

SOUTHWEST WEST CENTRAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE



**Education & Administrative Resources** 

### **Annual Report To Our Partners**



### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **MISSION**

We support and enhance the work of our members by providing programs and services to meet their needs.

### **VISION**

By striving to be innovative, collaborative and responsive, we will be the premiere service agency for our members.

### **VALUES**

Service ... a commitment to serve our members, potential members, coworkers and others.

Integrity ... the foundation of our actions.

Respect ... treating everyone with courtesy, politeness and kindness.

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020-21**



Maydra Maas Board Chair Westbrook-Walnut Grove Schools

SWWC Service Cooperative knows the future is ours to determine. Its Board of Directors succinctly know the actions we take and firmly believe the decisions we make today influence what happens tomorrow.

That's why SWWC continues to value our partnerships with regional public and parochial schools, and city/county/other governmental agencies. Our staff "owns a stake" in our cooperative that helps achieve goals essential for our kids to survive and thrive.

Just yesterday, on our way to church services, our middle granddaughter enthusiastically shouted as she pointed toward Westbrook-Walnut Grove Schools, Walnut Grove campus: "Look Grandma. There is my school. I go there to learn, and it is so FUN ... even with COVID!!"

On behalf of SWWC, our Board of Directors, and our wonderfully gifted staff, I sincerely thank you for your school's/agencies' unending cooperative support. TOGETHER, the plans we make and the people and policies we influence matter because they define OUR KIDS' FUTURE.



Cliff Carmody Executive Director

SWWC Service Cooperative exists for one very important purpose ... to support and enhance the work of our members!

This Annual Report highlights the 2020-21 programs, services and accomplishments of SWWC. This past year was unprecedented as our staff worked tirelessly during the pandemic to ensure we provided the highest quality experience for our members. I am extremely proud to say our staff and administration performed beyond expectations during this challenging time!

Our shared services model of delivering programs and services is the foundation to what we do. Entrepreneurial in spirit, we invest in the development of new programs and the support of existing programs in our day-to-day work. Because we are a membership driven organization, SWWC staff, administration and board work collaboratively with our members to provide affordable programs and services that support, enhance and meet their needs.

In addition, our values of service, integrity and respect are an integral part of what we do and are embedded in the benefits we provide our members. At the heart of these values is service. We believe service is the commitment to serve our members, potential members, co-workers and others. We care about them, listen to them and work to address their issues. Satisfying those we serve is a priority for everyone in the agency.

As we plan for the coming year, we will continue to recognize the needs of our members. We are grounded and committed to our service approach and will continue to find ways to be innovative in our efforts to provide high quality, affordable programs and services. The continued impact of the pandemic will require us to adjust when necessary, but we will not waiver from our commitment to serving you!

Thank you for all that you do in supporting our work together. I look forward to working with you in the coming year as we continue to find ways to meet your needs.

# **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The care, management, and control of SWWC shall be vested in a board of directors. The majority of the members of the board of directors shall be current school board members of school districts in full membership. The remaining board members may be representatives at large appointed by the board of directors or elected as representatives by other participating agencies, such as schools, cities, counties, or other governmental units.



