

Educators of Excellence

Celebrating positive impact and leadership

April 28, 2021 | 5:30 p.m.

2021 Educators of Excellence

Celebrating excellence

Educators of Excellence Awards celebrate the dedication, hard work, and leadership of innovative educators throughout Sourcewell's five-county service area of Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena counties.

How it works

Each school selects a TEACHER OF EXCELLENCE who has demonstrated a commitment to excellence that has led to increased student success.

Special awards recipients are determined by a selection team that reviews nominations for those who have demonstrated innovation and leadership that has positively impacted students and fellow staff.

These special awards include:

LEADER OF EXCELLENCE

PARAPROFESSIONALS OF EXCELLENCE

COACH OF EXCELLENCE

SUPPORT STAFF OF EXCELLENCE

SILVER LINING AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

TEAM OF EXCELLENCE



Human Connection Matters

Students crave it and great schools thrive because of it.

As co-founder of Till-360 (formerly Happy Caveman), Joe Beckman's mission has been to RECLAIM HUMAN CONNECTION in school communities throughout the world.

Joe has shared his infectious energy, humor, and passion in over 1,000 schools, positively impacting over 1 million people worldwide through:

- District-wide partnerships and live events that support students, staff, and parents.
- SEL video curriculum, The Human Connection Hub
- His new book, *Just Look Up - 5 Life-Saving Phrases Every Human Needs to Hear*

Joe resides in Minneapolis with his three children and exceptionally beautiful/patient/strong/kind-hearted wife, Jess.

Agenda

Welcome:

Paul Drange,
Sourcewell Director of Regional Programs
Kassidy Rice,
Sourcewell Leader of Education Solutions

Keynote speaker:

Joe Beckman

Awards presented by:

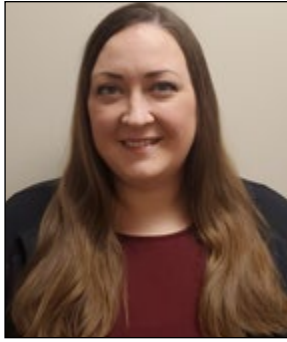
Kassidy Rice,
Sourcewell Leader of Education Solutions
Paul Drange,
Sourcewell Director of Regional Programs

Closing remarks:

Dr. Chad Coquette,
Sourcewell Executive Director/CEO

Carmen Zahn

Crosby-Ironton – Cuyuna Range Elementary School



As the education technology coordinator in the Crosby-Ironton School District, Carmen has played a critical role in ensuring students have the latest and greatest technology in their hands. At no time has this been more important than during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the dawning of distance learning, a component of education none of us were prepared for, Carmen has stepped up and led the district through these turbulent waters to ensure students had working devices and families had an internet connection at their home.

Donna (Jean) Wind

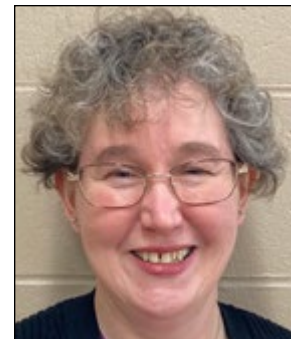
Brainerd – Baxter Elementary School



This year, in particular, Jean has worked with some of our struggling first-graders. Since Jean was at risk for health reasons to be at school in person, she was assisting from home. Virtually, she met one on one each day with 14 first-graders to work on sight words. Her cheerful disposition and positive attitude made the students look forward to working with her each day.

Shelly Franklin

Menahga Elementary School



Shelly runs a top-notch library! She is always ready to help students find books they need and is very knowledgeable about the authors and books students like. She's also always willing to help out any staff whether they need a bunch of books or help with a computer problem. She's always willing to listen, and if you have a question, she will do her best to get the answer for you.

