intervened by supplying volunteers and necessary parts to repair her vehicle, ensuring she now has a safe and dependable car for her vital appointments.

Additionally, many individuals and families who utilize the program often have further needs. Car Care also assists by connecting them with other critical local services, including food shelves, housing assistance, heating programs, and mental health resources.



What is the Program's History?

The Car Care program was originally created by Cliff Korkowski in 1999 as the Free to Be Program in Anoka, Minnesota. Korkowski, then President of Anoka Community College, was considering retirement when he attended a "Community Conversation" that brought together churches, businesses, and non-profits to discuss key community issues. They agreed that improving transportation could ease many daily struggles, and Korkowski was asked to develop a program to repair cars for those in need.

He created the 501(c)(3) non-profit "Free to Be," which initially focused on repairing cars with discounted labor from auto shops and funding from grants and human services referrals. Chisholm notes that the program was designed so well that Korkowski was asked to lead it, and it launched in 1999.

The program's success led to a new need: accepting and donating vehicles. Korkowski secured a charitable car dealer's license, which allows non-profits to hold and transfer titles for donated vehicles.

From 1999 through 2012, Korkowski gave away over 800 vehicles and repaired around 3,000. While the original program is still in operation today in Millerville, it now focuses only on vehicle repairs. Fast forward to 2012, Korkowski is again thinking about retirement and wants to move to the Alexandria, Minnesota, area to be closer to family. During a visit to a local bank, he shared his story of the "Free to Be" program. The bank employee urged him to start this program in Alexandria to help community members in need. Korkowski recognized the need and once again felt called to launch this program in the Alexandria area. In 2012, at age 72, he started the Douglas County Car Care Program, and they gave away their first car in 2013.

Over the next six years, Korkowski borrowed space from three different local car repair shops. Once a month, on a Saturday, he would bring in local volunteers, feed them breakfast, and fix one or two vehicles. For the rest of the month, they paid full labor costs for any other vehicles they wanted to repair. During this period, they distributed approximately 200 cars. They did not yet have their own shop, but they had a trailer full of tools.
In 2018, Chisholm was working at United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties as the Fundraising and Special Events Coordinator when he was approached by a board member of Car Care, who shared that Korkowski would be retiring soon and that there might be an opportunity for him to apply for a leadership role at the nonprofit.

> "I look like a mechanic, but I am not mechanical."
>
> Car Care Executive Director - **Kris Chisholm**

Chisholm applied and was chosen for the Executive Director position at Car Care. He jokes that he grew up on a farm in the area but knows nothing about car repair.





“It isn’t so much that people do not have access to a car,” said Chisholm. “It’s that someone has told them that it is unrepairable or they cannot afford the repairs.”

Chisholm continued managing the Douglas County Car Care Program as originally established, coordinating repairs for cars to be taken to local dealerships and calling retired volunteers to help fix vehicles once a month on Saturdays. It bothered Chisholm that during the rest of the month, if a car was donated and the repair and parts costs were too high, fixing the vehicle wasn't worthwhile. Many donated vehicles were eventually scrapped or parted out. At the start of 2019, he spoke with several retired volunteers about securing a permanent shop of their own. He inquired about their availability to volunteer during the week. The volunteers, now known as the “Spark Plug Gang,” were excited about the chance to help more during weekdays.

Douglas County Car Care Program board member Harold Koep had a shop space available for rent in January 2020, and a business from Glenwood, Minnesota, American Solutions for Business, donated funds to buy a hoist. They were now able to work on cars three days a week. “We would huddle around my phone to watch YouTube videos,” said Chisolm. They began tackling basic maintenance tasks and eliminated labor charges, which had been a major cost to the program's operation. They also kept building up an inventory of vehicles that were ready for clients.

When asked about ongoing repairs after a client’s vehicle is fixed, Chisholm explained that clients can receive service twice in a lifetime or every two years. He also mentioned that sometimes they need to evaluate cases where helping someone makes sense, even if they might not be financially qualified, but who genuinely needs support because of their circumstances.



Chisholm then approached the Douglas County Car Care board to suggest that they should own and operate their own facility, and the board agreed. In 2021, he found a shop to purchase near Osakis, Minnesota. The building needed repairs, which came at a cost, but now they would save money by not having to rent office space in downtown Alexandria or rent 30 parking spaces to store the cars they had repaired for giveaway.

