

SOUTHWEST WEST CENTRAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE

SWWC

Education & Administrative Resources

2023-24

ANNUAL REPORT TO OUR PARTNERS



**Our mission is to be a collaborative partner
providing exceptional services,
innovative solutions and proactive support.**

ADMINISTRATION

From the Executive Director, Cliff Carmody:

As a collaborative partner, SWWC provides comprehensive programs and services for our members. This approach to exceptional service, innovative solutions and proactive support has been the foundation of continued growth and expansion of SWWC programs and services.

This past year saw SWWC continue its investment in programs for our schools, cities, counties, and other governmental agencies. An important partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education led to SWWC being at the forefront of providing literacy support for schools in our region. In addition, capital improvements were an important highlight of 2023-24. With new educational learning centers set to open this fall and the groundbreaking for a new office and training center, SWWC has demonstrated commitment to meeting the needs of those we serve!

SWWC cannot provide exceptional programs and services without exceptional teams of staff. Although staffing continues to be a challenge, the outstanding SWWC team continues to be the cornerstone for all the work being done at SWWC. It has never been more important or more obvious that SWWC has GREAT people doing GREAT things every day!

All SWWC departments saw growth in programs and services during this past year. From finance/payroll support, to cybersecurity, mental health, literacy, early behavioral health, and student enrichment activities, SWWC continues to be a regional resource for our members. All of what we do is tied to meeting our members' needs and is a result of the intentional focus on member service. SWWC will continue to collaborate, innovate and support our membership.

Our members value SWWC programs and services, and I am proud of the work we do for all of you. As we look to the future, I am confident that SWWC will continue to be a valued partner with our members!



2023-24 Executive Leadership Team



Cliff Carmody
Executive Director



Amber Bruns
Clinical Director of
Behavioral Health Services



Liz Deen
Senior Director of
Teaching & Learning Services



Tegan Gillund
Director of Finance



Shelly Maes
Director of
Member Engagement
& SWWC Foundation
Executive Director



Mary Palmer
Senior Director of
Special Services



Abby Polzine
Director of
Human Resources



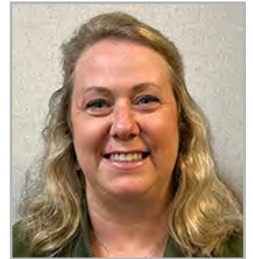
Christine Schmitt
Director of
Business Services



Josh Sumption
Chief Technology and
Information Officer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The care, management, and control of SWWC is with the **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**. A majority of the 10-member board must be current board members of school districts who are full members. These board members are elected by vote of all full member school districts. The remaining board members are appointed by the board and may represent cities, counties or other governmental agencies that are full members.



SWWC BOARD OF DIRECTORS (as of June 30, 2024)

Top: Matt Coleman, Chair, Marshall Schools; Jody Bauer, Vice-Chair, Tracy Area Schools; Carla Olson, Treasurer, KMS Schools; Steve Schnieder, Clerk, Worthington Schools

Bottom: Ben Bothun, Lac qui Parle County; Becky Foster, WWG Schools; Amanda Lecy, YME Schools; Becky Paluch, Ivanhoe Schools; Nicole Swanson, Tracy Area Schools

From the Board Chair, Matt Coleman:

On behalf of the SWWC board I would like to thank our members and partner organizations for the trust they have in the services we provide. I have served on the board for a few years and have come to the realization that SWWC is the premier service cooperative in the state of Minnesota. Most of the services we provide cannot be found anywhere else in southwest Minnesota. We continue to expand what we do in all areas of education and support to our members.



As we continue to struggle with staffing and funding in certain areas, please know we will do all we can to continue to offer the highest quality services in our region ... the kids and districts in our region deserve that. Thanks again for your continued support of our mission.

I will close with one of my favorite quotes, attributed to John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church:

“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can.”

