

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Focus ON THE REGION

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<http://wcif.org/survey.html>



How small retail can succeed when big retail can't
WCI has been sharing this SaveYourTown webinar with many communities. We'd love to come to yours. Contact Jill Amundson at 800-735-2239 or jill@wcif.org.

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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.

Excellence. Accountability. Impact

Focus ON THE REGION

One man's belief in small towns inspires many



Lloyd Paulson (far left) made many contributions to area community projects, including the Parkers Prairie Aquatic Center and the Deer Creek Ballpark.

The phrase "leaving a legacy" is used a lot. In the case of Lloyd Paulson of Moorhead, who died May 27, it aptly describes his contributions to helping rural communities thrive for generations to come.

You can see the legacy of this giving throughout west central Minnesota and beyond. In Deer Creek, pop. 322, it's the beautifully renovated municipal ballpark that draws teams from all over the area. In Parkers Prairie, pop. 1,011, it's the impressive aquatic center, with its easily accessible zero-entry pool, fountains and solar panels for heating. And in Battle Lake, it's the construction of a brand-new child care center to open this fall.

What's amazing about this legacy isn't necessarily the money he donated to

these projects, but the encouragement he gave and challenges he issued to provide matches to his gifts. "If people give back to their hometowns, they are going to benefit from that themselves," Lloyd said of the importance of local giving. "Unless the people who live there step forward, the community's not going to grow."

"Uncle Lloyd was the first person I talked with when I had the idea of restoring our baseball park," recalled Deer Creek resident and Lloyd's niece, Diane George. She also serves on the advisory committee for the Deer Creek Ballpark Restoration Fund, a component fund of WCI. "I didn't have a clue where to start

and he headed me in the right direction. He believed in me and what I could accomplish and he made me believe in myself. He was an awesome business man but a better uncle. He never gave anything out for free but made you work for it. He will be deeply missed as an uncle that I truly loved and admired."

"If you give where you live, you know where it goes."

Lloyd Paulson

"I've been blessed' is something Lloyd would say. God had blessed him and he felt that he needed to share that good will with the people and communities that he knew and loved," said Jim Arvidson, a Parkers Prairie resident who worked with Lloyd and with WCI as an advisor on the Parkers Prairie Public Swimming Pool Fund, also a WCI component fund.

that he knew and loved," said Jim Arvidson, a Parkers Prairie resident who worked with Lloyd and with WCI as an advisor on the Parkers Prairie Public Swimming Pool Fund, also a WCI component fund.

"Lloyd became a mentor to us as we began our roles as co-chairs of the Battle Lake Area Child Center capital campaign," Gary and Karalyn Harrington shared. "He was so generous with his time and knowledge around fundraising. We could see that he truly enjoyed helping us accomplish a project that would benefit our rural area and make him proud to have helped."

Inspired by Lloyd Paulson's local philanthropy? WCI can help you achieve your charitable giving wishes through a donor advised fund. Learn more by contacting Tom McSparron or Rebecca Petersen at 800-735-2239. WCI encourages people to consult their financial advisor first.

Watch our two videos on community giving featuring Lloyd Paulson at vimeo.com/wciminn.

Action Fabricating Uses BestForce Grant to Help Achieve Business Excellence

by Brenan Chase, communications intern

Business excellence is something that good companies continually improve upon. Located in the Detroit Lakes area since 1997, Action Fabricating is one such business.

What started in a small workshop has now grown to a factory of over 50,000 sq. ft., and 37 full-time employees. The parts fabrication manufacturer has clients spanning from agriculture to furniture stores. One thing that Action Fabricating CEO/owner Jordan Priem credits to the company's recent success is a training program that six workers went through, which received funding through West Central Initiative's (WCI) BestForce incumbent workforce training grant program.

The Disney Institute Business Training program is a five-day seminar in Florida focusing on business excellence. Business Development Advisor Bill Martinson from Enterprise Minnesota, said the training in Florida is "the best program out there for companies." The training included classroom teachings and walks around

the Disney parks to see their lessons in action. WCI collaborates with Enterprise Minnesota to offer the BestForce grant to help offset training costs for small to medium manufacturers. BestForce focuses on manufacturers who are interested in elevating the capacity of their company by increasing the skill level of their current workforce.

Thanks to the support of BestForce, Action Fabricating was able to move the training off location, said CEO/Owner Jordan Priem.