Maydra Maas, Chair Westbrook-Walnut Grove



Darin Balken Prairie Lakes Youth Program



Michael Hendrickson ACGC



Dr. Kathryn Kelly Vice-Chair Renville Co. SWCD



Jody Bauer Tracy Area



Joseph Nagel McLeod County



Don Brugman Clerk Windom



Matt Coleman Marshall



Steve Schnieder Worthington



Tom Walsh Treasurer KMS

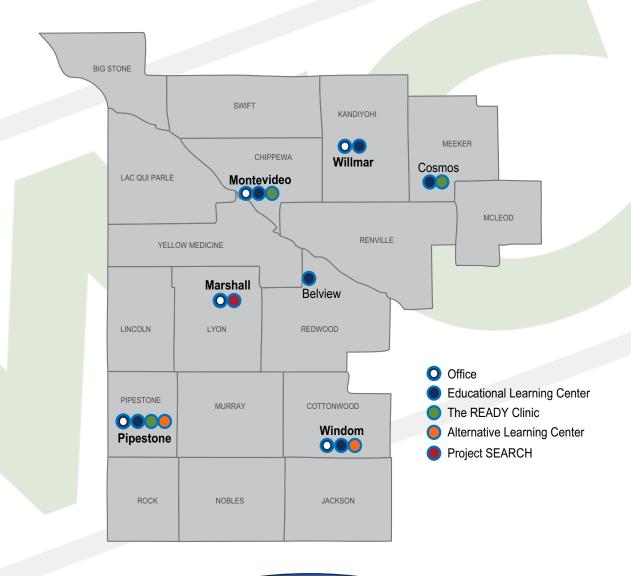


Kari Harding Canby



Mike Zins Fulda

# **SERVICE AREA**



counties comprise our service area (with some programs spanning beyond those boundaries).



### CENTRAL OFFICE

As with everyone around the state, country and world, the pandemic disrupted work in our Central Office activities.

**BUSINESS OFFICE** staff became subject matter experts on the new GEER, ESSER, CARES, CRF and American Rescue Plan funding streams, and managed multiple new requirements of the Families First Coronovirus Response Act.

#### Other BUSINESS OFFICE highlights:

- Received the Pathway to the Meritorious Budget Award (MBA) for the 2020–21 budget year from ASBO.
- Randy Erdman and Elizabeth Sullivan completed the MASBO Voluntary Certification Program.



 Randy Erdman completed the MASBO Leadership Academy.

The entire focus of **MEMBER SERVICES** changed due to the collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Service Cooperatives. The creation of Regional Support Teams in each service cooperative region involved naming a Regional Coordinator to work alongside epidemiologists and education staff to assist school districts in the region with all things COVID-related.

We quickly became experts navigating various guidance documents and safe learning plans. We became comfortable helping school staff with contact tracing (something we had never heard of before). We made connections with a new group of school staff - the school nurses. We spent hours on the phone (including evenings and weekends), in district COVID team meetings, in weekly public health/school district virtual meetings and more. We even helped distribute PPE ... TWICE! While it was a busy and challenging school year, being able to support our member school districts in this way was extremely rewarding!



400 highly skilled and talented professionals are on the swwc TEAM working throughout the region.

The **HUMAN RESOURCES** department experienced many COVID-related challenges and obstacles, but persevered and learned a great deal. They assisted with:

- Developing the SWWC COVID-19 Preparedness Plan.
- Distributing PPE to all SWWC staff/locations.
- Implementing staff leave options as part of the FFCRA and ARP.
- Assisted with SWWC decision-making on quarantine, isolation and other exposure guidance.
- Supported the staff return-to-office plan.
- Coordinated on-site saliva testing for staff.

Some highlights that were not COVID-19 related include:

- Implementation of new Title IX requirements.
- Began more concentrated efforts around diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Successfully coordinated virtual SWWC staff inservices.





# **ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

Minnesota Statute requires our **HEALTH INSURANCE POOLS** to bid our third party administrative (TPA) services every four years. With our current four-year bid due January 1, 2022, work began late in the fall and a request for proposal (RFP) was created.

Five carriers bid on the MHC insurance pool TPA services: BCBS, United Health Care, Medica, Gravie/Preferred I and Bind. All five met with MHC to highlight their proposal. After follow-up presentations with three finalists, the committee unanimously selected Medica.

A total of 13 workstreams have been created to ensure that by January 1, 2022, there will be no issues for our members with this transition.



Members of the **SCHOOL POOL** are required to bid their insurance every two years, and this was the year for that to happen. The renewal faced challenges with this required "shopping", as well as aggressive action by our current TPA because MHC selected a different carrier beginning 1/1/2022. We saw a contract loss of 18%, which is more than previous years, but considering the circumstances, we were pleased with the results.

