As a child, going on a field trip to a museum or science center is an exciting and immersive experience that sparks wonder and curiosity. But not all children have the opportunity to visit cultural organizations due to a lack of resources or funding. This is where the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC) comes in! CILC offers virtual visits with renowned experts, to National Parks, museums, historic sites, and more, narrowing the opportunity gap for all learners.

Founded in 1994 as a non-profit organization by Ameritech (now AT&T), CILC used distance learning to connect K-12 schools, hospitals, and libraries in Indiana for virtual visits based on scholastic or personal interests. It was after CILC facilitated a virtual field trip between a student group and experts at the Indianapolis Zoo that they realized the powerful impact virtual visits could have on learners without the privilege of visiting a cultural organization. Since then, CILC has grown
and expanded their mission to ignite a passion for learning through extending access to cherished institutions. Today, CILC partners with nearly 200 Content Providers who are experts from renowned cultural institutions and connects more than 57,000 members in over 100 countries for unforgettable virtual visits. CILC’s Virtual Field Trip Library boasts a staggering 2000 programs, offering tailored program packages and riveting live stream series at no cost.

One of CILC’s most innovative offerings is the Community of Learning (COL), a weekly series featuring educational live streams led by CILC content providers covering topics in art, STEM, literacy, and history. For over 400,000 viewers across 27 countries, COL is a valuable resource for learners in all learning environments. The Roam from Home series is designed for lifelong learners, providing virtual excursions through majestic National Parks and virtual tours of museums to explore world cultures.

CILC’s commitment to accessibility and lifelong learning has made them a game-changer for both K-12 students and schools. They are also a powerful tool to enhance learning and engagement for aging adults in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities. CILC is revolutionizing the way we access and engage with cultural institutions and experts around the world, bringing the world’s treasures to your screen. To stay up to date with CILC’s latest programs and offerings, including the Community of Learning and Roam from Home series, visit cilc.org.

For more about CILC’s offerings and partnership opportunities, please reach out to CILC staff:

- **Glenn Morris**, Executive Director, 507-389-5106
- **Aimee Armer**, Director of Strategic Development, 507-389-5107
- **Allyson Mitchell**, Director of Partnerships and Engagement, 507-386-2972
- **Tami Moehring**, Director of Member Relations, 507-215-3705

CILC is a program of SCSC.
Happy Workversary, Teresa Rome!

By Crista Krosch

We are pleased to celebrate Teresa’s 25th year work anniversary. Teresa’s current role with SCSC is Third Party Billing Coordinator. Her typical day involves all aspects of Third-Party billing including: compliance, staff training, data entry, email correspondence and the like. As the Third-Party Coordinator, Teresa’s role is to increase Special Education revenues. Teresa’s knowledge of the rules and regulations surrounding Third Party billing makes her invaluable to school districts and seeing increases in revenues for those schools keeps her motivated. Teresa began her position with SCSC working with one district; over the years, Teresa has supported over 30 different districts in a variety of ways.

SCSC Administrator Director Cindy Ehlers shared that “Teresa has had many roles with SCSC including support, academic programs, third party billing, cleaning services, etc. She is always willing to learn new things and give it her all, working to improve programs at SCSC. Teresa has a great attitude and is fun to work with.”

Thank you, Teresa, for your many years of service and for all you do to support our schools!

SCSC members, partners, students, staff, and their families are invited to share your Minnesota photos!

Photos will be included in the SCSC 2024 photo calendar. All Minnesota locales are welcome: landscapes, cityscapes, seasons, or interesting objects.

Requirements:
- The photos should be recent but don’t have to be from this year.
- People should not be identifiable.
- Email your photo(s) to socialmarketing@mnscsc.org. In the photo file name, please include your name and location of photo.

We look forward to seeing photos from your Minnesota adventures. Thank you for sharing them with us!
SCSC is excited to announce that Darin Jensen has joined our team as Administrative Director of Business Operations.

