

Support what you love today and tomorrow

Your support of West Central Initiative doesn't have to come all at once. There are many ways to combine your generosity to help us today and provide support to help us continue our work in the future. This is known as a blended gift.

To create a blended gift, select a way to give today, such as donating cash to our endowment fund or to one of our component funds; then, choose to create a deferred gift—including us in your will or trust, for example.

How It Works

Mary has supported West Central Initiative for more than 20 years. She has made gifts of cash or stock each year because supporting our mission brings her immense satisfaction and allows her to model the importance of generosity to her family.

Mary also wants to support our future efforts, so her financial

advisor suggests that she include a gift to West Central Initiative in her will.

Mary adds a \$125,000 gift through her will that will be directed to our endowment fund. We only use proceeds from the endowment each year to support our services and programs, and the remainder is reinvested, which allows it to grow and helps extend Mary's support indefinitely.

Thanks to Mary's careful planning, the programs and goals most important to her will thrive during and after her lifetime.

How Will You Blend Your Support?

Please contact Tom McSparron at 218-739-2239 or 800-735-2239 or tom@wcif.org to explore your many options for combining your current support with a gift that will extend your legacy at West Central Initiative for years to come.

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“Can we use our farmland as a charitable gift and continue to have it farmed locally?”



YES, you can do that and more.
Call Tom or Kim for more info, 800 735-2239.

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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.



Confirmed in Compliance with National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations



PO Box 318
Fergus Falls, MN 56538

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

FOCUS

on the region



A beautiful night—and park—for baseball

When the 2010 tornado ripped through the Wadena area, the city's baseball park was one of its casualties. Residents in Deer Creek—a small community of 320 just west of Wadena—already had plans to improve their own ballpark. They decided this was the opportunity to “think big” and redesign the entire ballpark to fit the needs of both their city and neighboring communities like Wadena.

The Deer Creek Ballpark Restoration Committee set up a component fund with West Central Initiative and worked with WCI's Tom McSparron to learn the best ways to raise the hefty sum of \$300,000 for a covered grandstand with announcer booth, new dugouts, a concession stand with modern restrooms, and lights, so games can be played at night.

Four years later, on a beautiful Saturday evening in July, committee chair Diane George stood on the pitcher's mound of Deer Creek's Elmer Becker Field, gazing out at

Continued inside.

FOCUS on the region

West Central Initiative's Quarterly Report
SUMMER REVIEW 2015



the residents of Deer Creek and neighboring communities who had come together for a ballpark dedication before the Wadena-Deer Creek Shockers took on their rivals, the Bluffton Braves, under the brand-new lights. Beside Diane was her son, Shocker Manager Jaime George—one of three sons who played on the team. Together—and not without a few tears—they thanked the contributors and volunteers who made the renovations possible.

Ninety-year-old Lloyd Paulson, who provided generous support to the project in memory of his wife, Beverly, and in honor of family and friends in the Deer Creek area, threw out the first pitch.

“It’s been wonderful having someone [like West Central Initiative] who can support us and keep us moving forward and be very positive even though we struggled at times,” said Diane. “I think any community that has an idea like this can accomplish this. You just need a little help, a little direction to get it started, and once you do, it’s wonderful and you end up with something like this!”

We want to take you out to the ballgame!
 Watch our video on Deer Creek Ballpark
<https://vimeo.com/wciminn/deercreekballpark>



55 combined years of helping make our region better: (L to R) Program Director Wendy Merrick, Accountant Kathy Nordick and Business Analyst Duane Larson recently celebrated their work anniversaries with West Central Initiative. Wendy is the “newbie” of the trio at 15 years; Kathy and Duane have both been at WCI for 20 years.

Clay County child care providers get “star” treatment

They may not be Hollywood celebrities, but 10 Clay County child care providers have achieved star status through the Parent Aware Quality Star Rating Program. In August, a “Star” party was held in their honor, to celebrate six months of long hours and intensive training and coaching through Clay County’s Building Quality program, to achieve a Parent Aware star rating.