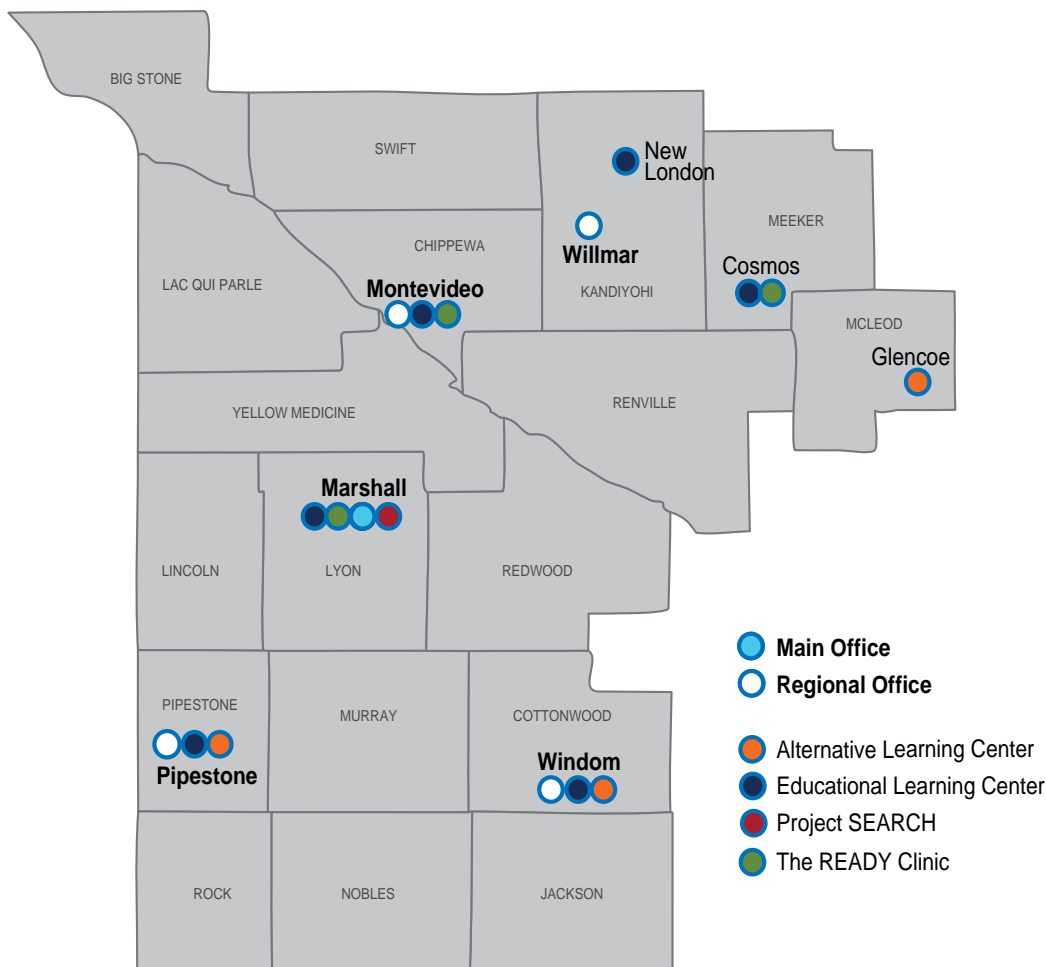
STAFF AND MEMBERSHIP

The SWWC team is made up of over 400 highly skilled and talented professionals, and our values of **SERVICE, INTEGRITY, SINCERITY AND COLLABORATION** an important part of how we do our work. Our team works at the locations identified in the map below and in schools throughout the region.

STAFF STATS

Average length of service: 6.23 years
 Staff working 20+ years: 28
 Staff working 15-19 years: 19
 Staff working 10-14 years: 32

The physical boundary of SWWC’s service area is the 18 counties of southwest and west central Minnesota, although many of our services are utilized beyond those boundaries throughout the state of Minnesota and into South Dakota.



SWWC Membership
 Over 100 full members
 Over 110 associate members

Full Membership
 Public schools, cities, counties, and other governmental agencies **within** the SWWC region.

Associate Membership
 Non-public schools, partnership agencies and nonprofits **within** the SWWC region
AND
 public and non-public schools, cities, counties, other governmental agencies, partnership agencies and nonprofits **outside** the SWWC region.

Note: During 2023-24, we had ELCs located in Belview and Willmar, which are not shown on this map. This map shows our new footprint with the ELCs in Marshall and New London opening Fall 2024.

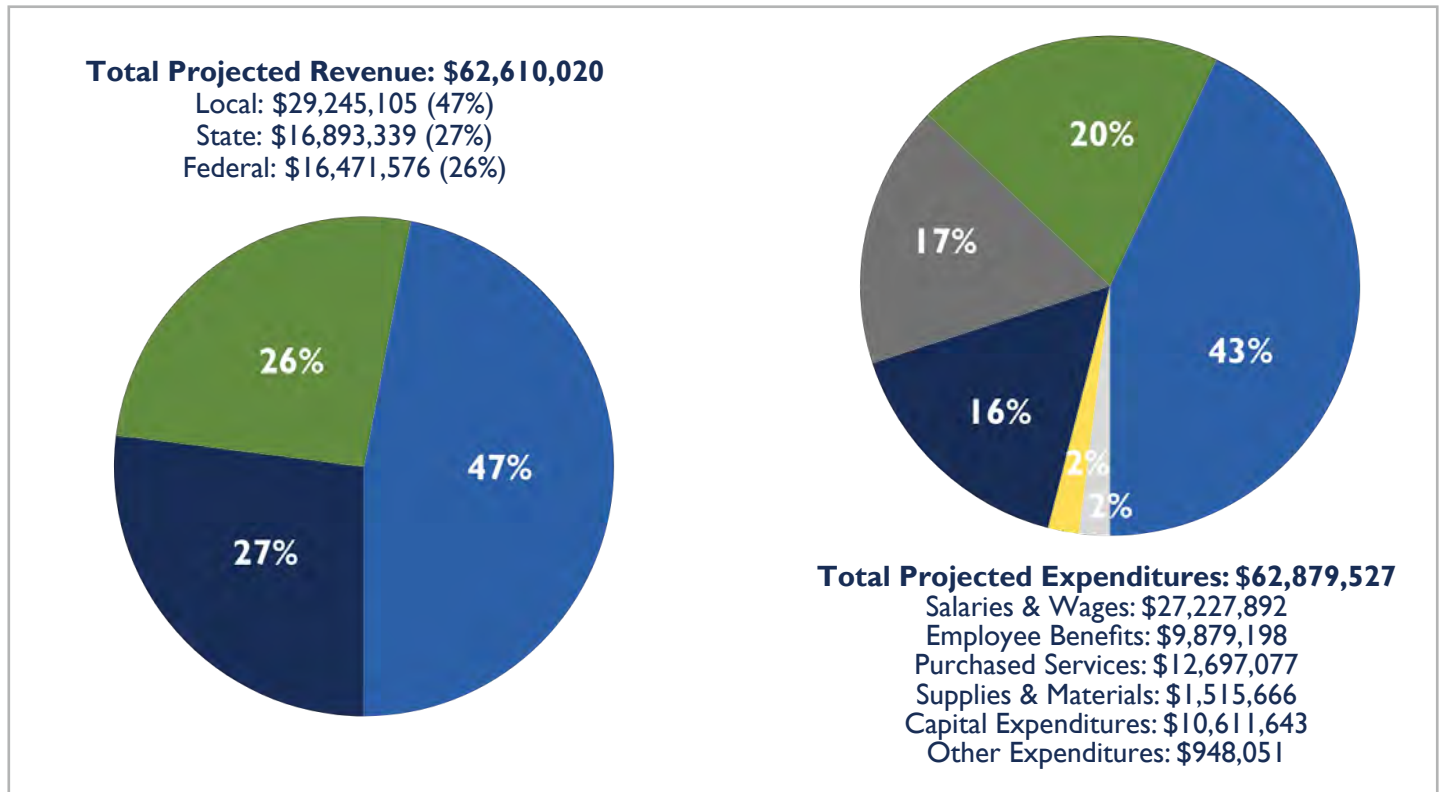
SWWC is a member of the Minnesota Service Cooperatives, an association of nine educational service agencies in Minnesota.



FINANCIALS

Service, integrity, sincerity and collaboration are the foundation of all we do and drive our efforts to be responsible financial stewards of the resources we are given to serve our members.