Darin previously worked with Benson Public Schools, SW/WC Service Cooperative, and Region V Computer Services and brings a wealth of knowledge with over 33 years of experience working with Minnesota schools. Darin’s diverse experience includes Business Manager, Technology Coordinator, MARSS Coordinator, SMART Systems software development and SOD planning, consolidations, and reconfigurations.

Interesting note: Darin is the youngest of six children. He and his wife, Karen, have two children, one grandchild and a puppy named Mylo.

Darin, IT’S GREAT TO HAVE YOU ON THE SCSC TEAM!

Welcome, Darin!
by Crista Krosch

Wellness Corner
By Hannah Keltgen

SCSC Wins Silver!

The American Heart Association has awarded SCSC the National Silver Level Recognition for its commitments to employee health and well-being as measured in the Association’s 2022 Workforce Well-being Scorecard™.

The Scorecard provides a comprehensive assessment of an organization’s culture of health by evaluating factors such as mental health policies, organizational wellbeing strategies to address burnout, health equity measures, employee financial resources and more.

Research has shown that supporting the mental and physical well-being of employees is vital to driving productivity, engagement, and successful business outcomes. By investing in a culture of health in the workplace, organizations can improve employee retention and bolster their organizational reputation.

“We are honored to be recognized by the American Heart Association for our commitment to employee health and well-being and our continued efforts to promote equity,” said Hannah Keltgen, SCSC Manager of Wellness and Marketing Communications. “Our organization is dedicated to creating a culture that is safe, supportive and provides opportunities for everyone to reach their full potential—in and out of the workplace.”

The Workforce Well-being Scorecard is a key component of the Association’s Wellbeing Works Better™ platform, which helps business leaders unleash the power of a healthy, happy workforce.

For more information and a full list of recognized organizations, visit heart.org/workforce.
On the SCSC/MHC Insurance Plan (Medica)?
Enjoy earning $220 a year with the My Health Rewards program!

Your healthier future starts now.
Earn points and get rewards with My Health Rewards, an online tool that helps you take small steps to reach your health goals.

You'll earn points by making small, everyday changes. Those points can add up to $160 per year in rewards!

1. Go to the Rewards page
2. Click on Learn How to Earn More Points
3. See a list of all the ways you can earn

A monthly statement, also under the Rewards page, gives you a summary of the points you’ve earned. Your points add up throughout the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WAYS TO EARN</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>PULSECASH REWARD AMOUNT</th>
<th>REWARD TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EARN PROGRAM POINTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>E-gift card or other options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>E-gift card or other options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>E-gift card or other options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>E-gift card or other options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$160 per year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-DAY TRIPLE TRACKER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track any combination of the following activities on 20 or more days in a calendar month to earn a bonus reward:</td>
<td>$5 per month</td>
<td>E-gift card or other options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,000 steps a day and/or;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 active minutes a day and/or;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 workout minutes a day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$60 per year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point-based rewards + 20-day triple tracker rewards =</td>
<td>$220 in rewards potential per year</td>
<td>E-gift card or other options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Connect Fitness Tracker
Get Started
Cooperative Purchasing

CPC vendor Tremco is well versed in using ESSER funds for facility improvements. As you plan facility improvements this year, please be aware of the deadlines for using ESSER II and ESSER III funds as well as the applicable restrictions on using those funds.

What Schools Need to Know About Using ESSER II and III Emergency Relief Funds for Facility Improvements

- The deadline to use ESSER II funding is September 30, 2023, and ESSER III is September 30, 2024.
- Available ESSER II and ESSER III funds may be used for inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects to improve the indoor air quality (IAQ) in school facilities. Roofing and building envelope continuity, HVAC disinfection and moisture management can significantly impact indoor air quality.

Tremco Roofing & Building Maintenance can help improve IAQ through industry-leading building envelope solutions. Tremco works to address indoor air quality issues quickly and effectively through air barrier audits, building envelope testing, continuity systems, indoor environmental testing, HVAC remediation, building and room decontamination, and more.