The building was renovated with help from volunteers and donated materials. They moved in January 2022. During this period, Chisholm served as the executive director, lead mechanic, and fund developer, while also handling Human Resources and developing marketing for the nonprofit. Along with Chisholm, there was an office manager responsible for title work and managing the car giveaways, as well as a client manager who supervised relationships with agency partners and guided clients through the application process, supporting them until the end.

Chisolm successfully recruited a highly skilled mechanic to join the program full-time and manage the shop. Currently, they have three hoists and are on track to repair 360 cars this year.

They kept receiving referrals indicating that their clients needed a car, but Chisholm explained they weren't asking if clients already had a vehicle that could be repaired. “It’s a lot cheaper to fix the car that they have,” said Chisholm. They began identifying with their partner agencies, clients who have a car or access to a vehicle that needs repairs. Car Care assesses the car for free and determines if it is repairable.

They have repaired over 1,000 vehicles since opening the shop and have given away 570 vehicles in the Alexandria region. In addition to receiving repairs or a vehicle donation, clients also participate in a Car Care Clinic, where they learn about basic car insurance literacy and car maintenance.

Another innovation from the program is the creation of the Car Care elective for high school students. It began with a private school in Alexandria, which incorporated the program into a 12-week elective course. Now, three schools are collaborating to offer the Car Care Course as an elective. This initiative helps develop students interested in careers in mechanics.



In Alexandria, volunteers work four mornings a week, fixing an average of 40 cars each month. In the afternoons, students arrive for the Car Care Course elective. The Car Care program also provides businesses with opportunities to invite their employees to participate in a community volunteer event, similar to Habitat for Humanity.

The Fergus Falls Site

In early 2024, Chisholm was approached about the program and a potential location in Fergus Falls through a mutual acquaintance from his church in Alexandria. The pastor of Life Church in Fergus Falls contacted Chisholm to explore the possibility of starting a Car Care Program there. He met with the Life Church board of directors and took them to visit the Car Care shop near Osakis, where they were impressed by what they observed.

Life Church had constructed a shop behind their church, which had largely remained underutilized, except for some woodworking activities by church members. They proposed leasing the Fergus Falls building to the Car Care Program for just one dollar per year and also helped purchase essential equipment, including a hoist, tools, and tire machines, to prepare the shop for vehicle repairs. They launched operations in Fergus Falls one day a week starting in April 2025.

The Fergus Falls Car Care shop has six volunteers who consistently work there every Monday. They were able to install a second hoist to increase capacity. Their average cost to repair a car to get it back on the road is $500. They can purchase the parts at cost, and they do not charge labor to the client. “It takes money to get things going and to keep things going, and also consistency in volunteers and to create an environment that makes the volunteers want to come back,” said Chisholm. Their goal in Fergus Falls is to increase the number of days they are open each week.

The Need for Funding

Funding is sourced from private business contributions and select grants. Chisolm expressed his intent to partner with county boards and the State of Minnesota to share data regarding the impact of his program on families and individuals, facilitating their access to employment, medical appointments, and other essential services. He aspires to create future funding collaborations with local counties and the state.

With Chisolm acting as the Executive Director, there are currently both an Operations Manager and a Shop Manager supervising activities at each location. If additional resources were available, they would aim to hire another Shop Manager for the Fergus Falls site, which would enable them to expand their operating days. They would also require a Client Manager to support client intake processes.

Chisholm shared that they just received Opioid grant dollars from Douglas, Stevens, and Pope Counties, with the understanding that many individuals fall back into their addiction when they cannot get to their rehab and counseling appointments.

The foundation has been established, and we understand the process," stated Chisholm regarding the potential for the Fergus Falls shop. "With 14 years of experience in car repairs using this method, the model is remarkably easy to replicate." Chisholm also mentioned that he is willing to share the business plan and assist anyone interested in launching a Car Care Program.

Would you like to get in touch with the Car Care Program for more information?

Click here to email the Executive Director or visit their website.





LCSC members are invited to join a networking luncheon specifically for City Clerks, Deputy Clerks, and City Administrators on Thursday, November 13, 2025, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at LCSC.
You can participate either in person or via ZOOM. This event offers a fantastic opportunity to network and discuss pertinent topics with fellow regional members.