Wendy Vandeputte

Brainerd High School



Students in the BHS Key Club have learned through the leadership of adviser Ms. Vandeputte to put service before self. Community needs require service. Key Club members have developed strong character through the service performed throughout the school year and summer and by participating in weekly leadership meetings and training. Ms. Vandeputte walks the walk, demonstrating – professionally and personally – the mission of the organization.

Christy Boelz

Staples-Motley Elementary School



Christy is the kitchen lead at Staples-Motley Elementary. She impacts students on a daily basis with her smile, care, and great music. She leads a team that not only knows how to have fun with students, but makes sure they are getting good, hot food choices each day and that they will enjoy and fill their bellies. Kids don't miss a chance to have a great breakfast and lunch under the direction of this fun lunch lady. Her ways of decorating and dressing up while playing fun music makes it a place that students want to visit every day.

Riley Atkinson

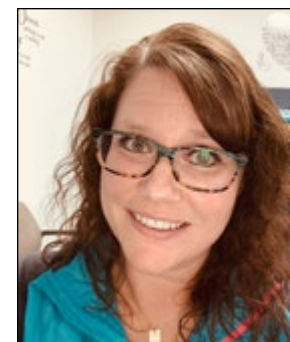
Brainerd – Baxter Elementary School



Riley has been the epitome of curiosity this school year. Curiosity means to have a strong desire to know or learn something. Riley has dug in like a champion to learn all about third grade core curriculum, all while wrapping up the last of his testing to complete his DAPE licensure. He has said, “Yes, I can do it!” to everything asked of him this school year. He knows technology well and brings a level of confidence not common for first-year teachers, as he offers trainings and ideas to his colleagues.

Laura Kiser

Wadena-Deer Creek Middle/High School

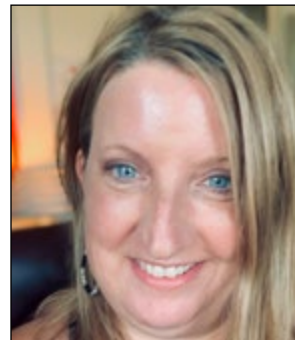


Laura has been a champion and cheerleader for students and staff throughout the pandemic. As the middle/high school social worker, she has always been the school's greatest resource in terms of taking care of the emotional well-being of everyone. That role has obviously expanded with the mental/emotional stress of the past year. Her ability to listen to the needs of others is a gift few possess.



Pequot Lakes Instructional Administrative Team

Ben Johnston, Aaron Nelson, Michael O'Neil, Melissa Hesch



This team drives continuous improvement efforts across all programs and grade levels in the Pequot Lakes School District based upon the Marzano High Reliability Schools™ framework.

Focusing nearly all of their work on developing the capacity of teachers and staff to implement best practices, they also ensure those practices are implemented with fidelity through continuous monitoring protocols. They implement this work with a strong understanding of the art of leadership using the concepts and frameworks offered by GiANT Worldwide.

Students in Pequot Lakes Public Schools have benefitted from an improved learning environment, improved instruction, and improved program alignment as the leadership work of this team has been implemented over the past three to five years.

Mary Kloster

Bertha-Hewitt High School



Building meaningful relationships with students is Mary's first priority. She rarely sits in her teaching chair, but rather would prefer to sit in the chair next to her students helping and tutoring one on one with her special education students.

Jill Lee

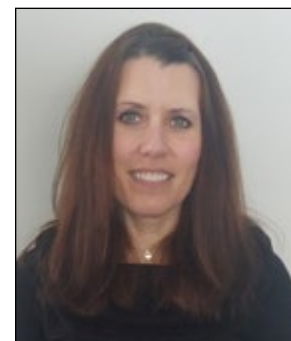
Brainerd – Baxter Elementary School



Rather than resent the school year because she was not going to teach in her music area, Jill has embraced the challenges and learning opportunities and has grown tremendously as a teacher. Her colleagues admire and respect her; her students enjoy her lessons and love her.