The financial information below comes from the 2023-24 SWWC Final Budget approved by the SWWC Board of Directors. Complete copies of audited financial statements are available at the SWWC office.



2023-24 Superintendents’ Executive Council

Chair: Scott Monson, Minneota
 Vice Chair: Molly Schilling, Adrian
 Past Chair: Joe Meyer, MCC
 Dr. Bill Adams, Willmar
 Dr. Chad Anderson, Tracy Area
 Paul Bang, Heron Lake-Okabena
 Dr. Chris Fenske, Lakeview

Doug Froke, Renville County West
 Ray Hassing, Round Lake-Brewster
 Dr. Jeff Holm, Willmar
 Todd Holthaus, Hills-Beaver Creek
 Dr. Jeff Horton, GFW
 John Landgaard, Worthington
 Dennis Laumeyer, Benson

Ryan Nielsen, Canby
 Dr. Melissa Radeke, Lester Prairie
 Barry Schmidt, Jackson County Central
 Richard Schneider, YME
 Dr. Klint Willert, Pipestone Area
 Dr. Sonya Vierstraete, SMSU
 Dr. Terry Gaalswyk, Minnesota West

The Superintendents’ Executive Council provides advice and support to SWWC Administration and the SWWC Board of Directors. Members are elected and representative of SWWC membership.

FY 2024-26 STRATEGIC PLAN

SWWC Mission

To be a collaborative partner providing exceptional services, innovative solutions and proactive support.

SWWC Vision

To create a future where children, families, schools and communities learn, succeed and thrive.

SWWC Values

SWWC believes in **SERVICE** to others. We care about the success of those we serve and those we employ. We work to anticipate the needs of others and collaboratively implement innovative solutions.

SWWC believes **INTEGRITY** is the foundation of our actions. We are honest, trustworthy, transparent and ethical. We are committed to do the right thing.

SWWC encourages **SINCERITY**. We believe in open and honest communication. We welcome everyone's contributions and ideas.

SWWC believes **COLLABORATION** aids innovation and creativity, improving our ability to provide exceptional services.

TALENT RETENTION, DEVELOPMENT AND RECRUITMENT	INTENTIONAL AND IMPACTFUL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
TALENT RETENTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Appreciation and Engagement • Intentional/Meaningful Connections • Welcoming Culture 	NEEDS ANALYSIS AND PLANNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent Member/Staff/Student Feedback
TALENT DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Employee Preparation • Staff Training and Professional Learning 	INNOVATIVE PROG/SERVICE DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-Based Practices • Efficient Programs and Services • Preferred Programs and Services
TALENT RECRUITMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment Resources and Policies • Partnerships for Job Promotion/Awareness • Recruiting Diverse Staff 	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditing Framework/Process • Standardized Structures/Communications

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND PROMOTION	AGENCY WIDE PLANNING AND OPERATIONS
UNIFORM/CONSISTENT COMMUNICATIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Planning, Tools and Processes • Information Systems 	STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and Implementing Agency, Department and Learning Center Goals • Strategic Monitoring/Tracking of Goals
MARKETING AND PROMOTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency Awareness of Programs/Services • External Promotions and Marketing 	FUTURE RESOURCES AND FACILITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional Evaluation and Analysis • Facility and Resource Planning/Development • Organization and Acquisition

BUSINESS SERVICES

The **REGIONAL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION CENTER** team serves over 50 public schools districts in the areas of finance, payroll and MARSS (Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System) support. Our department assists school districts with accurately reporting students, complying with accounting standards, ensuring accurate payroll processing, and mandatory reporting.



This past year we expanded our comprehensive Smart Systems Finance/Payroll software solution to include a timekeeping application called TimeTracker.



SWWC's **HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM** provides consultation and coordination of services related to the management of environmental health and safety concerns for school districts. We help over 50 schools identify and prioritize health and safety plans and programs by conducting on-site visits, assisting in the completion of mandatory regulations, and assisting schools with the long-term facility maintenance funding process.

In June we hosted the Minnesota State Fire Marshal and Minnesota OSHA for a Custodial Training Day.

INSURANCE SERVICES

SWWC, participating through the Minnesota Healthcare Consortium (MHC), offers our members a high-quality health insurance option. The MHC Health Insurance Pools are member-owned and self-insured for schools, cities, counties and other governmental entities. Currently, MHC has over 325 groups and over 43,000 members. For SWWC we service 64 groups with nearly 4,000+ members.



**Minnesota
Healthcare
Consortium**
Participating Minnesota Service Cooperatives



Our Live Well program continues to be a strong component of our health insurance option. In 2023 the SWWC Pool provided nearly \$850,000 in incentive grants that went directly to member VEBA or HSA accounts. We continue to receive very positive feedback from our members and group leaders that this program has been a game-changer by putting the member more in control of their healthcare needs and costs.

We continue to partner with WEX for medical spending account (VEBA, HSA, FSA) administration. This partnership has been very successful, and the total amount of assets managed by WEX/MHC is over \$300 million ... money used by members to help pay for out-of-pocket healthcare needs.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

During 2023-24, our **BEHAVIOR ANALYTIC SERVICES** included substantial support for students and educators through various initiatives. Here are some key highlights from the past year:

- **Student Support:** Extensive assistance provided to students, including moving many to a least restrictive environment.
- **Consultations and Assessments:** Numerous consultations with teachers and completion of functional behavioral assessments.
- **Professional Development:** Several training opportunities offered to educators.
- **Behavior Conference:** High engagement at our annual virtual event with continuing education opportunities for behavior analysts and school psychologists.

THE READY CLINIC expanded services across all four locations in Cosmos, Marshall, Montevideo and Pipestone. The academic year began with several children transitioning back to their home school districts, allowing new children to begin services. By the end of the fiscal year, 18 children were receiving services at our locations.

Due to staffing challenges, we closed our Pipestone location near the end of the fiscal year, with children either discharged from services or transitioned to our Marshall location. Referrals continue to come in from various individuals and agencies across the region.



Our **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES** covered clinical supervision, student support at our ELCs, PBIS webinars, conflict resolution, team building, professional development, and district contracts. The demand for mental health support for both staff and students continues to be significant, with substantial numbers receiving these services during the year.

