

A new home for SWWC - Education cooperative holds ribbon cutting, open house for \$11M project

Aug 29, 2025

Deb Gau, dgau@marshallindependent.com



Photo by Deb Gau

Southwest West Central Service Cooperative Executive Director Cliff Carmody cuts the ribbon on the new SWWC administrative office building in Marshall

MARSHALL — It took almost 10 years for the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative to build a permanent home in Marshall. But it was worth the wait, said SWWC Executive Director Cliff Carmody.

“This is a proud, exciting time and moment for SWWC,” Carmody said. “This space represents more than just new walls and work stations. It symbolizes growth, renewed energy and deeper commitment to the work we do and the people we serve.”

SWWC, an educational service cooperative serving thousands of students across an 18-county region, officially moved into new offices on London Road this summer. On Wednesday, the cooperative held an open house and ribbon-cutting for the new facility.

SWWC staff moved into the new office on June 30. The cooperative’s previous administrative offices were located in the Market Street Mall in Marshall.

Carmody said the idea of building a permanent office were part of facilities discussions for SWWC going back several years.

“Frankly, we thought our first priority would be addressing the needs of our administrative office at the mall on the other side of town. However, we focused our efforts on educational facilities,” Carmody said. “Nearly a decade later, we’re here celebrating the opening of our new administrative building.”

About 50 people work in the new office building, but it also has space for training and meetings, SWWC staff said.

The new building has an area of 17,640 square feet, said Kim Barse, the owner representative with ORB Management who worked with SWWC on the project. The cooperative broke ground on the project last year, and construction took 13 months.

“You can see inside the building, there’s a lot of technology,” Barse said. “One of the facts with that is, the data cabling in this facility is approximately 9.5 miles (long).”

The total cost of the project was about \$11 million, Carmody said. Because SWWC provides services for fees, regional membership will help support the cost of the building project over time, he said.

“It was important to us that we build a well-designed, functional building,” Carmody said.

Visitors Wednesday got a chance to tour the new building, which included office space for SWWC administration, as well as business services, and technology and teaching and learning departments. A large training room is equipped with cameras and video technology that can be used for conferences and training events, said Shelly Maes, director of member engagement at SWWC and executive director of the SWWC Foundation.

When it came to decorating the common areas of the office building, SWWC turned to the landscape of southwest and west central Minnesota for inspiration. Several photo

murals show landmarks like the Buffalo Ridge, Ramsey Falls in Redwood Falls, and more.

“I was trying to find cool things from each area” of SWWC’s service region, Maes said.

“Overall, we are just thrilled with the space,” Maes said. Features like big windows and natural light have gotten positive reactions from employees. The more open layout of the new office building also let people in different departments interact more, Maes said. “You see people you really didn’t see before.”

SWWC staff helped coordinate the move into the new offices this summer. Carmody said moving the technology the cooperative uses was what made him the most nervous, but it went smoothly.

“This is truly a team effort, and I’m deeply grateful for that,” he said.

Carmody said he was also thankful for the local partnerships that helped make the new office possible. SWWC worked together with the city of Marshall and the Marshall Economic Development Authority to find a location for the new office.

In 2023, the Marshall City Council approved an agreement that allowed SWWC to purchase five acres of city-owned land at the corner of London Road and Channel Parkway for \$1. The agreement also allowed the cooperative to use conduit bond financing for the project.

“This doesn’t happen if we don’t have partners,” Carmody said of the office project. “Without their support ... we wouldn’t be here today.”

“When we started planning this move, our goal was to create a space that reflects our values — collaboration, innovation and service,” Carmody said. “I think we’ve been successful.”