To learn about CPC’s contract with Tremco or becoming a CPC member, contact Jerome Evans, CPC representative, at 651-371-1258. SCSC members can immediately engage the services of a CPC vendor without worrying about Minnesota’s procurement laws.

ICS

From Planning to Implementation: Creating a Customized Plan for a District’s Future

Strategic and systematic thinking are the hallmarks of districts positioned for future growth. But how does a district move from planning to implementation and what are the steps to achieve a successful facility-related project? Understanding the needs of a district is paramount to the planning process when districts need to engage their communities, define needs, navigate funding, communicate effectively, select a delivery model, and establish a plan for on-going facility operations.

For more information, reach out to Karen Klein, Cooperative Accounts Manager, at karen.klein@ics-builds.com or 651-728-1880.

Rapp Strategies: Public Information and Community Engagement Plans

South Central Service Cooperative is partnering with Rapp Strategies for high-quality public information and community engagement plans for your use during operating levies. As of last November, Rapp Strategies has provided communications support for 87 referendum elections, for which the mostly greater MN clients have had success 63 times. Rapp Strategies can help you to assess your best strategies based on your education objectives, tax impact, and past experience with referenda.

For more information, contact Todd Rapp, Rapp Strategies, Inc., 651-270-1071 or toddrapp@rappstrategies.com or review the services flyer.
SCSC Executive Searches
By Jessica Maday

City of Arlington Names City Administrator

SCSC Local Government Solutions assisted the City of Arlington with their City Administrator search. Ten applications were received, and three applicants were interviewed on March 7. Jessica Steinke was named the City Administrator for the City of Arlington. Ms. Steinke served as the City of Mankato/ Minnesota Valley Council of Governments Program Administrator for six years. Steinke is currently earning her AAS degree in Business Administration from South Central College.

City administrator searches are conducted by Mike Humpal, Manager of Local Government Solutions. He can be reached at 507-389-5766.

SCSC Assists New Prague and New Ulm School Districts with their Superintendent Searches

After two rounds of interviews, New Ulm selected Sean Koster as the district’s next superintendent. Koster previously served for 14 years as an administrator, followed by superintendent of Beacon Academy in Minneapolis, a K-8 charter school.

The New Prague Area School Board selected Dr. Andrew Vollmuth as their new superintendent. Since 2007, Vollmuth has been the principal at Normandale Hills Elementary in Bloomington and was previously a K-8 principal in Rochester. In addition to his role as elementary principal, Vollmuth is also an instructor at Concordia University, St. Paul, University of Minnesota, and University of St. Thomas.

Superintendent searches were conducted by SCSC’s Advisory Services – Member District Administration consultants, Ed Waltman and Harold Remme. Please contact Ed at 507-386-2988 or Harold at 507-386-2984 for assistance with your next search!

Help us stay in touch

SCSC would like to stay connected with our members and partners!

Do you have new hires who may benefit from receiving our newsletter or emailed communications?

Has your contact information changed in the last year?

We want to hear from you! Please let us know by email: scscinfo@mnscsc.org or reach out to Tana Fladland, Program Support, at 507-389-1425.

Thank you!
SHINING A LIGHT ON GREAT EMPLOYEES!

MEMBER RECOGNITION AWARD

NOMINEE: JEFF ADAMS
Recognized by Monica Erickson
Janesville Waldorf Pemberton School District

“Principal Adams treats everyone with respect, whether complimenting or correcting them. He works long, tireless hours to ensure all staff and students have what they need to be successful. He is involved with the staff and students. He has a great sense of humor!”

NOMINEE: BETH BAKER
Recognized by Tia Dupont,
Mankato Area Public Schools

“Beth is very passionate about promoting health to all staff at Roosevelt Elementary. She encourages a majority of staff to participate in site-based activities as well as district-wide activities. Her encouragement helps Roosevelt to have one of the highest participation rates in the Mankato Area Public School District for Employee Health Promotion activities.”