Christina Lundgren

Brainerd High School



Christina is student centered and supportive of all staff. As Brainerd High School's technology integrationist, she has led staff through a difficult year learning and relying on technology to best provide high-quality instruction. No technology need is too great for her to address, and she instills all things about what a teacher leader should be.

Corey St. Peter

Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School



Corey has a great attitude and rapport with students, which allows him to get to know them on another level. His caring and compassion for students show when he speaks about them and are reflected when they reciprocate by working diligently for him.

Megan Syrstad

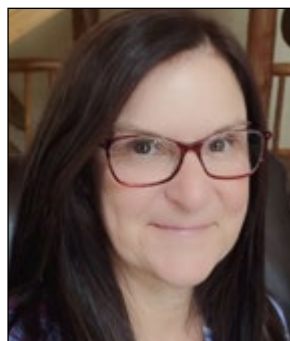
Crosby-Ironton High School



Megan is driven by what is best for students. Her endless positivity and ability to connect with students are unmatched and evident in everything she does at C-I. After sitting in her classroom, you can tell right away she has put a lot of thought and planning into everything she does and asks the kids to do. She lives and breathes the C-I mission of, "Learning Through Relationships," creating a positive impact on students and student achievement.

Lori Vosacek

Crosby-Ironton – Cuyuna Range Elementary School



From the classroom to the bike trails, to the world of virtual learning, Lori has shown again and again that her students' success is at the top of her priority list. Lori loves her students and puts forth maximum effort to make sure they are getting the education they deserve. Because of her vision, tenacity, and commitment to her students and their families, so many CRES students are better prepared for the challenges of school and life.

Scott Hetherington

Crosslake Community Charter School - online program



Scott retired from teaching in the traditional classroom but wanted to stay connected with students and continue to learn himself. While he had a slight learning curve to change his mode of teaching to online instead of face to face on a regular basis, he has far surpassed the school's expectations.

Lisa Steffen

Crosslake Community Charter School - seat-based program



Lisa has put her heart and soul into teaching kindergarten at Crosslake Community School for several years. Specifically this year, parents have appreciated how she has supported students and families by bridging the gap between in-person learning and engaging students during distance learning.

Joni Schwartz

Freshwater Education District



Joni has worked with preschoolers with special needs for almost 15 years and continues to develop new strategies according to their needs. This year she volunteered to be in a pilot using a new data system with her students in order to track more accurate data of children. With the information she learns, she can better focus interventions and help other ECSE teachers become more data directed and efficient.

Susan Benjamin

Little Falls Community Middle School



The innovation Susan demonstrates in her role as a personalized learning coach and STEM teacher has transformed the middle school. Her pedagogy practices, depth of experience, and relationship skills are beyond reproach. With the challenges related to COVID and the constant change of learning models, Susan has been a rock.

Glennnda Davis

Little Falls – Dr. S.G. Knight Elementary School



Glennnda's influence on students goes beyond the classroom. She makes connections that leave a lasting impression. Students enjoy their time and interaction with her even after they move on through the grade levels. They always seem to find their way back to Ms. Davis to connect.

Jayme Fuchs

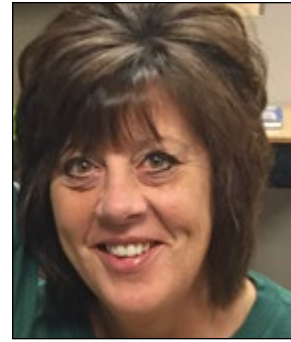
Little Falls – Lincoln Elementary School



Jayme has developed a positive working relationship with staff and has played a vital role in promoting a positive school climate as part of the Building Leadership Team. She continuously strives for excellence and is always flexible and willing to do whatever it takes for what is best for the students and the school.

MaryJo Olson

Little Falls – Lindbergh Elementary School



MaryJo is an incredibly talented Emotional/Behavioral Disability teacher who understands the importance of creating positive relationships with her students. Her classroom is a safe place, where her kids can seek support and gain the tools they need to have success in all parts of their school day.