The Live Well program continues to be popular with schools, with the pool paying out \$1,096,074 in worksite wellness, biometric screenings and employee incentives. School Pool finances are strong; reserves exceed the Board Target maximum of 35%, IBNR reserve is fully-funded, and the RSR is currently around 20% below the recommended funding level.

The **JANUARY I POOL** renewal for January I, 2021, saw a contract decrease of 8%. This pool is more price sensitive with members "shopping" yearly.

The Live Well program is popular for this pool too, with a total of \$558,410 paid out for worksite wellness, biometric screenings and employee incentives. Pool finances are strong; reserves are at the Board Target maximum of 35%, IBNR reserve is fully-funded, and the RSR exceeds the recommended 100% funding level.

The **ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES TEAM** has faced several key staff transitions over the past few years, and 2020-21 was no exception.

Doug Deragisch, who led the team for 13.5 years, retired on June 30, 2021. He will continue, however, in a part-time role to assist with the transition within our health insurance program. Barb Raske, who worked in RMIC with MARSS, Payroll, and Finance also retired after 40 years of service.

The knowledge and experience is not easily replaced, and prompted a reorganization of leadership. Effective May 1, 2021, Christine Schmitt was promoted to Director of Business Services. Despite the changes, the **RMIC TEAM** has grown to 13 staff and remains committed to providing the excellent service and support that members have come to expect.



total number of groups in the school and the January I HEALTH INSURANCE POOLS.

### **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

#### BEHAVIOR ANALYTIC SERVICES AND

MENTAL HEALTH consultants were busy supporting students and staff this last year. Our behavior analytic service staff were tasked with multiple modalities of supporting students/staff and some had to work cross- departments (ELCs and TRCs) and manage a work load far heavier than before. They challenged themselves to grow and attempt services in a way that they haven't been comfortable doing before. Each and every one of them rose to the challenge and pushed themselves out of their comfort zone to ensure a quality service that our districts needed.

Mental Health services provided support for clinical supervision of staff at our ELCs, psychotherapy at Minnesota West for students and staff, conflict resolution, team building, and professional development for Northwest Service Cooperative, completion of intake evaluations at the Abbott House, and implementation of CARES/ESSER grant funding/mental health supports for students and staff at SWWC.

school districts in
Minnesota and South
Dakota purchased
behavior analytic services.



THE READY CLINIC locations in Cosmos, Montevideo and Pipestone (shown below) started off 2020-21 with three clients. Despite pandemic challenges, we received 55 referrals and ended the year with ten clients. We implemented parent training and received very good feedback from participants.



Our **POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)** work continued to grow and expand in the southern region. Cohort 16 and 17 continued to work through their Year 2 and Year I work during the restrictions of the pandemic. Our southern region adapted the in-person work to on-line modules and as the pandemic advanced, hybrid options with a mix of support to try meet the needs of the districts.

Our region has also been allowed to pilot the development and implementation of a new Tier II cohort training model. A small sampling of districts will be selected to trial the new cohort model. Data gathered from the experience will guide the future expansion of PBIS work in advanced tiers for the whole state.

Our region has also continued to build capacity with the number of trainers, external coaches, data facilitators, and individuals trained to provide support for schools at no cost to them.

schools received support from the SWWC SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM during 2020-21.

## LEARNING CENTERS



**SWWC ELC - WINDOM** moved to a new building prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year. We are now located in the Winfair Elementary School (shown above) at 1454 6th Avenue.

#### SWWC's EDUCATIONAL LEARNING

**CENTERS (ELCs)** faced many unique and challenging obstacles during the 2020-21 school year. Late guidance received from the Minnesota Department of Education, high rates of staff absenteeism due to illness and quarantines, and continual shifting between learning models forced our teams to reprioritize goals and react to continual pandemic changes.

However, unlike many school districts in Minnesota, the ELCs did not experience a significant loss in enrollment. During 2019-20, enrollment across the six ELC locations was 203 compared to 199 this past year. We project enrollment to increase to 210 for the 2021-22 school year.