REGISTER NOW

From the

Executive Director

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

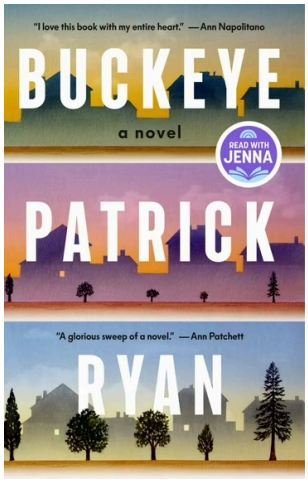


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Together we achieve

Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director

From Story to Service

What Buckeye Teaches Community Leaders



I recently finished one of my favorite reads of 2025. Buckeye, by Patrick Ryan is a novel set in the Midwestern town from the World War II era into the late twentieth century. It traces the lives of two families. The character development is excellent, and it is a fantastic work of historical fiction, my favorite genre. It covers large spans of history and deals with big themes (war, service, identity, family).

For civic leaders, Buckeye offers some fantastic exploratory thoughts including:

1) Civic Service beyond the obvious battlefield.
2) Small-town midwestern community dynamics
3) generational impact and 4) Empathy and reflective leadership.

A key takeaway is the importance of empathy — seeing people's stories, contexts, and limitations. For people in governmental communication roles, the book is a reminder that effective communication is grounded in authentic understanding, not just top-down messaging.

While Buckeye is a work of fiction, it reflects the dynamics of community, service, legacy, identity, and change. For CCOGA (City, County, Other Governmental Agency) communicators and leaders, it is a thoughtful book that can spark reflection about how we serve, how we lead, and how we build community.



JANE EASTES
Deputy Executive Director

Rural COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

International Year of the Cooperative

2025 is the International Year of the Cooperative. A Cooperative is an organizational model that is owned and run jointly by its members.You may belong to one of the 50 electric cooperatives, or a food cooperative, like Manna in Detroit Lakes, or have your money in a credit union. There are agricultural cooperatives, and of course, Service Cooperatives! The first ever Minnesota Cooperative Summit was held in Morris, MN this summer. There I learned that Minnesota has the most cooperatives of any state, over 800 supporting 3 million member-owners in agriculture, energy, food, housing, and more. Minnesota also has a robust nonprofit sector, with about 10,000 nonprofit organizations in the state that generated over **$100 billion in economic activity in 2024**.

Together Cooperatives and nonprofit organizations touch every Minnesotan's life. The model of keeping wealth local, prioritizing local control, and providing for community well-being and resilience is especially important to the future of our rural communities.



But the "plural" sector (nonprofits, cooperatives, foundations, etc) doesn't work without strong partnerships with the governmental and private sectors. The business scholar and author, Henry Mintzberg, describes these three sectors as the three-legged stool of civil society. A healthy society rests on these three balanced pillars.

The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MCN), a statewide association of over 2,200 nonprofit organizations, just published the results of its 2025 Survey of Current Conditions of Minnesota's Nonprofit Sector. Not surprisingly, it shows nonprofits, like our schools, facing stiff headwinds from increasing need for services, rapidly rising expenses, and a decrease in funding from foundations and government. The good news from the report is that "nonprofits continue to navigate uncertainty, advocate for their communities, and stay grounded in their missions." Nonprofits are focusing more resources on fundraising and maintaining the public trust by increasing their public policy and outreach efforts.

Let's celebrate the Year of the Cooperative and along with it, the diversity of Minnesota's many organizations working hand in hand with schools and government on behalf of ALL youth, families and communities.

Arts Power the Lake Region $13.7M in Local Economic Impact



Written By: Timothy Wollenzien, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Lake Region Arts Council

New data shows the arts are not just enriching — they're essential to our economy.

The just-released Creative Minnesota Economic Impact Study, published by Minnesota Citizens for the Arts, highlights the impressive economic impact of arts and culture in the nine-county region served by the Lake Region Arts Council (LRAC). The study confirms what many of us know intuitively: that the arts do far more than inspire — they fuel local economies, support jobs, and strengthen communities.

The Numbers Tell the Story

In LRAC's region — which includes Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin counties — the numbers speak volumes:

- $4.8 million in direct annual spending by nonprofit arts organizations
- $8.9 million in additional audience/event-related spending
- $13.7 million in combined total annual economic activity
- 450 local jobs supported by the arts sector
- $1.6+ million in state and local government revenue generated

These are more than just statistics — they're proof that the arts are vital to the economic and civic life of our region. If you're interested, the results for all of Minnesota show some astounding numbers and data.

