

Online tools to help with charitable giving and estate planning



We are continually impressed by the generosity and kind spirits of the residents in our nine-county region. Because promoting philanthropy is one of WCI's main objectives, WCI has a charitable giving planning site that makes it easy for those who live and work in west central Minnesota to find information to help make wise charitable giving and estate planning decisions:

wci.planmylegacy.org
 WCI's donor services team Kim Embretson and Tom McSparron are available to go over information on this site, discuss your ideas and answer questions. You can reach Kim and Tom at 218-739-2239 (800-735-2239), kim@wci.org or tom@wci.org.

Consult with your financial advisor about all your charitable and estate planning needs and decisions.

Free for you at wci.planmylegacy.org
The latest news and information on charitable giving and estate planning
Personal estate planning kit
Sample bequest language
Gift Illustrator: What could your gift look like? What are the benefits?
Brochures guides on topics such as:

- Making Your Will
- Beneficiary Designations: The 3 Easiest Ways to Leave Your Legacy
- Strengthen Your Future With a Charitable Gift Annuity
- Trusts: Choose From 2 Win-Win Ways to Donate
- Endowments: A Gift That Lasts Forever
- 7 Ways to Donate Real Estate
- One-Stop Giving: The Convenience and Simplicity of Donor Advised Funds

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our mission
 Serving to improve west central Minnesota through funding, programs and technical assistance.

our vision
 Uniting ideas and resources to help people and communities create a better tomorrow.

West Central Initiative is an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

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FOCUS on the region



FIRST LEGO® League workshop for teachers at Lakes Country Service Cooperative

Creating a skilled workforce for a strong region

Ask people what is one of the most important things that keep a community vital and chances are you'll likely hear "Jobs." Not just any job, but the kind that pays a livable wage and has benefits. Often these jobs require specific skills.

Communities, organizations, schools and businesses throughout west central Minnesota are taking on the challenge to build a better workforce for the future success of our region. West Central Initiative offers funding and assistance to help.

Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) was able to use a WCI Competitive Workforce Grant award to provide a three-phase, year-long intensive training project for teachers in engineering skills, theories and industry-based applications. The teachers now lead curriculum redesign in their schools to improve delivery of engineering content to students, based on new Next Generation Science Standards, which emphasize hands-on experiences that lead toward STEM-related careers.

"Two presenters from the University of St. Thomas—an engineering professor and an education professor—showed how instructors can teach engineering without

Continued inside.

FOCUS on the region

West Central Initiative's Quarterly Report
 WINTER 2015

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spending a whole bunch of money on curriculum,” said Troy Haugen, LCSC career and technical education coordinator.

Practicing engineers from the region also shared their expertise.

The engineering workshops led to LCSC offering a FIRST LEGO® League workshop this past January, which provided each participant with a LEGO® robotics kit for their school and encouraged schools to form robotics teams for competition.

For Haugen, the most important thing about the workshop was teaching STEM concepts in west central Minnesota classrooms. “Thousands of kids will have access to these kits,” he said.



A CWG Award helped the Tri-State Manufacturers Association (TSMA) work with Bemidji State University’s 360° Center of Excellence to expand a Dream It. Do It. campaign into west central Minnesota. Dream It. Do It. encourages young people to consider manufacturing careers. TSMA also launched West Central Robotics Gear Up to support new and existing robotics programs in area schools that help develop skills that can translate to the workforce. TSMA also provided support to LCSC for its LEGO® robotics workshop.



Library Director Erin Smith is an NCRC test proctor.

The Fergus Falls Public Library is using a CWG award to become a testing center for the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). Using a job skills assessment system called WorkKeys, participants work online at their own pace on specific modules in applied mathematics, reading information and finding information. The successful completion of these modules leads to earning the NCRC. The library began offering assessments in the fall of 2014 on select evenings and weekends.

The library and Fergus Falls WorkForce Center are also using grant funds to work with area high schools to assess students, using the WorkKeys system.

“Taking assessments is not every student’s favorite thing to do, but after completing them, students were encouraged by their results and interested in learning more about how their workforce skill set matched up with potential future careers,” said Erin Smith, Fergus Falls library director and an NCRC proctor.

Several companies throughout the region recognize applicants with NCRC-certified work skills. A list of these employers is at: http://ffpubliclibrary.org/career_readiness.html.

In addition, school districts in the region, like Detroit Lakes, Alexandria, Morris and Fergus Falls, are revitalizing their industrial arts programs to help students get the specific training they need to be employed by local manufacturers.

