

SERVING SCHOOLS, CITIES, COUNTIES, AND NON-PROFITS

# RESOURCE

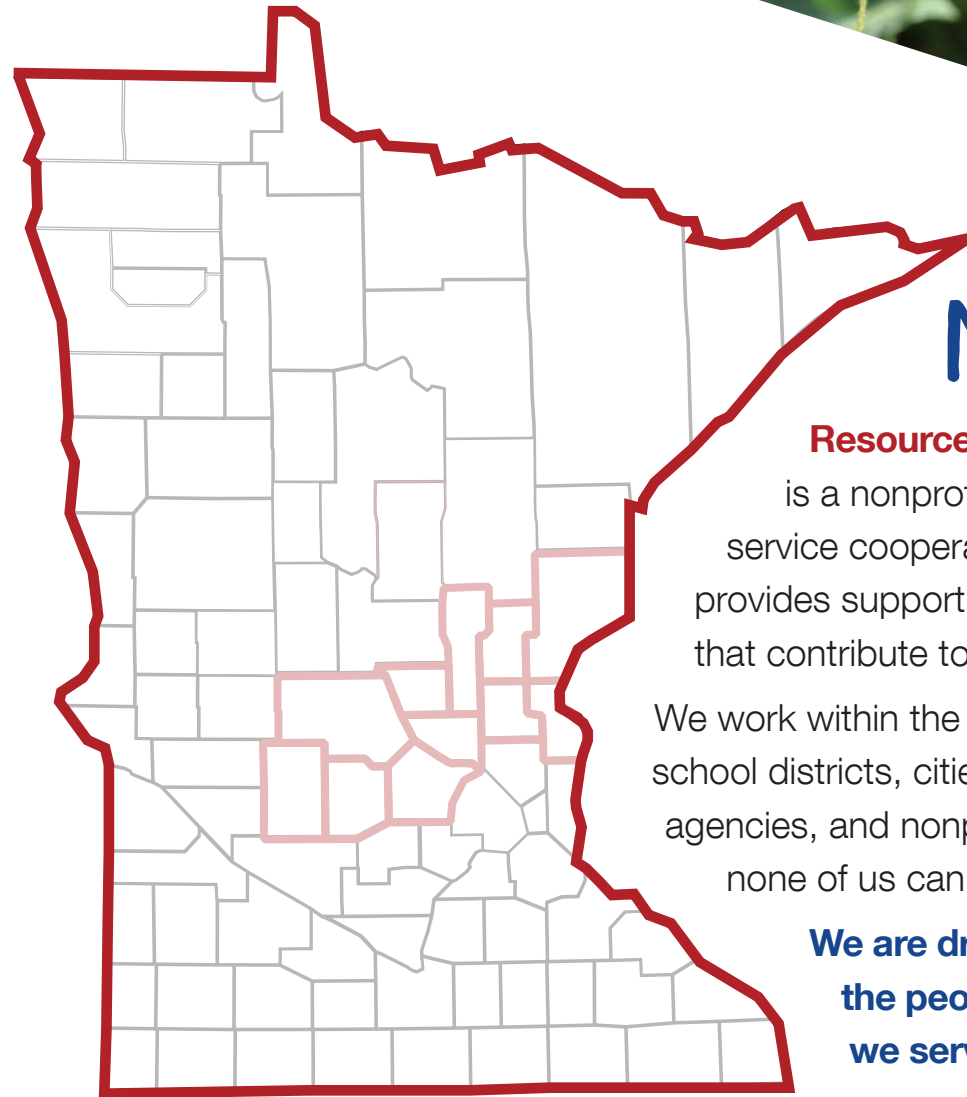
MAGAZINE

Fall 2018

## COLLABORATION

Mora Schools and  
Kanabec County work  
together to develop  
“Gardening is Science”  
Page 12





## MISSION

### Resource Training & Solutions

is a nonprofit, public, member-driven service cooperative in **Region 7** that provides support, services, and solutions that contribute to member success.

We work within the central Minnesota area with school districts, cities, counties, governmental agencies, and nonprofits to do together what none of us can do alone.

**We are driven to positively impact the people and communities we serve.**



**You can go faster alone, but further together.**

I learned this early in my career. As a mid-sized central Minnesota school district, my staff were often limited in their opportunities to network or hear from national level speakers.

To overcome these limitations, I worked cooperatively with two superintendents in adjacent school districts. Together, we coordinated a common staff development day for our three districts and combined our financial resources to bring in a national level speaker each year as our morning keynote, as well as many local and regional experts to conduct various breakout sessions throughout the day.