NOMINEE: CAROLYN FICKEN
Recognized by Megan Morgan
Martin County West

“Carolyn is organized and hard-working. She keeps us all in line and ensures all daily activities are completed without bumps. She answers most phone calls and makes sure every message gets to where it needs to be. She is the glue that holds us together; thank you for all that you do!”

NOMINEE: SHERREE ECKSTROM
Recognized by Liam Dawson,
St. James Public Schools

“Sherree is a student-centered teacher that goes to bat for her students each day. During the pandemic, she learned to apply computer science strategies to use with her 2nd grade students through the use of Scratch. She will be greatly missed as she enters retirement at the end of the 2022-2023 school year.”

NOMINEE: ANNE OLSEN
Recognized by Liam Dawson,
St. James Public Schools

“Anne is an equity advocate for all students. She has helped to facilitate an equity book club for staff and is always looking for ways to innovate and provide access for all students. She has implemented computer programming, using Scratch with her second grade students. She has left a lasting impression on the lives she has touched at Northside and will be missed as she walks into retirement at the end of this school year.”

NOMINEE: TINA KRUMWEIDE
Recognized by Megan Morgan
Martin County West

“The students adore Tina! She has a way of bringing togetherness despite what is going on all around. Compassion and caring runs deep within her. She is a safe person for all students and assists in so many needs around the classroom; not to mention she is a phenomenal co-worker! We appreciate you, Tina!”
SHINING A LIGHT ON GREAT EMPLOYEES!
SPRING HONOREES • FEBRUARY–APRIL 2023

NOMINEE: ASHLEY OLSON
Recognized by Megan Morgan
Martin County West
"Ashley puts in more hours than most will ever know. Due to COVID she has had to take on many more roles and has done a great job! She is kind and always has a smile on her face. Our district is more than blessed to have her; we appreciate you!"

NOMINEE: PAMELA OLSON
Recognized by Liam Dawson,
St. James Public Schools
"Pam is a respected colleague and friend to many. Her dedication to the students and her colleagues at SJPS does not go unnoticed. Outside of the amazing work in the classroom, she has also helped organize and plan our school STEM night and serves as co-director for our school musical. Her impact will be felt for years as she steps into retirement at the end of the 2022-2023 school year."

HONOREE: SAMANTHA ROSENBERG
Recognized by Chelsea Rolling,
Martin County West
"Samantha has gone above and beyond being a first-year special education teacher. She has persevered during a challenging school year. She is caring, kind-hearted, and dedicated to helping students reach their goals."

NOMINEE: STANNETTA SVOBODA
Recognized by Kayla Zehms
Martin County West
"Ms. Svoboda is a wonderful teacher. She goes the extra mile to make sure each of her students’ needs are met! She motivates kids in a positive way that turns into life-long learning! Ms. Svoboda is a wonderful role model to all!"

NOMINEE: DARCY YOUNG
Recognized by Megan Morgan
Martin County West
"Darcy is a no-nonsense go-getter. She makes sure students have access to a large variety of healthy/fresh foods. She takes pride in her job, and it really shows with the interactions she has with students, food presentation, and variety of selections. She has been open-minded and instrumental to the Try-Day Friday initiative and introducing new foods. Thank you, Darcy!"

SCSC’s SPOTLIGHT award program recognizes SCSC members for outstanding contributions they make to their organizations.

Names for recognition may be submitted throughout the year and honorees are announced quarterly.

Honor someone today at mns CSC.org/spotlight!
Inaugural School Health Conference Energizes Districts’ Employees

The School Health Conference held on March 23 was a HUGE success! Three service cooperatives – Southwest West Central, South Central, and Southeast – partnered on the event bringing together over 250 people, in person and across virtual platforms. In attendance were school nurses, social workers, counselors, and administrators. Thank you to all who attended!

The conference was made possible through COVID-19 Public Health Workforce supplemental funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), administered by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Additional sponsors include Medica, Minnesota Department of Human Services, and EmpowerU.