Check out the table on the next page for much more information.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SPENDING BY ARTS AND CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR AUDIENCES

Lake Region

Lake Region Arts Council

creative MN



Region 4

Direct Economic Activity			
	ORGANIZATIONS	**AUDIENCES**	**TOTAL EXPENDITURES**
Total Industry Expenditures (FY2024)	$8,919,670	$4,813,573	**$13,733,243**

Economic Impact of Spending by Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences			
TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS (includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts)	**ORGANIZATIONS**	**AUDIENCES**	**TOTAL IMPACTS**
Employment (Jobs)	65	65	**130**
Personal Income Paid to Residents	$2,469,717	$1,875,262	**$4,344,979**
Local Tax Revenue (city and county)	$215,513	$170,654	**$386,167**
State Tax Revenue	$388,186	$310,198	**$698,384**
Federal Tax Revenue	$593,471	$450,564	**$1,044,035**
Total Tax Revenue Generated	**$1,197,170**	**$931,416**	**$2,128,586**

Event-Related Spending by Arts and Culture Audiences Totaled $4.8 Million			
ATTENDANCE TO ARTS AND CULTURE EVENTS	**LOCAL[1] ATTENDEES**	**NONLOCAL[1] ATTENDEES**	**ALL ATTENDEES**
Total Attendance to In-Person Events	109,710	62,249	**171,959**
Percentage of Total Attendance	63.8%	36.2%	**100.0%**
Average Per Person, Per Event Expenditure	$24.34	$34.43	**$27.98**
Total Event-Related Expenditures	**$2,670,342**	**$2,143,231**	**$4,813,573**

Nonprofit Arts and Culture Audiences Spend an Average of $27.98 Per Person, Per Event			
CATEGORY OF EVENT-RELATED EXPENDITURE	**LOCAL[1] ATTENDEES**	**NONLOCAL[1] ATTENDEES**	**ALL ATTENDEES**
Food and Drink	$14.32	$15.82	**$14.87**
Retail Shopping	$2.66	$1.80	**$2.35**
Overnight Lodging (one night only)	$0.01	$3.70	**$1.34**
Local Transportation	$2.57	$4.52	**$3.27**
Clothing and Accessories	$2.47	$2.01	**$2.30**
Groceries and Supplies	$1.11	$3.72	**$2.05**
Childcare	$0.06	$1.51	**$0.58**
Other/Miscellaneous	$1.14	$1.35	**$1.22**
Overall Average Per Person, Per Event	**$24.34**	**$34.43**	**$27.98**

[1] For the purpose of this study, local attendees live within the Lake Region defined as Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin Counties in Minnesota; nonlocals live elsewhere.

Source: Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic and Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences in the Lake Region.
For more information about this study or about other cultural initiatives in the Lake Region, contact the Lake Region Arts Council or Minnesota Citizens for the Arts.

Why This Matters

These findings provide powerful tools for artists, arts organizations, and advocates across our nine counties. Whether you're writing a grant, meeting with a city council member, or sharing your organization's story with your community, this data helps make the case for continued investment in the arts.

You can use this report to:

- Advocate effectively with elected officials and local leaders
- Strengthen proposals and sponsorship requests with credible, local data
- Plan strategically for future growth and partnerships
- Educate stakeholders about the arts' role in job creation and economic development
- Calculate Your Own Impact
- Want to know how your organization contributes to your local economy?
- Use the Arts Economic Impact Calculator on LRAC's website. This easy tool lets you enter your budget and staffing information to estimate the ripple effects of your work. It's quick, powerful, and perfect for grant applications, board reports, or local advocacy. The calculator has been customized for our Region, and it's pretty powerful.

The Bottom Line

The arts are more than concerts, exhibitions, and performances — they are economic engines that drive the communities in the Lake Region forward. With $13.7 million in economic activity, 450 jobs supported, and millions in local revenue, the arts are deeply woven into the fabric of all our communities. This is something we should all be proud of!

Explore the full report and access the impact calculator at:
https://lrac4.org/economic-impact
Or, feel free to reach out to the team at the LRAC office in Fergus Falls,
lrac4@lracgrants.org



Thursday, November 20, 2025, 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at Lakes Country Service Cooperative.