Sara Pohlman

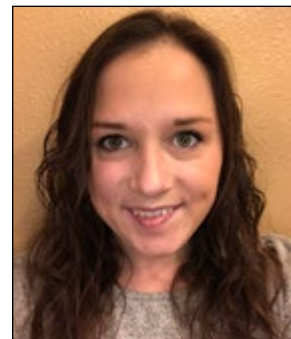
Little Falls Community High School



Sara has been the lead special education teacher at LFCHS for the past 23 years. She is instrumental in scheduling students and helping create personalized individual educational plans. Sara does a fantastic job working with students to build a transition plan from high school to the workforce or postsecondary programming.

Molly Peterson

Menahga Middle School



Molly is an instrumental member of the fifth-grade team as a distance-learning teacher. Organized and quick to adapt, Molly uses innovative methods to reach her distance students, making them feel they are part of our middle school family.

Ashley Lynne

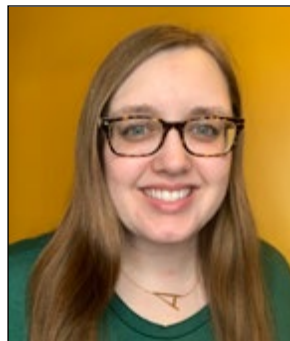
Menahga High School



Ashley understands the power of building positive relationships with her students and the impact it has on their social emotional well-being. She dedicates long hours to lesson planning for her students, communicating with families, and providing leadership and guidance to her colleagues through mentorship.

Ashley Walvatne

Menahga Elementary School



Ashley is known as someone who helps anyone, anytime. She knows every student in the school and who their siblings are. She works hard to connect with every single student in her class and remembers them long after they've moved on. She steps up for her team all the time. She is an incredible leader and team player.

Elizabeth McKenna

Pequot Lakes Middle School



Beth is invested in the development of the whole child. This past school year she paved the way for Pequot Lakes Middle School to be awarded a grant opportunity to engage in the Botvin Life Skills curriculum. Aiming to improve the health and wellness of students, she will coordinate the inclusion of the content and see it through to a life-changing experience for her students.

Belinda Reier

Pequot Lakes – Eagle View Elementary School



Belinda is a pioneer for her school and for distance learning, and a mentor and leader on the distance-learning team. She takes initiative to learn more about the resources implemented this year as well as how to use ones already in place. She has continued to take her teaching in distance learning to new levels of expertise.

Lynn Smith

Pequot Lakes High School



No mask will ever hide Lynn's smile or muffle her laugh, and the only infectious thing spreading in her class is joy. A veteran teacher with a long history of compassionate service to her students, Mrs. Smith proved the power of relationships in a digital learning world.

Brittany Bueckers

Pierz – Healy High School



Brittany really goes into everything asked of her with a “can-do” attitude. When the high school focused on interventions for students and implemented a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Brittany took the lead by supporting teachers as they implemented the process. She also serves on multiple leadership teams and is looked to for support and advice by her colleagues. She is a good listener and is always willing to help those around her.

Alice Nevins

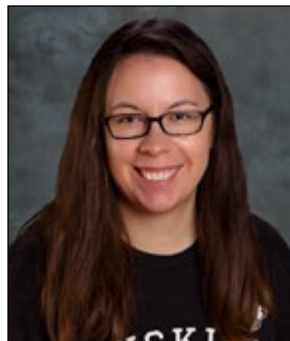
Pierz – Pioneer Elementary School



Alice is the epitome of a workhorse. Her dedication to each and every child on her caseload is unquestionable. Alice finds her own success through the results of her students and works tirelessly with each and every one of them. She is always flexible and willing to pitch in to help her colleagues with a new special education student or another assessment. The world quite simply cannot have too many just like Alice in it.