Thank you Sponsors!
Nurse Assistant Virtual Reality Skills Training Pilot Completed

By Amanda Bell

SCSC is excited to announce that the pilot for Nurse Assistant Virtual Reality Skills Training has been completed! Nurse assistant virtual reality skills training provides an immersive experience for students and prepares them for work with patients.

The pilot was launched in December 2022, with five long-term care facilities throughout Minnesota participating with their NA students. VR simulations provided real-time feedback on critical skills such as personal care, patient positioning, and safety checks. The pilot results showed that VR is valuable for giving feedback and enhancing student learning. Instructors who participated in the pilot found that VR effectively assesses students’ understanding of clinical concepts and identifies areas where support is needed. Based on the success of this pilot, plans are in the works to expand the program statewide.

The feedback from the pilot participants was used to update and improve the VR skills; a second pilot started the end of March using an updated version of the software incorporating hand tracking.

To find out more, contact Amanda Bell, SCSC Nursing Assistant Program Manager, 507-386-2960, or visit cnahighstep.com.

Watch the training video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUpUMTUeSY

Nurse assistant virtual reality skills training provides an immersive experience for students and prepares them for work with patients.
CRAVE

Minnesota State University, Mankato welcomed 170 area high school students on March 3 for the Culinary Regional Arts Venue in Education (CRAVE) event. CRAVE is part competition (culinary challenge, cake decorating, menu design, knife skills, food art, and table scaping) and part education (sushi rolling, homemade mac and cheese demo, current table scaping practices for events, culinary trivia, and food prep).

According to Kim Mueller, SCSC’s Regional Career and Technical Education Coordinator, the educational portion of CRAVE is chock full of food-related sessions for students to feast on. Some engaged in culinary trivia, some observed an MSU chef demonstrate how to make homemade mac and cheese.

“You know, not the mac and cheese from a box but what does it look like as a chef?” Mueller said. “Chef Born talks about what he does as a career in the middle of making homemade mac and cheese. So it’s kind of fun.”

CRAVE is made possible and coordinated by South Central Perkins Consortium. This year, the event was hosted by MSU-M.

For more information about CRAVE, contact Kim Mueller, 507-389-2123.
This spring, students from area schools have been exploring trades careers via The Big Ideas Trailer. Through simulators, students could try their ‘hand’ at heavy machinery operation, welding, and construction. Through VR (virtual reality), students could choose from 23 experiences, such as changing oil, HVAC, robotics, and more! Thank you to the top-notch instructors from The Big Ideas Trailer and the South Central Service Cooperative for exposing so many students to these high-demand careers.

The Big Ideas Trailer will head to St. Peter High School on May 8 and Nicollet High School on May 11.

For more more about the Big Ideas Trailer please visit: bigideasusa.org.

Thank you to this year’s participating schools:

MAPS
JWV
Nicollet
St. Peter

USC
Blue Earth
TCU
Waseca

WEM
LCWM
Riverbend
Madelia

Pictured: Students from Mankato and Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Public Schools.
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a set of ideas and tools that schools use to improve students’ behavior. Each year, the PBIS State Leadership Team selects Minnesota schools that apply to take part in a two-year PBIS implementation training cohort.

Congratulations to the following members of the Southern PBIS Cohort 17 Graduates who just completed their two years of training!

- Sibley East Public Schools
- Mankato Area Public Schools
- Kato Public Charter School
- Jackson County Central Schools
- Pipestone Area Schools
- Fulda Public Schools

Visit mnsccsc.org/pbis for more about PBIS.
Math Mania
By Mary Hillmann

Nearly 100 area students in grades 6-8 competed February 14 (because they love math!) as individuals and teams in the Math Mania Tournament sponsored by South Central Service Cooperative and Mankato Community Education.

Top placing individuals included Nathaniel Carlovsky, Ziva Zahrt, Eli Schauland, Jonah Hermanson, and Ezra Spike (St. Paul’s Lutheran, New Ulm); Covin Winter (Loyola Catholic School), Jaxon Wolff (Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Public Schools).