Discounted registration for LCSC members.

This comprehensive training, led by Josh Heggem, an MSBA Board Certified Labor and Employment Law Specialist from Pemberton Law, is designed to help you prepare for significant changes to Minnesota's employment landscape in 2026.

The session will provide an essential update on new laws, including the new Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) and Minnesota Paid Leave laws. It will also offer a foundational review of employment law basics, focusing on key areas such as the hiring process, discrimination, effective performance management, and best practices for disciplinary actions and terminations.

The training begins with a light breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and concludes at 12:00 p.m.

REGISTER HERE

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Clean Lighting legislation aims to eliminate the sale of fluorescent bulbs, reducing risks for maintenance staff, waste workers, and others. Starting January 1, 2026, the sale, offer for sale, or distribution of pin-based linear or compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) will be banned.

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Help Shape a Hopeful Future

for Rural Communities at the Rural Democracy Summit 2025

Written By: Greta Hentges
Marketing and Communications Specialist
West Central Initiative

Mark your calendars: **Friday, October 31, 2025**—that's when the Rural Democracy Summit 2025: Toward a Positive Rural Vision takes place at the University of Minnesota Morris. This half-day gathering invites community members, local leaders, and changemakers from across west central Minnesota and beyond to come together for conversation, connection, and action. Think of it as a space to swap stories, wrestle with tough challenges, and spark new ideas for a hopeful rural future.

To offer a deeper look at the purpose of the summit and the outcomes we hope to see, we asked our Director of Civic Partnerships, Ben Schierer, to share his perspective.

What makes this summit especially relevant for people in our region right now?

I think most people, no matter their political affiliation or background, would agree that our communities and families are more divided than ever. And when we're divided, we're not at our best. This summit is about asking how we can come together—how we can make sure our communities are strong at the local level, even when national and state politics feel polarized. We want to move past division and create communities that thrive.

Why is it important for people to attend the summit, whether they see themselves as leaders or as community members who care about the future?

The key to any successful democracy is participation. That's what our country was founded on, and it's when our communities are at their best. Yes, we'll have subject-matter experts and leaders at the summit, but the heart of it will be the people who live and work in our towns every day. Their voices, their experiences, and their ideas are essential. Democracy works best when everyone takes part, not just those in leadership roles.

Can you tell us more about the panel discussion and why these voices were chosen?

The panel brings together people with deep experience and diverse perspectives. Heidi Heitkamp, former United States Senator, is a respected leader with a strong understanding of rural issues. Kathy Cramer, a political scientist and author, has helped many understand the challenges communities face in moving forward. Tom Horner, who has run for political office and served at high levels of state and federal government, brings a different perspective and a commitment to strengthening communities. Mark Ritchie, former Minnesota Secretary of State, adds his knowledge of history, leadership experience, and passion for the people and communities that make Minnesota unique.

The discussion will be moderated by Lori Sturdevant, who is widely regarded as Minnesota's foremost political observer and historian. Together, this group will provide powerful insight into both the challenges and opportunities facing our communities.



Ben Schierer
Director of Civic Partnerships
West Central Initiative

How do you hope attendees will continue the conversations afterward?

I hope people leave with fresh ideas about how they can help move their communities forward, along with the inspiration that comes from connecting with others who share similar aspirations. More than just one day of dialogue, the summit is meant to spark relationships and collaborations that last.

If participants walk away with new connections, stronger relationships, and a sense of shared purpose, then the ideas and energy we generate together will continue to ripple out into communities across the region. That's how real change happens—through sustained effort, rooted in hope and cooperation.

About the Rural Democracy Summit

The Rural Democracy Summit 2025 offers a chance to come together, exchange ideas, and chart a hopeful path forward for rural communities in West Central Minnesota. By bringing together people from many walks of life who share a commitment to our collective future, the summit aims to strengthen the foundations of democracy and spark action that helps communities thrive. Register by October 27 to reserve your spot and be part of shaping a positive rural vision.



Celebrating Our Own Staci Allmaras

Congratulations to Staci Allmaras for her recent recognition at the Pelican Rapids Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting, where she received the prestigious P.R.I.D.E. award!

(Pelican Rapids Individual Demonstrating Excellence)



Staci Allmaras, pictured at the center with chamber board members Lana Grefsrud and Sandie Strandlien, received the prestigious award at the Pelican Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce annual meeting and awards banquet. She was recognized for her dedication to the youth of Pelican Rapids and her leadership in bringing the future Bridge Center youth and community center to life.