#### SWWC's ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER

(ALC) services saw a positive change in 2020-21 as we transitioned to offering a unique and flexible experience to meet the needs of learners who haven't been successful in the traditional school system through more flexible scheduling and a greater use of technology. We also expanded programming to reach more students and member school districts by utilizing technology and space at ELC - Pipestone. As a result, we served three additional member school districts (Pipestone, Edgerton and RTR) and grew ALC enrollment from 29 students to 47.

Students who attend an ALC are identified as "at risk of not graduating" ... in fact, students attending SWWC's Setting IV programs are also at risk. Research and data has shown that students with CTE coursework were more likely to graduate, enroll in a two-year or fouryear college, or became employed. So, after hiring a Career and Technical Project Coordinator to work with ALC and ELC students, we implemented the Next Up Transition Curriculum. Students developed Career Learning Plans based on a framework that was developed to move students through a continuum from Career Awareness to Career Placement/Transition. Four students participated in job shadowing experiences and four participated in paid internships. One student with poor attendance was at risk of not graduating, and when given the opportunity to participate in a paid internship, the student became engaged, attendance improved and the student successfully graduated!

project search interns graduated after participating in interships at Runnings, Chartwells, Goodwill and AmericInn.



### SOUTHWEST PRAIRIE RCE

The work of the **SOUTHWEST PRAIRIE REGIONAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**, in a "normal" school year, begins when districts and schools are identified through MDE's accountability process.

We work the schools and facilitate a Critical Needs
Assessment, help them determine an Evidence Based
Practice they will implement, and coach them through a multi-year PDSA cycle for implementation.

However, a "pandemic" school year looks much different. In a nutshell, 2020-21 was spent doing whatever teachers and schools needed in relation to the pandemic.

We had to switch gears and provide teacher platforms, which were hosted virtually, to connect teachers within the same discipline or grade level. This also expanded to school leaders and school counselors. During these virtual sessions, we listened and often completed a communication loop to MDE.

These virtual sessions offered a great opportunity to model a positive learning (virtual) environment that teachers could use with their students. We listened and responded with what the leaders and teachers needed. We produced grading documents, transition documents, and Responsive Return guidance and planning ... all while guiding and coaching schools through Continuous Improvement.



1. Prioritize equity.
2. Start from within.
3. Measure what matters.
4. Go local.
5. Follow the money.
6. Start early.
7. Monitor implementation of standards.
8. Value people.
9. Improve conditions for learning.
10. Give students options.

The pandemic brought a spotlight onto the many inequities throughout the state, ranging from access to online education, to policies that don't work for many cultures. The year opened many doors to equity conversations and highlighted the work necessary to make school equitable for all Minnesota students. Many schools asked for assistance and support to help embed equity training into leadership teams and staff.

Overall, the accomplishments of the 2020-21 school year were far from what was planned ... but rich relationships with school leaders and teachers were created that will last.

districts were identified through MDE to work with the Southwest Prairie RCE.



### SPECIAL EDUCATION

The goal for the **SWWC STAR AUTISM SUPPORT COHORT PROGRAM** was to continue developing the capacity inside SWWC member districts and SWWC ELCs to serve elementary-aged students with autism and other developmental disabilities by providing sustainable local resources and curriculum to assist with implementation of evidence-based practices.

ELEMENTARY COHORTS (13 training sites) were active in the region during 2020-21.