Our **LICENSED SCHOOL NURSING SERVICES** continued to grow in response to increased legislative mandates and ongoing needs in member districts. The regional nurse consultant supported the Minnesota Department of Health Workforce Grant by coordinating community practice opportunities, providing training and support for school health staff, and providing training and curriculum for students.

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION SERVICES provided significant support to our ELCs, READY Clinics, member school districts, and community agencies and individuals. These services are now available on a fee-for-service basis, with invoicing available on a monthly basis.

The **SWWC SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM (SCRT)** responded to ten calls in the region during the 2023-24 school year. The SCRT provides support and assistance to schools experiencing a student or staff death due to accident, illness, suicide, or other tragic events. Team members, primarily school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors from districts across the region, are trained in trauma effects on student learning, distress signs and symptoms, interventions, developmental considerations, referral signs, debriefings, and team development. Our regional trainer also supported the statewide initiative to develop crisis response teams in each service cooperative region.

SWWC
SCHOOL CRISIS
RESPONSE TEAM

SPECIAL EDUCATION



KNOWLEDGE EMPOWERS YOU! PARAPROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES were held in Worthington and Willmar in August 2023. Over 600 paraprofessionals from across the region attended a general session covering annual training topics and breakout sessions with topics like data collection, trauma informed care and math strategies. Thanks to all who contributed to these successful events!

Worthington Public Schools and Adrian Public Schools participated in our 2023-24 **EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES BEHAVIOR COHORT PILOT**. The primary goal was to enhance district capacity to effectively support elementary students with developmental disabilities by equipping them with sustainable local resources and tools for implementing evidence-based behavioral practices.

Throughout the cohort, Worthington and Adrian aimed to establish elementary level evidence-based practice model classrooms. District staff received comprehensive training to ensure the successful implementation and generalization of these programs, which included two training sessions and ongoing support through four half-day on-site coaching visits during the year. Additionally, they engaged in four community of practice sessions that provided opportunities to share experiences, insights, and network with other cohort members.

By participating in the cohort, these two districts not only enhanced their expertise in evidence-based behavioral practices, but also fostered a collaborative environment aimed at improving outcomes for students with developmental disabilities.

Building administrators are crucial for the success of all school programming, including special education. To support districts and building leaders who are members of our SpEd Cooperative, the SpEd Directors developed a **SPED COFFEE HOUR** training series. The series, attended by 43 administrators from 20 districts, covered essential topics such as District Administration & Director Relationships, IEP Meetings, Accommodations vs Modifications vs Interventions, Out of District Placement Referrals, Problem Solving Teams, Child Find & Referrals, Paraprofessional Supports, Responding to Parent Requests, and Special Transportation.

The SWWC Due Process Specialists hosted the 2023-24 **NEW/NEWER SPED TEACHER COHORT (NSTC)**. They supported and trained throughout the year to assist districts with retention and increase special education staff skills by providing relevant and meaningful support and training in due process and instruction.

A total of 80 teachers participated in the year-long program from the following districts:

ACGC	Eden Valley-Watkins	Heron Lake-Okabena	MCC	Redwood Area
Adrian	Edgerton	Jackson County Central	Milroy	Round Lake-Brewster
Benson	Ellsworth	KMS	Mountain Lake	Red Rock Central
BLHS	Fulda	Luverne	New London-Spicer	RTR
BOLD	Glencoe-Silver Lake	Lynd	Ortonville	SWWC ELCs
Canby	Hendricks	MACCRAY	Pipestone Area	Tracy Area
Cedar Mountain	Hills-Beaver Creek	Marshall	Prinsburg	WWG
				Windom Area
				Worthington



SPECIAL EDUCATION

During 2023-24, the **EDUCATIONAL LEARNING CENTERS (ELCs)** in Belview, Cosmos, Montevideo, Pipestone, Willmar and Windom served 244 students across the six sites, with the highest daily enrollment at 199. Our commitment to providing exceptional educational experiences for our students is stronger than ever, and we have been working diligently to enhance our services and facilities. Here are a few examples:

- **Strengthening Our Commitment to Literacy:** In collaboration with SWWC's Teaching & Learning Department, we have been working to meet the READ Act requirements which focus on ensuring that all students achieve grade-level proficiency in reading. We developed a comprehensive plan to address the literacy needs of our students, which includes identifying key areas where our educators require additional support and resources. Tailored professional development sessions were designed to equip our staff with the latest strategies and tools to enhance reading instruction and support student success.
- **Holistic Support through Behavioral Health Services:** Recognizing the importance of mental health and well-being, we partnered with SWWC's Behavioral Health Department to ensure that we provide strategic and consistent services to our students, families, and member districts. By working closely with behavioral health professionals, we were able to offer a more holistic approach to student support including regular consultations, targeted interventions, and ongoing monitoring of student progress.
- **Enhancing SpEd Services:** Our collaboration with SWWC's Special Education Department was instrumental in identifying areas of strength and growth, and allowed us to gather feedback and identify steps we can take to ensure access to programming as the need arises.
- **Ensuring Safe and Welcoming Learning Environments:** Over the past year, NEW facilities at ELC - New London and ELC - Marshall were being prepared to open for Fall 2024. These facilities were designed with student safety and comfort in mind. We continue to evaluate our current facilities and work to ensure they are meeting the needs of our programs.

We are incredibly proud of the progress we have made and are grateful for the continued support of our staff, families, member districts, and community partners.

Together, we are creating a brighter future for our students.



ELC - New London



Seven students participated in **PROJECT SEARCH** this year and graduated in May 2024. This program serves as an opportunity for students to transition from high school to community employment by learning and working at our host partner site, Avera Marshall, five days a week during the school year.



2024 Project SEARCH Graduates

At Avera Marshall, students participate in three, 10-week unpaid internships in different departments. A skills trainer, program instructor and hospital department staff work with the students to help them develop the necessary job and interpersonal skills to gain meaningful employment.