The result of this was an incredible level of sharing of knowledge and networking amongst fellow educators, and creating a shared resource pool for our staff to hear from experts from around the country. We had truly gone further together.

So why did this collaboration last only three years? Quite simply, it was too time consuming for each district. The coordination and planning of the conference required more time than the three districts' internal capacity could sustain.

That is what gets me so excited about the role we play at Resource Training and Solutions. We can bring our members together, foster collaboration, and respond to the needs of our members with sustainable solutions.

Every day, I get to see our members go further together. You'll find some of those stories here: Resource honors Mora Schools and Kanabec County, who worked together with many community members to establish a garden benefiting the community (see page 12). The BADGES program works to bring law enforcement and community members together to build positive relationships (see page 16). Fifty-two expert presenters share their creative skills with 1,500 local students at Resource's YAYA student conference (see page 22).

I look forward to what the next year will bring. Keep sharing your ideas and needs so we can uncover new opportunities to enhance our region.

Mark Schmitz  
Executive Director

**Volume 1 | Issue 1 | Fall 2018**

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**ON THE COVER:** Mora Elementary School 5<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher, Kayla Thor  
*Photo by Bethany Drake*

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# FAMILIAR FACES, FRESH IDEAS

## Chisago Lakes Schools Saves \$12,000

By Jennifer Morrisette Hesse

Wayne Warzecha was just doing his job by arming Resource members with good health and safety product information. But his advice delivered \$12,000 in savings last year to Chisago Lakes School District.

It started with Warzecha sharing a new safety data sheet (SDS) management system with Steve Mikutowski, director of Building and Grounds. "I like to make members aware of what's out there so they have good information upon which to base their decisions," Warzecha said.

Resource developed SDS Depot so school districts like Chisago Lakes Schools can access and add chemical inventory data faster and more simply by using barcode scanning technology. Organizations can manage this data remotely from cell phones or other devices, and Resource staff uploads product inventories for them. The service is especially appealing for organizations that have specialized information divided by building within a multi-site system.

As a service cooperative, Resource offers this robust system at a fraction of the cost of other systems. "We wanted to make our system affordable for everyone because we knew other products were very expensive, especially for smaller districts and organizations," said Scott George, director of Resource's Health and Safety department.

When Chisago Lakes Schools made the switch to SDS Depot, Mikutowski appreciated how Resource made the transition smooth and easy. Resource members can rely on Resource's health and safety team to provide forward-thinking solutions, guidance, and assistance at all levels. "The customer support Resource provides is very good," says Mikutowski. "Josh Baumann is always quick to respond and Wayne helped transfer the SDS information into the new system. He trained staff to use the service."

### More Savings with Safe Schools™ Training

Chisago Lakes Schools not only switched to SDS Depot upon Warzecha's suggestion, but also transitioned from a previously used safety training video series to Resource's Safe Schools™ option. The larger subject selection and improved video production quality of the Safe Schools™ program impressed Mikutowski. He believes the quality of employee training materials make better impressions on district employees who must often learn information quickly during mandatory sessions.





**Page 4:** Resource's health and safety team (front to back) includes Scott George, Wayne Warzecha, and Josh Baumann

**Above:** Chisago Lakes School District Building and Grounds Director, Steve Mikutowski

**Left:** Mikutowski scans a janitorial product using SDS Depot

“The quality of Resource’s services are better—and probably at a fraction of the cost.”

The district’s preparation with Resource enabled school leaders to deal with a surprise Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) visit. Chisago Lakes Schools passed this important assessment because of the advanced mock OSHA inspections they made with George’s expert guidance.

“Other organizations should really take a look at what Resource has to offer,” he says. “The quality of Resource’s services are better—and probably at a fraction of the cost.”

Learn more about Resource’s health and safety services at [www.resourcetraining.com](http://www.resourcetraining.com).



## 4 SYSTEM FEATURES

1. Digital and paperless
2. Superior customer support
3. Remote access from your device
4. Cost-efficient

Crow Wing County partners with Resource to revitalize work site wellness



# WELLNESS REBOOT

County social worker Lynn Nelson needs to check her blood pressure twice a day at work. Finding the private space that she needed within the Crow Wing County office buildings was a challenge. Human Resources Director Tami Laska wanted to change that for Nelson and the other 470 county workers who might need to do a similar health check, administer medication, use a breast pump, or just take a brief moment to regroup. Laska created a comprehensive work site wellness plan that included the creation of wellbeing rooms and more.