They know they can! ECIs work to increase literacy in region

In the children’s story *The Little Engine That Could*, a train engine pulling a load of toys breaks down at the bottom of a mountain with no power to make it to the top. The sad engine’s spirits dip with each passing engine that refuses to help because they are “too important” or “too tired” or it’s “not my job.” Only a little blue engine stops to help. Chanting “I think I can, I think I can!” the Little Engine is able to crest the mountain and bring toys to the children.

“I think I can” describes the mindset of communities and organizations in our region to develop literacy programs. When our 10 Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) coalitions surveyed communities about early childhood issues, they made the startling discovery that too many children did not have access to books, or didn’t have adults read with them. It could seem like a daunting task, but people and organizations stepped up to the challenge to expand access to reading.

I think I can! Coincidentally, *The Little Engine That Could* is the first title children receive when they join Dolly Parton’s The Imagination Library, which is offered in several of the counties in our region. This program delivers a book in the mail each month for participating children, up to their fifth birthday.

I think I can! Crates of books have cropped up in Grant and Otter Tail County communities in locations where children often need to wait.

I think I can! Southern Valley ECI (Wilkin County) is working with parents and child care providers on decreasing screen time and increasing read time.

I think I can! Traverse County ECI continues to support the library’s Saturday Story Hour, something that was missing for several years in their community.

I think I can! Prescription for Reading and Reach Out and Read are book distribution programs where a trained doctor or nurse gives children books during their well-child exams. Hidden in this pleasant gesture is the medical professional’s observation of how the children interact with the book and if there is a concern about a child’s development.

I think I can! Partnering with the local Kiwanis groups, the Becker County ECI—and soon Otter Tail and Stevens County ECIs—are offering the “Today’s Readers, Tomorrow’s Leaders” program where Kiwanis members read to children in child care settings, with each child receiving a copy of the book.

I think I can! Two Traveling Treehouse mobile learning buses make their way through Douglas and Pope Counties, bringing literacy programming and books to children in remote areas.

I think I can! Both Clay County and White Earth ECI have initiated “Free Little Libraries” in several neighborhoods, and White Earth has received a large grant to purchase books plus a library furniture donation from a local college to open a new public library.

Like the Little Engine, perseverance pays off and, through a book-by-book approach, the ECIs have developed and partnered to bring the joy of reading to thousands of children. Each project adds another component to build a system that teaches the importance of literacy and the joy of reading to all children.

—Marsha Erickson

A “Little Library” in the White Earth Community.



Minnesota Cup 2015 round opens March 23

WCI is once again sponsoring the Minnesota Cup, a statewide competition that inspires entrepreneurs to begin their startup journey, supports them as they develop a solid business plan, provides exposure for their ideas and offers numerous opportunities to expand their networks. The 2015 MN Cup opens March 23.

Learn more at mncup.org, or contact our VP of Business Development Dale Umlauf, 800-735-2239, dale@wcif.org.

New videos feature area businesses

We’re sure you already know this, but we have some amazing businesses in west central Minnesota! We love it when we can work with a company to help them thrive. Our two latest videos feature two businesses that used WCI’s services to build capacity.

WCI Business Development: Helping Businesses Succeed

Meet one of West Central Initiative’s business clients, Voyager Industries of Brandon, and learn how they have worked with WCI to help develop and grow their company.

Workforce 2020 - World-class Training for a Highly Skilled Workforce

Back in the ‘90s, “job creation” was the economic development buzzword, but West Central Initiative could see on the horizon a growing need for more skilled workers to fill those jobs. WCI’s Workforce 2020 program works

Safe Routes to School Grant for Rothsay

West Central Initiative was awarded a Safe Routes to School grant to help the Rothsay School District develop a community-wide plan to find ways to encourage and provide safe ways for students to walk or bike safely to and from school.

“More students walking and biking means less traffic on the road and near schools, improving safety and promoting healthier kids,” said MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle.

WCI Transportation Planner Emily Ambrosy will work closely with the Rothsay school and community to develop the plan.



with Enterprise Minnesota to bring world-class training not found in our region to manufacturers to help incumbent workers increase and learn new skills to keep up with the fast pace of technology and manufacturing needs. Meet Bill Martinson from Enterprise Minnesota, who explains Workforce 2020, and Maria Kohnhorst from Northland Woolens, who gives a manufacturer’s viewpoint on how training helped her business.

Watch our videos at vimeo.com/wciminn/