Jayme Finstad

Pillager Middle School



Jayme is a fantastic teacher who is empathic, organized, intentional, and prepared for it all. She is always a source of calm and consistency for her students and staff. The team all relies on and respects Jayme immensely. She is a gem and a vital part of the success of the Pillager Middle School team.

Zachary Karelis

Pillager High School



Zach goes above and beyond to provide an excellent education for Pillager High School students. He puts in countless hours making sure his students understand the math concepts he is teaching. Zach is very genuine in his conversations with his students, encouraging them not to settle for “good enough.” He is a great example of what administrators, students, and parents expect teachers to be.

Kellie Klimek

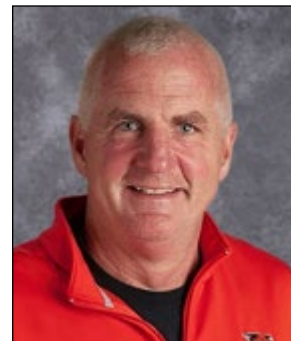
Pillager Elementary School



While she may not have decades of experience under her belt, Kellie is a Teacher of Excellence. She is determined to make an impact on every single student in her classroom and continually strives to find new and creative ways to get the most from her students regardless of where they are academically. She works hard at getting to know her students and building healthy, positive relationships with them.

Tom Demars

Pine River-Backus High School



Tom is a quiet leader in the high school. He’s not one to ask for or want attention for his valuable contributions. As a veteran teacher, he has modeled the, “growth mindset,” by embracing change required and making the best of any situation.

Shari Kamholz

Pine River-Backus Elementary School



Shari is always caring for others. She brings a positive attitude to her class every day. She remains flexible, patient, and understanding in her approach to reaching students and families. Despite challenges, Shari has managed to remain focused on what is best for kids to ensure their experiences at PRB are the best they can be.

Michael Marschel

Royalton Elementary School



Michael is a highly skilled and caring instructor. His values, integrity, and character make him a role model for others. He has the highest reputation among parents, and his classroom is filled with engaging and hands-on learning. He is respected by colleagues and is always willing to get involved and provide support. Every school deserves a Michael Marschel.

Zachary Silbernack

Royalton Middle/High School



Zach is a tremendously talented teacher who works hard to ensure his students have great learning opportunities in his classroom. Zach teaches the highest level of math classes at RHS and has successfully implemented many progressive technologies and teaching strategies to make his classroom and lessons accessible. His hard work and professionalism have earned him this well-deserved distinction.

Heidi Huotari

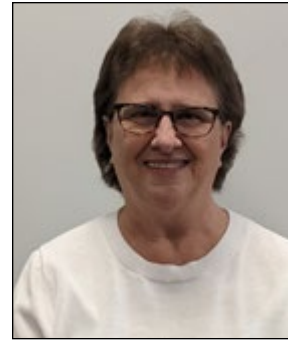
Sebeka Elementary School



Heidi has been the preschool teacher in Sebeka for the past 15 years. She is highly respected by our parents, loved by her students, and continues to display the qualities of a teacher we all want in our buildings. Our preschool program is second to none because of Heidi's leadership and the strong support system she is surrounded with that serves the social/emotional and academic needs of our preschool students.

Sheree Polman

Sebeka High School



When students enter Sheree's room, they are always greeted with a loud, "Hello!" and a huge smile. Students are excited to attend her classes and will work hard for her. With Sheree's love of literature, she brings classic material into her room and relates it to what is happening in her students' lives.

Kimberly Prestridge

Staples-Motley Elementary School



Kim has the dedication and drive to support teachers and students to help all involved be successful. Through her position as student success interventionist, she helps students take ownership, reflect, and make good choices.

Phyl Runzel

Staples-Motley Middle/High School



Throughout the years, Phyl has been a dedicated educator, mentor, and leader to not only her students, but their families and her colleagues. This past year has been no exception —frankly, it highlighted her talents and gifts as an educator.

