

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

FOCUS

on the region

We're your partners in philanthropy

WCI's development team, Sandy King and Tom McSparron, are coming to a community near you. We're proud of our accomplishments, but our success is because of YOU, our partners. Together we ARE making a difference!

As we travel this summer and fall, don't be surprised if we stop by and just say "hi" with a handshake. You know, the good old-fashioned "glad to know you" and together we can make a difference in our communities. Things are changing – both here at WCI and in our communities – what an exciting time we have before us!

Coming to your email soon!

Here is a quick peek at what you can expect in the coming months:

- More communication on what is happening in our nine counties.
- More training opportunities.
- More chances to visit with staff.
- More sharing of best practices.
- More ways of helping YOU with your giving. Visit our Planned Giving pages at wci.planmylegacy.org.

Hope we have you a little bit curious about what we are up to. Sandy and Tom are excited to share the current focus areas of

WCI and also to talk with communities about their needs.

We are looking for opportunities to meet with groups in the nine counties and are willing to speak at your service clubs, chamber events, lunch and learns - you name it! Our goal is to let you know what is happening at WCI from current program focus areas to how you can make a difference in your community and the nine-county region.

As WCI celebrates 30 years of championing west central Minnesota, we want to thank all of our many partners who have helped the region prosper and grow – in many ways! Together we achieve more.



WCI's development team Sandy King and Tom McSparron are on the road to meet with you: "Never before have we had more ways to connect, more opportunities to lead, and more friends and partners!"

Maximizing Your Impact

A new planned giving newsletter just for you from West Central Initiative. Sign up at wcif.org/impact

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

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Excellence. Accountability. Impact

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.



LIVE WIDE OPEN WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA

Rural Living Comes with a Catch.*

*Hopefully, it's a walleye.

West Central Initiative is pleased to introduce "Live Wide Open," a bold new movement to encourage people to return, move to and, yes, to stay in west central Minnesota.

Explore our region, meet people who are living life wide open, become a partner at livewideopen.com

WHAT "LIVE WIDE OPEN" CAN MEAN FOR YOU. Live Wide Open can mean many things: certainly the wide open spaces of rural Minnesota, but also having the breathing room to make a good life for yourself—where you don't have to fight traffic gridlock, where the recreation you love is at your doorstep instead of a three-hour car drive away, and where you can make it to your kid's ball game in 10 minutes.

Live Wide Open can also mean opening up your capacity to do what you love or what you've always dreamed of doing. There are a lot of opportunities for work and for starting your own business in west central Minnesota.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO WELCOME MORE RESIDENTS TO WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA.

There's a lot to do to make Live Wide Open a success, but it starts with the support and partnership of the cities, counties, chambers of commerce, businesses and organizations in our region. Frankly, many are doing this promotion on their own. So, why is this different? This is a campaign that encompasses— not replaces—all of the good work already being done promoting communities and local jobs. It promotes an entire region in areas that perhaps other marketing campaigns are not reaching, then inviting the people who are interested to learn more about the community, county or job that fits them best.



Move here.
 Stay here.
 Make the most of what west central Minnesota has to offer.
 Live Wide Open.



Live Wide Open is a campaign of West Central Initiative. For more information, contact us at 800 735-2239 or livewideopen@wcif.org

WCI launches new forgivable child care loan pilot program

WCI wants to make it easier for child care providers to succeed. That's why we're launching a forgivable child care pilot program for both home- and center-based providers. Here are the details:

1. Loans up to \$3,500.
2. Used to open or retain child care slots.
3. Proceeds used to make property suitable for child care.
4. 0% interest.
5. Payments are forgiven each month child care services are provided.
6. Must meet WCI loan guidelines.

To learn more, contact our Director of Business and Economic Development Greg Wagner at greg@wci.org or call 218-739-2239.



WCI unveils new strategic plan

Grounded in our mission but with an eye on the future, WCI has developed a three-year strategic plan to respond to our region's needs.

bit.ly/WCIstrategicplan

CNA program goes to high school

It's normal to start the day brushing one's teeth—not so normal if someone else is doing the brushing. On this spring morning however, nine students at Alexandria Area High School (AAHS) are taking turns doing just that—brushing each other's teeth. It's part of the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program held in the high school, and one of the skills these students need to demonstrate to receive the CNA credential.

In this classroom turned lab, complete with beds and other equipment typically found in a healthcare facility, students actually don robes and get into bed, experiencing care from the patients' point of view along with the vulnerability that comes with relying on someone else to provide their personal care.

There is laughter and some faces made at having someone brush their teeth, but this is what the students have been trained to do, and they get down to business. Instructors with clipboards watch the procedure, checking off steps as they are accomplished and reminding students when one is missed. After the teeth brushing, the students move on to passive range of motion, gently moving their lab partner's arms and legs to



help with their mobility. Teeth brushing and passive range of motion are just two of 52 skills the students will learn, 25 of which they will be tested on to receive their CNA credential.