We look forward to expanding Project SEARCH to Worthington in 2025-26, with Sanford Worthington as our host partner site.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

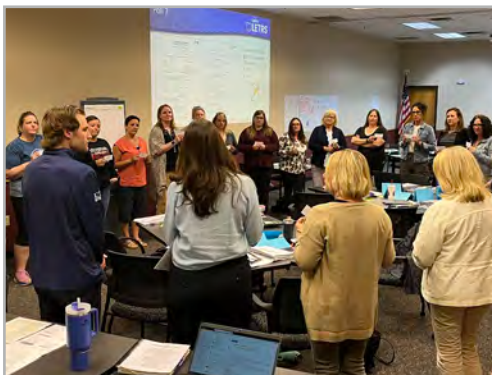
TEACHING AND LEARNING EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS

supported over 31 school districts during 2023-24. Educational consultants work with a shared group of districts and schools to provide tailored teaching and learning support, improve instructional practices, and provide guidance on curriculum and instruction to improve student outcomes.

This year we were thrilled to support multiple educators with professional learning, team development, and system supports to effectively expand and develop their knowledge of evidence-based literacy practices.

Over the past year, our educational consultants also:

- Provided guided support on analyzing data and action planning.
- Guided superintendent and principal collaboration meetings.
- Facilitated grade and subject alike curriculum meetings.
- Hosted multiple common in-services for educators and paraprofessionals.
- Provided technical assistance, training and coaching on curriculum and instruction.
- Trained many educators on Structured Literacy.
- Supported curriculum review, standards alignment and purchasing of curricular resources.



SWWC LITERACY SPECIALISTS provided support to hundreds of educators and over 40 school districts to support READ Act implementation. Our literacy experts provided intensive training, coaching, and infrastructure supports to prepare schools and districts for advancing their literacy goals.

For several years, SWWC and schools in the region have been pioneers with LETRS professional development for educators, with a focus on the science of reading and how to improve literacy instruction. In fact, spring/summer 2024, SWWC hosted LETRS facilitator training where 25 literacy experts in the region participated in highly-focused and engaged in-person training from national trainers to learn how to lead their own staff with learning evidence-based literacy instructional practices.

This regional collaborative effort is one of the many collective cost-sharing efforts to ensure high-level training at a shared cost. We partnered with multiple districts to bring UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Institute) national trainers to the region and in August 2024 plan to bring CAREI Functional Phonics national trainers to our region.

Further, our literacy team offered multiple sessions to discuss the READ Act, support Local Literacy Plan development, and support selection of approved curricular materials.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The **SOUTHWEST PRAIRIE REGIONAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (RCE)** team provided support to 17 school districts and 23 schools that were identified as needing support based on student outcomes across multiple indicators, including math achievement, reading achievement, progress toward English language proficiency, overall proficiency or by specific student group, graduation rates and/or consistent attendance. The RCE team worked with district/school staff to identify root cause, make a school improvement plan with an evidence-based practice, and implement the process.



RCE Team

The RCE team worked in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) and the other Minnesota Regional Centers for Excellence to further develop the statewide education system, COMPASS (Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success). The leadership and tremendous work from this team paved the way for expansion of supports and services in our region.

Beginning July 2024, COMPASS will support all public school districts, charter schools and Tribal schools thanks to an annual \$13.5 million investment for implementing Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Support (MnMTSS) by the Minnesota State Legislature. MDE and MSC will use a portion of that funding to provide free continuous improvement guidance, professional learning and flexible support through COMPASS.

The COMPASS Statewide System of Support, which includes the READ Act-Funded Regional Literacy Network, establishes a team of specialists at each of the nine regional service cooperatives who will work in close collaboration with MDE. These specialists will offer expertise in the areas of Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MnMTSS), literacy, math, school climate and culture, equitable access to high quality learning environments, and culturally responsive instructional leadership. This expands continuous improvement opportunities and builds upon the assistance previously offered through the six Regional Centers of Excellence. Support for ESSA targeted and comprehensive schools will now be offered through all nine MSC regional COMPASS teams.

The COMPASS Regional Team at SWWC consists of the following positions: Regional MnMTSS Lead, Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership Lead, Regional Literacy Lead, Literacy Network Coaches, Regional Math Lead, Equitable Access Specialist – Special Education focus, Statewide Advocate Lead, and School Advocates.

During the summer of 2023, a team from SWWC participated in MDE's six-session **MINNESOTA MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS (MnMTSS)** course, which allowed our team to explore the state's continuous improvement framework for ensuring positive social, emotional, behavioral, developmental and academic outcomes for students at SWWC's ELCs and ALCs.

We completed a fidelity assessment evaluating the efficient use of resources and positive student outcomes for the following five components of MnMTSS:

1. Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement
2. Family and Community Engagement
3. Multi-layered Practices and Support
4. Assessment
5. Data-based Decision Making

During 2023-24, we wrote/received a grant to support a Coordinator of MnMTSS for SWWC's ELCs and ALCs, which allows us to move forward with plans to implement evidence-aligned practices. We are taking steps to complete the nine-session MnMTSS course, evaluate our current instructional practices, and make instructional shifts to support school improvement. This is exciting work and we are excited to have the coordinator in place for the 2024-25 school year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING



During the 2023-24 school year, SWWC, in partnership with over 50 regional school districts, received a \$3,000,000 **SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER PIPELINE GRANT** from MDE to support tuition and programmatic support for school staff who are interested in becoming a licensed special education teacher.

The program launched in Spring 2024 and we have already approved 86 participants for the program! The future special educators in the program have expressed extreme gratitude to the region for writing this grant and providing a pathway to special education teacher licensure – many mentioned this has been a game changer for their careers and has fulfilled their lifelong dream of joining the PHENOMENAL field of special education.

We will provide high-quality education and support to our future special education teachers, ensuring they are well-prepared to meet the diverse needs of students in our region.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)

is a collection of evidence-based behavioral practices which lead to improved academic and behavioral outcomes for students when implemented with fidelity. Our PBIS work continued to grow and expand in 2023-24. Cohorts 18 and 19 continued to work through their Year 2 and Year 1 work with cohort training to support the needs of the districts. Over 215 schools in southern Minnesota have gone through the two-year training cohort in the past 20 years (850+ schools across the entire state), and we have about 40 PBIS coaches that regularly attend coach meetings. This past spring, ten southern Minnesota school teams completed the two-year team-based PBIS Tier I cohort training.