Team Gray from Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial Junior/Senior High School, including students Grace Pahl, Phena Jones, Karl Schwartz, Ethan Seppmann, and Carson Othoudt, were named champions at the Math Mania Tournament. Placing second was St. Paul’s Blue including Isaiah Friese, Judah Guenther, Jonah Hermanson, and Eli Schauland. Third place was St. Paul’s Gold including Noah Bredeson, Nathaniel Carlovsky, Jamis Martens, and Gabe Schmidt.

Well done, amazing “math maniacs”!

Want to know more about this annual tournament? Visit mnsccc.org/student/math-mania

---

Spelling Bee: Students Compete to Spell Their Way to Washington
By Mary Hillmann

After a weather delay from the previous week, 21 spellers from south central Minnesota competed March 2 in the South Central Service Cooperative Regional Spelling Bee, a qualifier for the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The participating fifth through eighth grade students had previously won their local bees.

After 13 rounds, Elijah Elledge, a fifth-grade student from Immanuel Lutheran School, was named champion after correctly spelling “parvo” as the championship word. Brielle Brown, an eighth grader from Maple River Schools, finished in second place after misspelling “expunge” in round twelve. Madelyn Ryan, from Tri-City United Schools, was third.

Congratulations to all the Super Spellers! Find out all the buzz about Spelling Bee at mnsccc.org/spellingbee

Pictured, l-r: Madelyn Ryan, Elijah Elledge, and Brielle Brown.
Math Masters
By Mary Hillmann

SCSC, in conjunction with Math Masters of Minnesota, hosted the 2023 Regional Math Masters Competition at Bethany Lutheran College on March 10. More than 110 sixth graders representing 22 teams and individuals from 10 area schools competed on sets of mathematical problems.

Teams participated from Blue Earth Area Schools, Janesville-Waldford-Pemberton Public Schools, John Ireland Catholic School (St. Peter), Loyola Catholic School (Mankato), New Ulm Area Catholic Schools, Sleepy Eye St. Mary’s Catholic School, Saint James Public Schools, St. Peter Middle & High School, Waseca Public Schools, and Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Schools.

Top finishers in the Fact Drill were Kaitlyn Cowdin, JWP; Max Demi, Waseca; Bryan DeJager, Waseca; Jovah Bense, JWP; Shylo Driessen, Waseca; Samantha Salzwedel, St. Peter; Otto Staus, St. Peter; Maahin Lad, Waseca and Wyatt Hansen, New Ulm Area Catholic Schools.

First Place Team Award went to WEM 1. Team members Jerimy Bolhmann-Little, Charlie Denis, Charlie Hebl, Jake Nutter and Gavin Williams. Second place went to St. Peter Middle School 1. Team members Roba Salim, Himalaya Harrison, Mackynzie Wilmes, Samantha Salzwedel and Otto Staus. Third place went to Waseca Team 1. Team members Bryan DeJager, Michael Petracek, Shylo Driessen, Maahin Lad and Gavin Farley.

Congratulations to all the Math Masters! Learn more at mnscc.org/math-masters

Poetry Out Loud
By Mary Hillmann

Twelve high school students participated in the 2023 Poetry Out Loud state finals, which took place at Minnesota State University, Mankato on February 24.

The Minnesota State Arts Board and SCSC announced Stella Wright, a senior at Robbinsdale Armstrong High School, as the 2023 Minnesota Poetry Out Loud champion. Wright was also the 2022 state champion. Ari Kimball, a junior at Minneapolis Washburn High School, was runner-up after three tiebreakers with Hannah Christenson, a freshman at Mound Westonka High School in Minnetrista. Wright will advance to the Poetry Out Loud National Finals in Washington, DC this May.