The CNA class is a one-of-a-kind program at AAHS, and a great example of how an area employer, senior care organization Knute Nelson, and two educational institutions, AAHS and Alexandria Technical & Community College (ATCC), put their heads and accumulative knowledge and expertise together to develop and run it. West Central Initiative awarded Knute Nelson Foundation a Competitive Workforce Grant to help start up the program.

ATCC already had a CNA program in their curriculum, but offering a program in the high school meant the course could be provided free of charge to the students,

who would also receive college credit and become eligible to work as a CNA.

While one of the goals is to help students receive certification so that they fill CNA openings in Alexandria, "the main goal of the program is to encourage a broad range of healthcare occupations," said Katie Perry, executive director of the Knute Nelson Foundation. "The CNA credential is highly regarded [in healthcare], and anyone over 16 years of age can work as a CNA. It is a gateway to the next step. From the employer's point of view, it's about planning for healthcare career pathways. This beginning point is of first and foremost importance."

School counselor Carrie Urness has already seen a positive impact in offering this first step toward a career in healthcare as part of the high school curriculum. "For some students, it has solidified

their going into nursing; others have said 'I'm glad I found out now,' that it's not what they want to do," she said. With 19 seniors, 22 juniors and 22 sophomores expressing interest in the CNA program, students are definitely seeing the value in what the credential can do for them and for their future, Urness said. "For some, this will be their employment. But there's such a wide range of different employment levels. It's a good opportunity for all."

The teens in this CNA class included students taking the certification as a step toward a nursing or medical career, and one who is interested in clinical social work.

A Collaborative Effort

The number of people involved in delivering this program is impressive. AAHS Science Teacher Meg Simon runs the program, which includes both classroom study and lab work. ATCC instructors Deb Brasie, Amber Nelson and Kellie Weisel come to the high school to present modules and teach skills—just as they would at ATCC.

"We're out of our world and into theirs," said Nelson. "Although they go to ATCC five times during the course, the [WCI Competitive Workforce Grant] and Knute Nelson helped outfit the lab right here in the high school."

ATCC Senior Dean of Academic Affairs and



Students Gregg Raisenen credits the hard work of the faculty and their enthusiasm for the program in helping make it a success. "They're hustling, but overall it's a positive experience. It's a great example of partnerships between college, a high school and industry," he said.

Alexandria District Superintendent Julie Critz agrees. "There have been positive comments from parents about how valuable the CNA program is for their children in terms of career and looking for jobs. Through our academy structure and through partnerships we can build a certification program in all our academies. This is the first one."

"It's creating winning scenarios all around for students, employers, schools and parents," Perry added. "We're extremely grateful for the grant and what we have been able to pilot and produce."

WCI announces 2016 Competitive Workforce Grant awardees

West Central Initiative is pleased to announce the recipients of its annual Competitive Workforce Grant awards. The purpose of the grants is to improve the economy of west central Minnesota by providing one year of start-up funding for stakeholders to launch new, promising workforce development strategies. Here are the 2016 awardees:

Alexandria Technical and Community College received \$7,550 for its 2017 Machining Summer Camp program.

Honor the Earth Minobimaatisiwin Renewables Workforce Training Program received \$9,100 for its solar thermal heating project. Honor the Earth will partner with Rural Renewal Energy Alliance (RREAL) to train White Earth Reservation tribal members to install solar thermal panels to help reduce homeowner heating costs.

Lakes Country Service Cooperative received \$40,000 for its STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) professional development pilot program, which teams high school instructors with industry partners.

Pope County HRA/EDA, in partnership with the Glenwood Lakes Area Chamber & Welcome Center, received \$25,575 for its Pope County Work Ready Communities project.

Otter Tail County, in partnership with Otter Tail County Tourism and Economic Development, received \$40,000 for the Otter Tail County Rural Rebound Initiative to recruit workers with needed skills to the region, facilitate collaboration between employers, educators and other entities with an interest in workforce development, and establish a Rural Youth Leadership Institute.

Tri-State Manufacturers Association Foundation (T SMA Foundation) received \$3,575 for a Dream It. Do It. central Minnesota interactive career expo exhibit that the foundation will use throughout the 2016-17 school year to promote careers in manufacturing.

Awardees were chosen because of their capacity to:

- Meet the needs of both employers and workers in west central Minnesota;
- Allow an organization to stretch and experiment with new ways to address skill shortages in west central Minnesota; and
- Test promising approaches likely to result in people securing jobs that pay family-sustaining incomes.

Read more about the 2016 Competitive Workforce Grant awardees at bit.ly/CWG2016.