Jason Lee

Swanville High School



Jason has grown by leaps and bounds in the four and a half years he's been with our district. When he started, he had to learn a lot of things on the fly. He has demonstrated his ability to be adaptable and uses his creativity to expand his lessons continually.

Jolaineah Waltman

Swanville Elementary School



Jolaineah has developed into a very good teacher during her career at Swanville. This year she has worked hard at implementing technology in her class. She is very passionate about her students and works hard to see them succeed.

Denise Cheney

Upsala High School



As the band and choir director, Denise faced many challenges during the pandemic, challenges she was able to overcome through her creativity and passion for music. Through research, she was able to find ways to keep the students playing. Denise maintained a positive attitude through all the difficulties and made sure that the band played on.

Mark Herbes

Upsala Elementary School



Mark has been an elementary teacher at Upsala for over 40 years and during that time has had a positive impact on his students. His ability to connect goes above and beyond expectations. Ask any Upsala student who had Mr. Herbes and they can tell you about mean, median, and mode without skipping a beat.

Nicholas Bunio

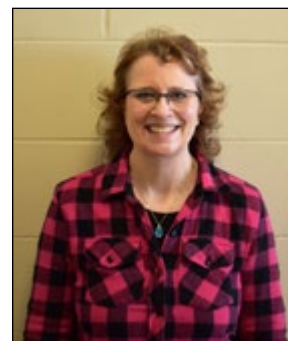
Verndale Elementary School



Nick is a strong educational leader who takes pride in his content delivery. His ability to connect with students shows through their music knowledge progression. Nick is dedicated and goes above and beyond to ensure he is meeting the needs of all students.

Kelly Youngbauer

Verndale High School



Kelly dedicates a tremendous amount of planning time to ensure her students receive the most relevant content on a daily basis. She is committed to the success of all of her students, and this shows through her enthusiasm and passion for education.

Sheri Holst

Wadena-Deer Creek High School



Sheri is the definition of a Teacher of Excellence. As a high school science teacher, she is tasked with helping students understand very difficult content. She has an incredible ability for doing this. No teacher in our school district does a better job of looking at standards and outcomes and helping our students achieve competency in them.

Fay Pary

Wadena-Deer Creek Elementary School



Fay works tirelessly to set up individualized programming for students and is always willing to lend a hand to colleagues. She makes her school better by learning all she can about best practices in her field of autism spectrum disorders and emotional behavioral disorders.

Alyssa Lissick

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Elementary School



Alyssa is a true teacher leader, with an influence that extends beyond her own classroom to others within WHA and elsewhere. She goes out of her way to communicate needs, as well as where she can serve and help others.

Debbie Petersen

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Secondary School



Debbie isn't afraid to try new things with her students and is always looking for ways to engage students with the content. She often gets her students out of the classroom and into the woods to help develop an appreciation for the outdoors. Debbie is a leader among her peers and beloved by her students.

Thank you

“Every year I’m blown away by the caliber of teachers, paraprofessionals, leaders, coaches, and teams at this event – and this year is absolutely no exception.

Each of you emulates exactly what it means to be not only successful, but to be an individual of strong character, conviction, and passion.”

— Dr. Chad Coquette, Sourcewell Executive Director/CEO



Sourcewell: We are driven to serve

Who is Sourcewell?

Sourcewell is the regional service cooperative for Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena counties. We are one of nine service cooperatives in the state. We partner with education, government, and nonprofits to boost student and community success. We offer training, student academic programming, and contracted services to our central-Minnesota members. Statewide, we provide a self-funded group health insurance option for public entities. Throughout North America, we offer technology solutions for schools, and a cooperative purchasing program for all public entities. Sourcewell staff aim to be force multipliers, empowering you to fulfill your public service mission to help your students, school, and community.

Our core services

- Cooperative Purchasing
- Community Solutions
- Education and Career and College Readiness
- Regional Low Incidence Project and Collaborative Service Workers
- Insurance and Employee Benefits
- Technology Solutions for Schools