Our PBIS team developed a five-part webinar series on student behavior tips and tricks, developed an on-demand sustainability course, and continued to support regional schools with PBIS implementation. We have 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. We are also leading exploration work for Advanced Tier Training throughout the state.



Hazel Ashbeck (*shown at left*), a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and PBIS Regional Coordinator at SWWC, presented in March at the International Conference on Positive Behavior Support. Her session was titled *Establishing Efficient Tier 2 Systems to Promote Rapid Access to Function Based Intervention*.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

SWWC's **NEW TEACHER CENTER** Mission: To provide ongoing support to teachers, mentors/coaches and school leaders through collaborative partnerships with resources that disrupt achievement inequities and accelerate educator effectiveness, promote continuous improvement and reflective practice that maximize student engagement and achievement.

NTC/SRI Partnership

- Twenty-two schools focused on integrating social and emotional learning into rigorous academic instruction. This was implemented through professional learning communities, 1:1 coaching and/or hybrid models, all focused on school-wide professional development planning.

SWWC Regional Program

- We graduated our fourth cohort of instructional coaches. Current instructional coaches, along with coaches-in-training, had the opportunity to be one of three programs across the nation to participate in a pilot with NTC around the *Elephant in the Classroom* series. This was one of multiple professional learning opportunities available to our regional coaches and school leaders. Professional learning across our program is student-centered, focused on integrating social and emotional learning with rigorous, standards-aligned instruction, using an evidence-based framework.
- We also began a small pilot with SMSU and Worthington's Grow Your Own program to extend NTC's coaching framework to teacher candidates. And, finally, SWWC was one of six state pilot sites to collaborate with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the NTC as the state works to develop a statewide mentoring and induction framework based on New Teacher Center's model.

Statewide Teacher Mentoring Program

- SWWC was named as one of ten grant recipients of the Statewide Teacher Mentoring Program with MDE. This 3-year grant (beginning July 1, 2024) is a collaboration with the Minnesota River Valley Education District, SMSU, the MN Science Teachers Association (MnSTA), Southwest Initiative Foundation and the other Minnesota Service Cooperatives.



New Teacher Center Training

SWWC STARRS ONLINE ACADEMY

STARRS ONLINE ACADEMY helped over 300 K-12 students across the state during 2023-24 achieve their potential through individualized educational opportunities.

There are a variety of reasons students look for an online learning program, including:

- Looking for courses not offered in their district.
- Looking for flexibility.
- Experiencing mental or physical health issues.
- Credit deficient and wanting to graduate.
- Struggling with a traditional school environment.
- Having difficulty with a teacher.

SWWC Service Cooperative

TEACHING AND LEARNING

SWWC's **ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER (ALC)** services continued to grow in 2023-24 with total enrollment across all three sites (Glencoe, Pipestone and Windom) of 156 students. Night classes and summer school sessions saw record numbers of participants!

The Work-Based Learning Seminar Class enrolled 55 students. A total of 59 students are working in the community earning elective credits towards graduation.

In total, 71 students from 20 school districts graduated from our ALCs this year, with several of the graduates continuing their educational journey at two-year and four-year college programs.

The 2023-24 school year opened the door to a Stronger Connections grant opportunity at ALC – Glencoe. Through this grant, the team was able to explore evidence based social emotional learning programs, train on Check and Connect, and explore exceptional instructional practices like optimal learning environment. We are excited to expand this work in 2024-25.



ALC - Windom Graduation Ceremony

By providing interactive learning opportunities, students have a chance to see what they might be good at or catch an interest in something they didn't know they had. The **SWWC STUDENT ENRICHMENT PROGRAM** gives students a chance to explore areas that can influence future decisions on higher education and career options.

During 2023-24, over 11,883 students from 73 public and non-public schools participated in our events, which included the Conference for Young Writers, Conference for Young Artists, Science and Nature Conference, First Tech Challenge Robotics Qualifier Competition, Regional Spelling Bee, Culinary Skills Challenge, Photography Competition, Southwest Minnesota Career Expo, Major Madness, and both Junior High and Senior High Knowledge Bowl.



Students at Regional Conferences and Competitions

TEACHING AND LEARNING

LAUNCH YOUR FUTURE TODAY (LYFT) CAREER PATHWAYS priorities and strategies are established by an advisory committee that encompasses broad representation from secondary education, post-secondary education, workforce development, businesses (both public and private sector) and economic development.

The 2023-24 priorities included advancing career connected learning, ensuring equitable access to advanced CTE opportunities for all students, expanding regional awareness and collaboration, and advancing educator awareness/development.

Successful strategies towards meeting those priorities involved innovation grants that funded 14 projects (totaling \$187,500) across the SWWC region that provided hands-on real-life experiences to more than 7,000 students. Business, high school and post-secondary leaders collaborated to develop classes and experiences ([click here to learn more about the projects](#)).

In addition to the innovation grants, LYFT is heavily invested in career navigation services and leveraged funding to support five full-time Career Connector/Navigators. These positions support coordination and collaboration among business (300+) and education (50 schools) which results in supporting students to make informed education and career choices while intentionally building their social capital with value in the labor market, along with skills and knowledge needed to successfully navigate their educational and career paths.



LYFT is funded by a Statewide Career and Technical Education Consortium grant which is a collaborative effort with the Minnesota Service Cooperatives. This partnership works together to expand CTE experiences statewide, recruit and retain CTE teachers statewide, and forge deeper relationships between high schools, students, and Minnesota businesses.

SWWC, in partnership with LYFT Career Pathways and Technology & Trades on the Prairie, hosted a **CAREER INSTITUTE** in Redwood Falls in May 2024. Over 200 7th-9th grade students from Wabasso, Red Rock Central, Redwood Area, Springfield and Cedar Mountain attended.

The Career Institute is a highly interactive career exploration event for Redwood County schools that provides unique hands-on, project-based, experiential learning opportunities for students to explore, experience, and become exposed to current and future careers available.