> **"Feeling super honored by our amazing community. While the acronym is pretty cool, this award isn't about an individual. "There is no I in TEAM", and that's what it takes to make change happen."**

Staci Allmaras, LCSC Director of School and Youth Engagement

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211

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UNITED WAY | 211 Get Connected. Get Help.™



Written By: Nancy X. Valentine
Executive Director, Kaddatz Galleries

Open Call for Artists: Flourish, deadline to apply -

Friday, November 14, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.

Kaddatz Galleries invites early career and established local and regional artists to apply for Flourish, a group exhibition celebrating resilience, growth, and the uplifting energy of hope, to be held in January + February of 2026 in our Main Gallery. Just as plants bloom after enduring the seasons, this show will highlight artwork that reflects the beauty of thriving in new circumstances and embracing change.
We are seeking submissions across all mediums that embody renewal, optimism, and inner strength. Works might explore themes of transformation, healing, joy, or connection; illuminating the many ways art can radiate possibility for the future.
This is an open call for all artists who: Currently reside in the 9-County region of West Central Minnesota OR have a strong local connection.* These counties include: Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin.

Kaddatz Galleries Annual Open Call for Artists

There is no fee to submit artworks for consideration, however, artists must use the form below to submit 1 - 4 images and an artist bio. Artists may include an artist statement, social media handles and/or a link to a website; previous exhibition experience not required. The deadline for submission is November 14th, 2025 at 11:59PM CST. Selected artists will be notified the week of December 1 - 5, 2025, at which time they will receive a gallery exhibition agreement as well as further instructions about art drop off and pick up. Artists will be responsible for dropping off and picking up their work. Questions can be directed to: info@kaddatzgalleries.org



*We understand that there are many folks with deep ties to our region who may have moved on to other parts of the world. If that's you, your current geography - if outside of the 9-county region - does not exclude you from this opportunity and we simply ask that you share which community/county you feel a strong connection to in the submission form below.

Important Dates

- **Exhibition Dates:** January 20, 2026 - February 28, 2026
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Friday, November 14, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. CST
- **Date Selected Artists Notified:** Week of December 1-5, 2025
- **Art Delivery Dates:** January 5 - 10, 2026
- **Opening Reception:** 5-7 p.m., Thursday, January 22, 2026





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WEDNESDAY
29 OCTOBER, 2025

&

THURSDAY
30 OCTOBER, 2025

08:00 AM - 4:00 PM

08:00 AM - 11:30 AM

LOCATION - LCSC

1001 E. MOUNT FAITH,
FERGUS FALLS, MN 56537

REGISTRATION

$125 - Contract Clients
$150 - Non-Contract Clients

REGISTER NOW

Contact us to learn more.
Classes in October!

Jeff Preuss

jpreuss@lcsc.org

218-737-6529

Upcoming Webinar



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Otter Tail County

Hires Jodi Teich as the New County Engineer

Written By: Shannon Terry
Public Information Officer
Communications/Public Relations, Otter Tail County

"We are excited to welcome Ms. Teich to our team. Her proven track record of leadership in county engineering and her recognition as a national leader in the field make her an excellent fit for Otter Tail County."

Otter Tail County Board Chair Wayne Johnson.

Otter Tail County Commissioners have welcomed Jodi Teich as the county's new county engineer. Teich brings extensive leadership experience in county engineering and transportation planning to Otter Tail County.

Teich grew up on a dairy farm in southern Douglas County and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree. She worked as the assistant county engineer at Pine County for four and a half years before taking the assistant county engineer position at Stearns County. After 12 years as an assistant, she was appointed Stearns County Engineer in 2012, where she oversaw road construction, maintenance and transportation planning for one of Minnesota's largest counties.

Teich's credentials include being named the National Association of County Engineers' 2024 Urban Engineer of the Year. She currently serves as the north central vice president for the National Association of County Engineers and received the William Koniarski Transportation Advocate Award from the Minnesota Transportation Alliance.

During her tenure in Stearns County, Teich managed a comprehensive transportation system serving both urban and rural communities. Her experience overseeing complex infrastructure projects and coordinating with multiple jurisdictions will benefit Otter Tail County's extensive road network.