Parent Aware is the Minnesota state child care quality rating system where family-based, center-based and school-based early childhood care and education programs go through a rigorous coaching and application process. Providers that volunteer to be rated have:

- Volunteered for extra, in-depth training
- Devoted themselves to strong, caring relationships with each child
- Adopted the latest approaches to keeping children’s learning on track
- Committed to daily activities and routines that help children learn

“I am so proud of the extra work these providers have invested in their programs,” said Lori Hopewell, Clay County Child Care Aware coach. “They spend long days caring for children. Then they spend evenings and weekends completing training and paperwork. It’s a lot, but it pays off in the end. Their commitment to their programs and to the children in their care shines through!”

Child Care Aware and the Clay County providers have had additional support through this process. A grant for Clay County was received by West Central Initiative from the Mardag Foundation of St. Paul. Grant funds were used to hire an additional Parent Aware coach, offset training costs and provide funding for the cohort to meet and support each other through the Building Quality process. This funding will be available for two more years.

WCI also provides a \$25,000 Family Economic Success (FES) grant to support Parent Aware work throughout west central Minnesota. The grant helps fund a Parent Aware outreach coordinator, hired by Child Care Aware, to serve the region. The FES Early Childhood/Child Care group developed the associated work plan and meets quarterly to oversee progress and plan for the future.

Other Parent Aware news includes the expansion of early learning scholarships. The needs-based scholarships are available for parents whose child attends a Star-rated program. Up until this last legislative session, Clay County parents, along with many Minnesota parents in other counties, were not able to access the scholarships. For more information about Parent Aware or the early learning scholarships, please contact Child Care Aware of Minnesota at 218-299-7000.



Clay County’s “Star” providers, left to right front row: Darcy Barry, Greta Miller, Brenda Nelson, Megan Weidmeier, Christina Zimmerman, Brenda Huhtala. Left to right back row: Wendy Blue, Kay Heidrich, Kari Penas, Parent Aware Quality Coach, Lori Hopewell. Not pictured: Rachel Jonason, Elizabeth Janssen, Holly Heiser

Andrew Besold joins WCI as transportation planner

When West Central Initiative’s newest staff member, Transportation Planner Andrew Besold, flew into Fargo to scout out housing in Fergus Falls, he came with a collapsible bicycle in tow. A week later, he drove cross-country from New Jersey with two more bikes strapped to the top of his car. This isn’t so surprising once you learn that, for Andrew, cycling is a passion and his preferred means of transportation.

Andrew joins the planning team at WCI to work primarily on active transportation projects, including pedestrian and bicycle planning, Safe Routes to School, trails planning and more. In addition to his role in active transportation, he will work on other transportation projects for WCI, including scenic byway planning.

Andrew received a master’s degree in city and regional planning from Rutgers University, with a concentration in bicycle and pedestrian planning and safety. Prior to coming to WCI, he was a public lands transportation scholar with the Western Transportation Institute stationed at the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in Ketchum, Idaho. There he helped design multi-use trails and analyzed data on transportation patterns and the environmental impact of trails. He has also worked as a bicycle safety educator with Bike New York, and a cycling tour guide and active transportation research assistant with the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center. He is certified as a League



Cycling Instructor by the League of American Bicyclists.

“Andrew brings a great mix of education, expertise and excitement about active transportation to our region and to WCI,” said WCI Planning Director Wayne Hurley. “His previous work with Safe Routes to Schools programs in New Jersey will bring a fresh perspective to our SRTS planning work.”

“Minnesota has a great reputation for being at the cutting edge of active transportation planning. It is ranked the #2 most bicycle friendly state by the League of American Bicyclists. I am very excited to bring my skills and experience to a state that really understands the importance of active transportation and specifically to the West Central region,” Andrew said.

Contact Andrew about your community’s active living projects at andrew@wci.org, or 800-735-2239.