Nearly 30 career information sessions by the following businesses and colleges were available: Altimate Medical, Avera Granite Falls, Centra Care, Daktronics, Schult Homes, Redwood Area Development Corporation, Redwood Area Community Foundation, Farmward, Redwood County (Technology and Law Enforcement), Redwood Area Schools (Early Childhood Education), Minnesota West, Ridgewater, and the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council.



TEACHING AND LEARNING

LYFT Career Pathways sponsored the third annual **STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONFERENCE** hosted by SMSU in March 2024 where high school students from across the SWWC region participating in their local CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) class along with college entrepreneurs from the Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, convened to make quality connections with seasoned entrepreneurs, network, pitch business ideas, get feedback and tour local businesses. In the SWWC region, there are six CEO programs: West Central CEO, Southwest CEO, Lyon and Murray County CEO, Cottonwood Jackson CEO, Minnesota River Valley CEO, and 59 Corridor CEO.

SWWC, in partnership with LYFT Career Pathways, hosted a **FIRST TECH CHALLENGE (FTC) ROBOTICS QUALIFIER COMPETITION** in January 2024. High Tech Kids is part of an international robotics program that includes more than 6,700 teams globally. High Tech Kids, in partnership with FIRST, has been bringing FIRST Tech Challenge to Minnesota since 2013. Each year the competition is designed to challenge students to think critically and expand their knowledge of the engineering process.

This FTC Qualifier competition was an incredible showcase of intelligence in robotics, with inexperienced and experienced teams from across the state converging at Marshall Middle School to compete. Seeing the wheels turning in the students' minds as they tried to figure out how to fix, change or make the robot better, all while working together as a team to keep their robots running, was amazing. This was an opportunity for our community to witness innovation, creativity, and teamwork in action!

During 2023-24, there were six school districts, 12 teams and 121 students involved in our region. For 2024-25, LYFT is providing a small amount of grant funds to SWWC member districts to START or add a NEW team and/or help existing teams. Visit www.swwc.org/FTC for more information.



PROJECT DISCOVERY is a State-Approved Transition Disabled Program providing hands-on career exploration and both formal and informal assessments for special population high school students. This year, over 80 students from 13 schools came to the career exploration lab in Marshall with an opportunity to explore more than 40 careers.

NEW for Fall 2024, Project Discovery will be located at the new SWWC ELC - Marshall building at 1510 Stadium Drive, Suite 1 (on the SMSU campus). We will also be focusing on middle school, junior high and multilingual language learners during 2024-25.

SWWC
PROJECT DISCOVERY

TECHNOLOGY

The **SWWC TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS DEPARTMENT** continues to provide new and innovative services that meet the needs of our members in the ever-changing world of Information and Instructional Technologies. Over the course of the year, our department grew to 33 individuals with specialized knowledge and assignments in a vast array of technologies and processes. The diverse knowledge of our staff provides SWWC and our members access to collaborative expertise that would normally only be found in large metropolitan school districts. By participating in our Technology Services, members realize a significant decrease in the number of outside contractors and the associated additional costs that are normally necessary to tackle large, complex projects and at times to receive routine, regular support.

Growth and advancement were the primary themes for the **SWWC WIDE AREA NETWORK CONSORTIUM** over the past year. A comprehensive competitive bidding process was conducted on behalf of schools and libraries throughout SWWC's membership resulting in a new Wide Area Network (WAN) that unifies the existing SWWC, LCTN (Little Crow Telecommunications Network) and MRVED (Minnesota River Valley Education District) networks into a single operation. Now serving 48 school districts, the Plum Creek Regional Library System, and SWWC, our WAN directly connects 95 sites to the Internet, Internet2, and shared storage, security, and other regional resources. In addition to enhancements to the robust speeds of the services provided through the WAN, the consortium will also be providing participating entities with full E-Rate Coordination, coordinated Cybersecurity services and initiatives such as assessments, security awareness trainings, phishing simulations, and critical equipment monitoring through an integrated security information and event management (SIEM).



In early 2024 we began planning for and launched our **CENTER FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION**, which will commonly be referred to as A.I.D.E., that will provide SWWC a common collaborative presence to deliver leadership, professional development, and research in the rapidly developing realm of Artificial Intelligence. Our initial roll out will be a newsletter and the development of in-person and online training for educators and administrators in school districts.

The goal of A.I.D.E. is to develop a nationally recognized offering that will allow SWWC to further expand our knowledge and offerings in Artificial Intelligence, and to integrate and deliver those developments and services back into our membership through the services that they are already participating in. This goal will take time to achieve, as the center develops in the coming years.

SWWC CYBERSECURITY continues to grow in both the members being served and the services that are being provided. This year brought extensive growth in our services provided to new members outside of SWWC's geographical region and the addition of new positions. Our Comprehensive Cybersecurity services are now utilized by 22 entities from across Minnesota ranging from enrollments of 130 to over 10,000 students. Additionally, Managed Cybersecurity Services are being integrated into the SWWC Wide Area Network Consortium to ensure that all members participating in it have complimentary access to annual security assessments, fully managed security awareness training, phishing simulations, and SIEM monitoring of critical network infrastructure.



TECHNOLOGY

The **SWWC DATA PRIVACY PROGRAM** ended its second year with 77 participating school districts throughout Minnesota ranging from 32 to over 12,000 students. The core of the program is to provide critical resources to school districts that aid in achieving their compliance with the Minnesota Student Data Privacy Law that went into effect on July 1, 2022.

To date, 1,369 providers have received an initial review with Data Privacy Agreements established with 228 providers, covering 502 products that are utilized in schools throughout Minnesota. Collaboratively the schools participating in the SWWC Data Privacy Program have access to one of the few, if not the only, staff dedicated to data privacy compliance in Minnesota, and the largest catalog of products that have been vetted for compliance with the Minnesota Student Data Privacy Law.

We have **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES** for everyone! Our IT² Conference in October continues to garner greater recognition and attendance from Education Technology professionals throughout the state, and presenters and vendors from across the country. As we continue to develop IT², SWWC Technology Solutions spent the year focusing on the development of our new EdTech Connect Conference that will launch in August 2024 and focus on technology for classroom professionals and technology integrationists. EdTech Connect will fill the gap that was created as we re-focused the core audience and content focus of IT² over the past three years.