Cohort **ONE** completed Year 3 of implementation:

- Willmar Roosevelt Elem. K-2 SpEd Classroom
- Willmar Jefferson Learning Center Pre-K SpEd Classroom
- GSL Lakeside Elem. 3-6 SpEd Classroom
- GSL Lincoln Elem. Pre-K SpEd Classroom
- SWWC ELC Cosmos Elem. SUN Classroom

Cohort **TWO** completed Year 2 of implementation:

- Willmar Roosevelt Elem. 3-5 SpEd Classroom
- Marshall Park Side Elem. K-2 Classroom
- SWWC ELC Belview SUN Program
- SWWC ELC Willmar SUN Program

Cohort **THREE** completed Year I of implementation:

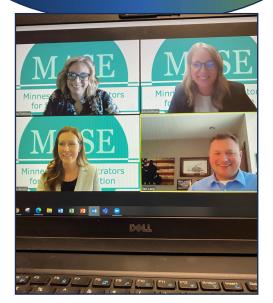
- Worthington Prairie Elem. K-5 Classroom
- SWWC ELC Cosmos SUN Program
- SWWC ELC Windom SUN Program
- SWWC ELC Montevideo SUN Program

STAR Coaches/STAR Site Teachers were supported virtually during the year by STAR Trainers. Training sites were also introduced to the new and improved STAR Online Learning System (SOLS). SWWC partnered with the Minnesota Low Incidence Projects to ensure that all educators in our service area received free access to the STAR Online Learning System.

We held two **VIRTUAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)** meetings for staff who work with students identified as having other health disabilities.



3 SWWC special education leaders conduct "MASE DAY AT THE CAPITOL" virtually.



### TEACHING AND LEARNING

A milestone was met in 2020-21 -- LAUNCH YOUR FUTURE TODAY (LYFT) PATHWAYS funded its 50th school-business partnership project!

Thanks to legislative funding and partnership matching funds, nearly \$3.5 million has been invested over the past four years to provide high school students with career and technical educational experiences that will help shape their future education/careers.

To further help students and families navigate the education/career planning process, a team of regional partners developed an animated video entitled "What's Next After High School" and web-based companion materials called The 3 E's Roadmap. These resources will help thousands of students explore their interests, learn more career opportunities in the region and create plans to reach their goals.

high school students in the region have experienced handson learning/career exploration through LYFT!

Seven schools in the **MINNESOTA WEST CARL PERKINS CONSORTIUM** piloted the NextUp
Transition Curriculum which helps students with
disabilities prepare for a successful transition to future
education/careers. Over 600 students were taught
lessons to help develop critical workplace skills such
as preparing for interviews, searching for jobs, setting
goals, advocating for themselves, handling peer pressure,
keeping a job and more.

Consortium members worked with the Center for Community Vitality (University of Minnesota Extension) to better understand the needs of high school English Learners (EL). Based on feedback from focus groups, more education/career planning activities specific to EL students will be provided in 2021-22. To that end, SWWC's **PROJECT DISCOVERY** will offer EL students to explore their interests and career skills through its hands-on career exploration modules.

The following SWWC **STUDENT ENRICHMENT** events were held virtually during 2020-21 due to the pandemic: Conference for Young Writers, Conference for Young Artists, Science and Nature Conference, Regional Spelling Bee, Digital Photography Competition, Culinary Skills Challenge and both Junior High and Senior High Knowledge Bowl. Staff did an outstanding job to ensure participants had a high-quality, online experience. We also added a virtual option for entire classrooms (in addition to individuals), which attracted several schools outside our region for multiple events.

**T&L SUPPORT SERVICES** (the North and South Collaboratives, Shared Services, Data & Intervention, Deluxe Services and Instructional Coaching) were delivered virtually, for the majority of the school year, due to pandemic limitations on in-person and on-site support. Our staff did a great job providing creative and flexible ways to meet teacher needs. Most professional development offerings were also conducted virtually or through our PD On Demand courses. Our PD on Demand courses drew great participation and feedback.

STATEWIDE LONGITUDINAL EDUCATION DATA SYSTEM (SLEDS) work continued with monthly statewide network meetings and ongoing support for those utilizing SLEDS data. Support for Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS) was rolled out this year as well. Two major projects during 2020-21 were:

- EL student participation in CTE courses, and
- tracking career pathways of students who participated in Minnesota River Valley CTE Collaborative courses.