"I am very excited for this opportunity," said Teich. "I look forward to bringing my experience to Otter Tail County and to building relationships and working to improve the lives of those who travel through the county."

As county engineer, Teich will oversee highway construction and maintenance, bridge inspections, traffic safety programs and coordination with state and federal transportation agencies. Otter Tail County maintains approximately 1,067 miles of county roads and 74 bridges throughout its 2,225 square miles.

Roots That Run Deep

Patricia & Travis Dickey Build a Future with Ashby Market & Meats

Written By: Greta Henges
Marketing and Communications Specialist
West Central Initiative



Life in Ashby, Minnesota, is shaped by connection. It's a town where helping hands are never far away, where familiar faces fill the aisles, and where community traditions run deep. At the center of it all is Ashby Market & Meats, where Patricia and Travis Dickey balance raising their three kids on the family farm with running the town's only grocery store—a gathering place that keeps Ashby thriving.

"I grew up here in Ashby," said Patricia. "My parents owned a restaurant, my dad was a cop and the mayor, and we were always involved in the community. It's always been a special place to me."



A Life Grounded in Family & Community

Ashby is the place where Patricia and Travis's story unfolds. While Patricia pursued degrees from Alexandria Technical & Community College and spent years working in restaurants and accounting, Travis stayed close to the land, working on the farm where he grew up near Evansville.

Before they were married, Travis took over his family's dairy farm, which they ran together for fifteen years before transitioning to beef cattle and grain farming.

Today, they're raising their three children—ages 13, 10, and 5—while managing both the farm and the market.

"It's a lot to juggle," Patricia laughed. "But it's worth it. This is where we want to be, and this is the life we've chosen for our family."

From JC's Grocery to Ashby Market & Meats

Four years ago, Patricia began working at JC's Grocery, the long-standing neighborhood store where locals picked up everything from fresh meat to last-minute ingredients for family dinners.

When the opportunity came up to purchase the store, she and Travis saw a chance to invest in their community and their future.

Through our loan program, they secured the support they needed to make ownership possible. "It took a while to make the decision," said Patricia, "but ultimately, we knew this was the right move for us and for Ashby."

Since taking over and rebranding it as Ashby Market & Meats, Patricia and Travis have worked hard to keep the store a cornerstone of the community. They take pride in cutting all their own meat, grinding burgers fresh daily, and offering the personal touch customers expect from a small-town market. None of it, they say, would be possible without their dedicated employees, whose hard work and commitment help keep the store running smoothly every day.

Serving the Heart of Ashby

Community life in Ashby often circles back to Ashby Market & Meats. Beyond stocking shelves, the store helps fuel local traditions, providing food for church gatherings, Lions Club cookouts, and the Ashby Legacy Fund's summer celebration.

Patricia also serves on a committee for the Ashby Legacy Fund, helping raise money for projects that strengthen the community. "Our whole family is involved in something," she said. "Being part of Ashby has always been who we are."



"We're the only grocery store in town, so we try to be there for everyone. We work with the American Legion and school fundraisers—whether it's spaghetti feeds or community events."

Patricia Dickey

Dreaming Big for the Future

While they're proud of what they've built so far, the Dickeys have even bigger plans for the future. They hope to expand the store to offer more products and create a larger meat-processing area. One of their dreams is adding a small deli section—a place where locals can grab sandwiches, salads, or ready-made meals to take home.

"There aren't any restaurants in town right now," Patricia explained. "We'd love to offer something quick and fresh, like a tater tot hotdish you can bake at home. It's about making life easier for our neighbors."

The Power of Community Support

This is a story of commitment and community spirit. With Ashby Market & Meats, Patricia and Travis have built a place where neighbors come together, families are cared for, and the traditions that make Ashby special are kept alive.

"This community is the best I've ever been part of," said Patricia. "They're so supportive— it's amazing. I feel lucky to give back to the place that gave me so much."

With Ashby Market & Meats, the Dickeys are preserving a beloved tradition while shaping a new chapter for Ashby. Their journey is proof that when families invest in their community, the whole town grows stronger together.

CIVIC BRIDGERS

On March 9-10, 2026, Civic Bridgers will present America's Future Summit, a two-day civic leadership accelerator designed to unite 250 Minnesota teens in celebration of the nation's 250th birthday.

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LCSC COMMUNICATOR

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
An equal opportunity employer

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

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