SWWC Technology Solutions also played a key role along with partners Sourcewell and ECMECC in re-launching the Minnesota Education Technology Leaders Conference in St. Cloud in February 2024. This conference provided a great compliment to SWWC's other events and demonstrates our role as an organization in providing EdTech leadership throughout Minnesota.

In addition to conferences, SWWC Technology Solutions provided five day-long Technology Leadership Workshops focused on a wide range of topics for Technology Leaders and Technology Integrationists. The workshops also provided invaluable networking opportunities among peers from across our membership and SWWC's Technology Solutions staff.

Focus has also been placed on the development and delivery of online professional development through our PD on Demand platform that is accessible through the SWWC website. Several courses are now available for educators, administrators, and anyone in your school district to expand their understanding of the latest in EdTech. This year we also launched an added benefit where members that are participating in SWWC Technology Integration Services receive complimentary access to all our technology courses on PD on Demand for all members of your staff.



Technology Workshops, Trainings and Conferences

SWWC FOUNDATION

2023-24 Annual Report

Imagine the impact on our region if **EVERY CHILD** had the opportunity to discover and explore their passion in life!



The **SWWC FOUNDATION** believes that students in the region, no matter where they live or how much money they have, deserve innovative and learning-rich educational opportunities so they can be positioned to learn, grow and find success.

Funds raised through grants and donations in 2023-24 supported the regional enrichment opportunities listed below. As an extension of the classroom, these events gave students the opportunity to further explore areas of interest in a hands-on learning environment. Many times these experiences can lead to higher education and career choices.

- Career Expo
- Conference for Young Artists
- Conference for Young Writers
- Creative Writing Contest
- Culinary Skills Challenge
- First Tech Challenge
- Major Madness
- Photography Competition
- JH Regional Knowledge Bowl
- Regional Spelling Bee
- Science & Nature Conference
- SH Regional Knowledge Bowl

Our partners made a HUGE impact on our region's future leaders in 2023-24!

Through grants and donations, we raised:

\$55,653 =

- \$48,580 for regional student enrichment.
- \$ 3,400 received for the ELCs.
- \$ 3,673 received for The READY Clinics.

We invite you to join us in making an impact and donate today at

WWW.SWWC.ORG/DONATE

or scan this code!



STUDENT ENRICHMENT - MAKING AN IMPACT!



Contact us or visit our website to learn more about partnering with the SWWC Foundation!

Shelly Maes, Executive Director
shelly.maes@swwc.org; 507-537-2282
www.swwc.org/foundation

 **SWWC**
FOUNDATION FOR
INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

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

Gifts Received July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

Business Partners

- Monogram Foods Loves Kids Foundation
- Southwest Minnesota Arts Council
- Southwest Initiative Foundation
- Carr Family Foundation
- United Way of Southwest Minnesota
- United Way of West Central Minnesota
- Schwan
- SW MN Workforce Development Board
- Pipestone Helping Farmers
- Kandi Power Charitable Trust
- United Way of Nobles County
- Great River Energy
- Federated Rural Electric Trust
- Lyon-Lincoln Electric Trust
- Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust
- Nobles-Murray Rural Electric Trust
- Otter Tail Power Foundation
- Redwood Electric Trust
- Sioux Valley Energy Customers' Trust
- Agralite Electric Trust
- United Way of Pipestone County
- Brown County Rural Electric Trust
- Minnesota Valley Coop Light & Power Trust
- Renville Sibley Cooperative Power
- Hay Dobbs Architects

Individual Partners

- Jeremy Adams
- Melissa Andree
- Amanda Barton
- Chris Bauer
- Kerry & Shelly Berg
- Lynn Bren
- Amber Bruns
- Bobbie & Cliff Carmody
- Jonathan Centes
- Matt Coleman
- Arlene Duchan
- Lisa Gregoire
- Hayley Hansen
- Vicky Harris
- Tom & Cheryl Hoff
- Noah Johnson
- Mitch & Tracy Kramer
- Eric Larsson
- Cameron Macht
- Shelly Maes
- Jerri McKinley
- Scott Monson
- Paula Moore
- Tom Parker
- Bailey Rettmann
- Jodi Robinson
- Elaine Sandquist
- Greg Scheitel
- Stephen Schnieder
- Greg & Amy Sippl
- Jack Stewart
- Stephanie Streng
- Josh Sumption
- Jason & Tracy Turner
- Ron & Ann Wendorff
- and many donors who wished to remain anonymous



2023-24 Memorial/Honorarium Donations

- In Memory of Maren Heil by Ron & Ann Wendorff
- In Memory of Bruce Gossen by Cliff & Bobbie Carmody
- In Memory of Bruce Gossen by Josh Sumption
- In Memory of Stephen Grages by Ron & Ann Wendorff
- In Memory of Sharon Gregoire by Ron & Ann Wendorff
- In Memory of Bob Maes by Cliff & Bobbie Carmody
- In Memory of Bob Maes by Mary Palmer
- In Memory of Barb Max by Ron & Ann Wendorff
- In Memory of Anthony Meyer by Ron & Ann Wendorff
- In Memory of John Schneiderman by Anonymous
- In Memory of John Schneiderman by JoAnne McKim
- In Memory of Jerome Smith by Ron & Ann Wendorff
- In Memory of Julie Stewart by Amber Bruns
- In Memory of Gene Sunderman by Ron & Ann Wendorff
- In Memory of Paul Volker by Amber Bruns
- In Memory of Paul Volker by Shelly Maes
- In Memory of Paul Volker by Abby Polzine
- In Memory of Paul Volker by Josh Sumption
- In Memory of RuthAnn Zinter by Amber Bruns
- In Honor of Amber Bruns by Bailey Rettmann

SWWC Foundation Board of Directors (as of June 30, 2024)



Tom Walsh
Board
Chair



Matt Coleman
Board
Vice-Chair



Becky Foster
Board
Member



Jan Fransen
Board
Member



Carla Olson
Board
Member



Steve Schnieder
Board
Member



Ann Wendorff
Board
Member

**GREAT people
doing
GREAT things!**

SOUTHWEST WEST CENTRAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE

SWWC

Education & Administrative Resources

www.swwc.org