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. Poetry Out Loud is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, Poetry Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board and SCSC.
By Mary Hillmann

The 2023 Young Writers & Artists Conference (YWAC) was held on March 7 and 8 at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato. More than 880 students in grades 3-8 attended. YWAC offers students the opportunity to explore a variety of subjects related to writing and creative arts. Youth were inspired and encouraged to take their own talents to new levels. Some of the session topics included: poetry, fiction writing, cartooning, sewing, theater, music, graphic design, journalism, science fiction, screen plays, calligraphy, and much more!

This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Additional grant funds were also provided by the Prairie Ecology Bus Center.
Synergy Leadership Exchange

Nominate Your Students as Academic All-Stars!
By Leah Garry

It is time to nominate your students as Academic All-Stars! All Minnesota K-12 teachers, principals and academic challenge coordinators are invited to designate students as “Academic All-Stars,” to be eligible to attend the 2023 Gathering of Champions. This free annual celebration and recognition of student excellence is sponsored by Synergy & Leadership Exchange and its educational partners. The 2023 Gathering of Champions will be held at the Mall of America on Friday, August 4.

Visit synergyexchange.org and click on the Nomination Process drop down or click here to nominate your students!

Who Should You Designate as an Academic All-Star?
We recommend you consider the top students from the following three categories:

1. Students who are consistent top academic performers
2. Students who have shown significant improvement in achievement or have overcome barriers to academic achievement
3. Students who are local, regional, or state champions in a Minnesota Academic League Council approved event. The names of approved programs are found in the Reach for the Stars catalogue.

How Do You Nominate Students?
- Nominate your students online today at synergyexchange.org and click on the Nomination Process drop down or click here. The nomination deadline is June 29.
- After submitting your nomination, you will receive an email within five business days from Synergy with an Invitation & Congratulations Packet. Please print this invitation and letter and distribute it to the students you have named as Academic All-Stars. This is the student’s only invitation to the Gathering of Champions and provides details about the event, including how to register for the show of their choice. Synergy will not be contacting the nominees. This letter is your opportunity to recognize your students. They must register themselves to attend the ceremony of their choice.

Academic All-Stars Attending The Event Will Receive*:
- A certificate of achievement and congratulations on stage from dignitaries
- Commemorative items and prizes honoring their selection as an “Academic All-Star”
- Discount coupons for rides in Nickelodeon Universe® and purchases at participating Mall of America merchants

*Details subject to change

For More Information:
Please contact Synergy & Leadership Exchange at goc@synergyexchange.org or 507-389-5115.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange is a program of the South Central Service Cooperative.
June 21 • Relicensure in a Day
Contact: Mary Hillmann
As part of the 125 clock-hour requirement for license renewal, the Minnesota Legislature, by statute, requires ALL teachers to show evidence in specific areas to renew a license. These sessions are offered in one day and the times and areas are:

8-9 a.m. ■ Cultural Competency
9-10 a.m. ■ Early Warning Signs of Mental Illness
10-11 a.m. ■ Suicide Prevention
11 a.m.-12 p.m. ■ English Language Learners
1-2 p.m. ■ Reading Preparation
2-3 p.m. ■ PBIS/Accommodations

If attending Cultural Competency, you will receive additional instructions on assignments that need to be completed in advance of attending the session (a self-assessment and multiple readings). Participants may register for all six areas or choose individual sessions.

Register here

June 23 • Reading Academy (The Art and Science of Reading)
Contact: Mary Hillmann
Dive into reading with our reading academy series at the SCSC Conference Center! Select one of the grade-level lists from the 2022-23 series, enjoy reading the books, submit an online review for each book you read, and then convene for a full day of networking, best practices, book discussions, and literacy resources.

Register here

Register for other professional development opportunities at mnscc.org/events-registration.
SCSC Connects is a quarterly e-publication of South Central Service Cooperative. It is published in February, May, August, and November.

SCSC members, staff, and partner organizations are welcome to submit content by the first day of the month prior to publication.

**SCSC Connects Staff:**
**Editors:** Hannah Keltgen, Crista Krosch, and Jessica Maday
**Design and Layout:** Roberta Jensen