The regional **INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAM**, partnering with the New Teacher Center, added a third cohort of instructional coaches this year. Instructional coaches were vital to supporting teachers across the region throughout a very challenging year.

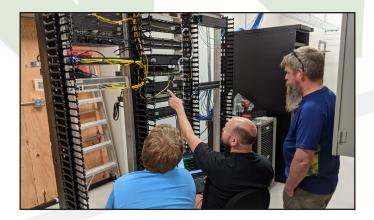
SWWC was named as a partner in a 5-year federal Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant, along with the New Teacher Center and SRI (research institute). The grant will have a social-emotional learning focus. We are excited to continue to build our capacity and see the impact this can have for schools, teachers and especially students.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

The **SWWC TECHNOLOGY** team's top priority during 2020-21 was to ensure a cohesive and consistent educational experience for all students and staff in the schools we serve, and ensure all SWWC staff had the ability to effectively and efficiently work from home/remotely.

We needed to be ready for anything and everything to change at a moment's notice. Our team provided expertise, dedication and resolve to ensure staff and students had the best possible learning environment regardless of the learning model was being implemented at the time.

We made the transition to Office 365 and Teams for collaboration, a process expedited to accommodate remote work during the pandemic, but one that has built great efficiencies and brought many teams at SWWC closer together than ever before.



We developed a new program focused on Cybersecurity which will offer two primary services: **SECURITY ASSESSMENTS** and **CYBERSECURITY SERVICES.** We believe that these service offerings will not only provide growth in staffing, but also in the expertise provided to our members and beyond.

We played instrumental roles in eight **BUILDING CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS** in the region by assisting with E-Rate funding applications for infrastructure equipment, RFPs providing the competitive bidding process for new building wiring projects, and telecommunications and network systems project management. Among our biggest accomplishments included projects with Pipestone, RTR, Worthington and the SWWC ELC in Windom, as well as new projects starting at Lakeview and MACCRAY.



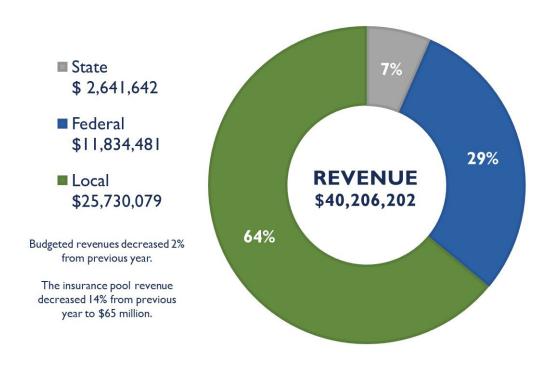
The **WIDE AREA NETWORK** welcomed Lynd Public Schools back into the consortium and added St. Mary's Catholic School in Worthington as a brand new member.

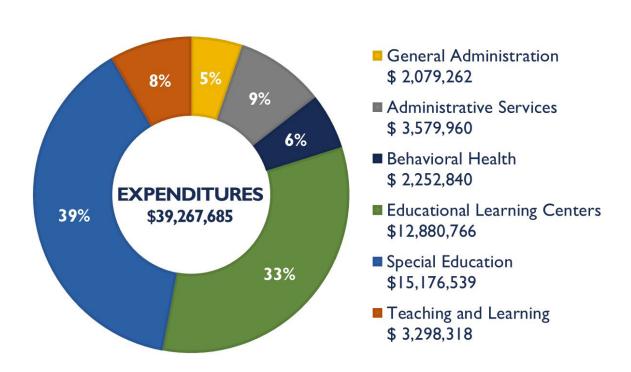
The flexibility of the WAN service contract with SDN Communications was demonstrated with changes for both Pipestone Area and RTR Schools. Both districts consolidated into single PreK-I2 school buildings, which resulted in a reduction from six buildings directly connected to the WAN to just two. The SWWC ELC - Windom and Windom POP locations also consolidated into a single site on the WAN (shown here). In all, SDN allowed the WAN Consortium to eliminate the monthly costs of **FIVE** WAN connected sites with no questions asked.



### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Our core values of service, integrity and respect are the foundation for all we do, including our efforts to be great financial stewards of the resources we are given to serve our members.





### **SWWC FOUNDATION**



WE BELIEVE that students in the region deserve innovative and learning-rich educational opportunities so they can be positioned to learn, grow and find success.

The SWWC Foundation strives to inspire a culture of giving that will support regional student enrichment programs, as well as, provide greater access to enrichment activities.

Funds raised support a variety of **REGIONAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES** for students, including:

- Camp Aspire
- Career Expo
- Conference for Young Artists (shown at right)
- Conference for Young Writers
- Creating Writing Contest
- Culinary Skills Challenge
- Digital Photography Competition
- First Tech Challenge
- Knowledge Bowl
- Project Discovery
- Regional Spelling Bee
- Science and Nature Conference (shown below)
   These opportunities are an extension of the classroom and give students the opportunity to further explore

areas of interest in a hands-on fashion.



"SWWC provides experiences for children that we cannot offer in smaller schools."

~ Elementary Principal





### LARGE OR SMALL ... ALL DONATIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

- A \$1 weekly gift sends one student to a conference where they may discover a natural talent that sparks learning.
- A \$20 monthly gift provides a scholarship for TWO children to attend Camp Aspire (a full-day, week-long summer camp for K-6 with hands-on discovery through community, character, social-emotional and project-based learning).

# YOU CAN DONATE AT WWW.SWWC.ORG/ FOUNDATION

The SWWC Foundation was incorporated in December 2017 as a 501c3 public charity and a 509a3 Type II supporting organization. SWWC and the SWWC Foundation exist in a brother/sister relationship. While the organizations are separate and governed by two separate boards of directors, the SWWC Foundation was organized exclusively for the benefit of SWWC Service Cooperative (similar to a hospital or university foundation).

SWWC is dedicated to providing unparalleled education and administration services, innovative solutions and uncompromising support to our members and the communities we serve with integrity, respect and responsive action.

# 2020-21 SUPERINTENDENTS' EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Chair: Ryan Nielsen, Canby

Vice-Chair: Wayne Wormstadt, Windom Area Past Chair: Kevin Enerson, Pipestone Area

Dr. Chad Anderson, Tracy Area Paul Bang, Heron Lake-Okabena Dan Deitte, Minneota and Ivanhoe

Dr. Chris Fenske, Lakeview

Doug Froke, Renville County West

David Hansen, Dawson-Boyd

Todd Holthaus, Hills-Beaver Creek

Jeff Horton, Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop

John Landgaard, Worthington

Joe Meyer, Murray County Central

Dr. Michelle Mortensen, Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart

Craig Oftedahl, Luverne

Nels Onstad, Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City

Greg Schmidt, Lac qui Parle Valley

Richard Schneider, Yellow Medicine East

Chris Sonju, Glencoe-Silver Lake

Dr. Sonya Vierstraete, Southwest Minnesota State

Dr. Terry Gaalswyk, Minnesota West

The Superintendents' Executive Council provides advice and support to SWWC Administration and Board of Directors.

### 2020-21 SWWC EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Cliff Carmody, Executive Director

Tammy Stahl, Deputy Executive Director

Amber Bruns, Clinical Director of Behavioral

Health Services

Doug Deragisch, Senior Director of Administrative

Services

Randy Erdman, Director of Finance

Lisa Gregoire, Director of Teaching and Learning

Nicole Lydick, Southwest Prairie RCE Director

Shelly Maes, Manager of Member Services and

**SWWC Foundation Executive Director** 

Mary Palmer, Regional Director of Special Education

Abby Polzine, Director of Human Resources

Christine Schmitt, Director of Business Services

Josh Sumption, Director of Technology



SWWC is a member of The Minnesota Service Cooperatives, an association of nine educational service agencies in Minnesota.

**SWWC Main Office** 

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**WWW.SWWC.ORG**