"Being offsite allowed for employees to be more engaged, which couldn't have happened being at home." Priem said, adding "WCI made it so the program was affordable for Action Fabricating."

Once completing the program, Priem and his team wanted to make sure they were implementing what they learned. "It's what you do when you get back from the program that

really matters," Priem said. Action Fabricating focused on key concepts from the training to improve their strategic plan, including effective communication, selective hiring practices, employee motivation and changing the culture of the workplace.

The company hopes to familiarize every employee with Disney Institute trainings and practices, and implement more ideas to help with sales growth and expansion. In addition, "looking into more trainings is always an option for our company to improve ourselves," Priem said.

One piece of advice Priem had for other manufacturers in west central Minnesota: "If the opportunity for WCI to help is available, take advantage of it."



Wendy Merrick, WCI Director of Programs, loves to provide funding to organizations for training programs like the one used with Action Fabricating. "Hearing what manufacturers want for training, and then helping fund these programs, is a perfect example of what we look for in a BestForce grant," she said.

Learn more at BestForce.wcif.org.



Meet Rick Schara

WCI welcomes Rick as its new marketing coordinator.

He works primarily on WCI's Live Wide Open regional marketing campaign (livewideopen.com).

Rick previously worked for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) as a business services representative. Prior to DEED, he was executive director of the 544 Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to helping support the mission of the Fergus Falls Area School District.

"I love how this position brings together my skills in workforce development and communications to help bring talented employees and new families to our region. They are instrumental in making sure our businesses and communities thrive," Rick said.

Want to learn more? Give Rick a call at 800-735-2239, or rick@wcif.org.



Meet Rebecca Lynn Petersen

Rebecca joins WCI as its new director of development.

In her role, she works with individuals, organizations and communities to foster relationships that help further WCI's mission to serve to improve west central Minnesota.

Before joining WCI, Rebecca was executive director of the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra for seven years. Previously, she served as executive director for A Center for the Arts in Fergus Falls.

"What all these positions have in common—and what I enjoy most—is connecting with people and community," Rebecca said. "As I work more closely with people and organizations, I find that it's more about sharing our stories, our interests and our passions, and finding common ground."

To talk with Rebecca about your community and your interests, contact her at rebecca@wcif.org or 800-735-2239.

An Amazing Response to Community Change Makers Grant Program First Round

When WCI launched its new Community Change Makers grant program, frankly, staff weren't sure what the response would be.

"Our goal with our Community Change Makers grants was to help communities arrive at their own solutions, but what would this look like?" said WCI President Anna Wasescha.

As it happened, change varies greatly from community to community, as indicated by the 17 awardees.

"In this first round, we can see our nine-county region through the eyes of individuals and groups who know and love their communities and, by working together, have summoned the creative energy to make

those places better places to live and work" Wasescha said.

Awardees are:

- The African American Development Association
- American Association of University Women—Fergus Falls
- Alexandria Technical and Community College
- Becker County Developmental Achievement Center
- The City of Breckenridge
- The City of Campbell
- Douglas County Car Care Program
- The City of Elbow Lake
- Empowering Kids Perham
- Glenwood Lakes Area Welcome Center
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College—Fergus Falls

- Concordia College, Moorhead
- The City of New York Mills
- Pelican Rapids Multicultural Committee
- Perham Area Activity Center
- Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership
- Minnewaska Area Schools
- United Way of Douglas and Pope Counties

A total of \$78,371 was awarded.

The next round of Community Change Makers grant proposals are due November 8, 2018.

Learn about the grant and about our awardees' projects at changemakers.wcif.org

From One Nancy to Another

"I want to thank all the women in my life who have contributed to my ability to do the work I am honored and lucky to do every day."

With those words, WCI's Director of Early Childhood Nancy Jost accepted the 2018 "Nancy" Award given annually by the Minnesota Early Childhood Funders Network, a network of the Minnesota Council on



Foundations. The award recognizes an individual or group for "leadership, vision and commitment to enhancing the social and emotional development of infants and young children."

The "Nancy" Award is named for the late Nancy Latimer, who was a lifelong advocate for children and families.

"As a society we must see that children deserve the best from us adults, that women are not the only nurturing gender, that people in the early childhood field deserve to be valued and well paid" Nancy said in her speech. "Early childhood should be a career as valued and well paid as any other teacher and many other professionals. Early childhood professionals are partners with parents in raising the next generation of parents, workers and citizens – our society depends on us, our children depend on us – our future depends on us!"