Research from sources like the Centers for Disease Control report that work site wellness programs may save on health care costs, but could do even more: they may transform

organizational culture by boosting retention, fostering engagement, and developing the good employee morale that is especially important for those who serve the public.

Laska wants county workers to know that their wellbeing is important, but she also knows good intentions only go so far. In 2017, she began a revitalization of the county’s wellness programming because only 35 percent of employees were engaged in wellness events and attendance at wellness planning meetings was declining. She wanted to see greater reach and impact with work site wellness efforts and she knew the program needed restructuring.

As a member of Resource Training & Solutions’ health insurance pool, Crow Wing County





**Above:** Seven of the 13 Crow Wing County WE committee members includes Abby Eggum, Darcy Dwyer, Sherry Smith, Erica Schmid, Jason Walkowiak, Miranda Neuwirth, and Steph Castillo

**Left:** Tami Laska (right) and Abby Eggum (left) proudly hold up Crow Wing County apparel



gains access to wellness funding, training, education, and networking tools that could help. Laska contacted the Resource wellness team to begin conducting a wellness strategic plan and enlisted the help of Abby Eggum, the county's human resources assistant.

### Employee Led

Eggum revived the county's wellness committee, "WE," with new and more diverse employee representation. The group now has more than 20 active volunteers who meet quarterly to execute projects and share vital employee input.

Committee members Sherry Smith and Darcy Dwyer share wellness news and information through the county's Intranet system and with an online wellness portal. Stacy Steil, wellness manager at Resource, says this kind of effective communication is essential to program success. "To have resources available to all employees 24/7, no matter their mobility on the job or work hours, allows equal access to information."

### Gauging Results

Eggum monitors program effectiveness and interest through surveys. She shares results with employees to nurture engagement and build goodwill. "We do care," she says. "To me, employees are the most important aspects of a wellness program."

Laska's wellness programming wish list included more than wellbeing rooms. She wanted to provide employees with healthy vending options, simple fitness tools to use at work or home, and wellness events employees found meaningful, like fitness challenges and blood drives.

Eggum made Laska's vision a reality, and employee feedback shows great appreciation for the wellness initiatives now in place. Current survey results show Crow Wing County's employee engagement is twice as high as for similar employers.

Proof of this appreciation is apparent. A group of workers regularly use the fitness space in the community services building to do a weighted hula-hoop workout. Feedback from the wellness survey information gathered during the planning stages indicated employees needed a place so they could stretch and move.

### Rethinking Work Site Wellness

Laska believes Resource's willingness to rethink work site wellness according to the county's specific needs was invaluable. Resource made many visits to Crow Wing County to help identify and assess spaces, provide insight on fitness equipment, and share resources that made program implementation easier. Eggum sees Resource as a true partner that was available and responsive to her. "Resource helped us get excited about the changes," Eggum says.

**"Resource helped us get excited about the changes."**

Laska hopes all of this work lays the foundation for even further healthy, positive change at Crow Wing County—be that physical, mental, or emotional. She is thrilled that the wellness programming creates a culture of engagement and fosters improved performance at her place of employment.

When it comes to a wellness programming reboot, she recommends beginning with the end in mind. "Reforming culture doesn't happen overnight, but small changes mean a lot and go a long way," she says.

## -- WELLBEING *at* WORK 6 ways to improve

**1. Alternate sitting and walking during the workday** Get up and walk for three minutes for every hour you sit at your desk.

**2. Eat lunch away from your desk** It helps you regain energy and refocus.

**3. How we communicate matters.**

Interpersonal connections are critical to wellbeing. Talk to co-workers in person instead of sending an email. Face-to-face interactions boost feel-good chemicals in our brains.

**4. Wipe your keyboard, mouse, and phone.**

Clean your work area weekly with disposable wipes and prevent the spread of germs that may make you sick.

**5. Before you go, make your list.** Take five minutes at the end of today to make your to-do list for tomorrow.

**6. Give your eyes a break.** Looking at a screen all day takes a toll on your eyes. Every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.



# For the Long Run

## Bethany Drake Makes Lasting Changes with Omada®

Resource health insurance pool members have asked for tools that help them stay healthier and positively influence their health, so when Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota recently introduced the Omada® program, Bethany Drake, Director of Operations and Program Development at Resource, decided to vet the program.

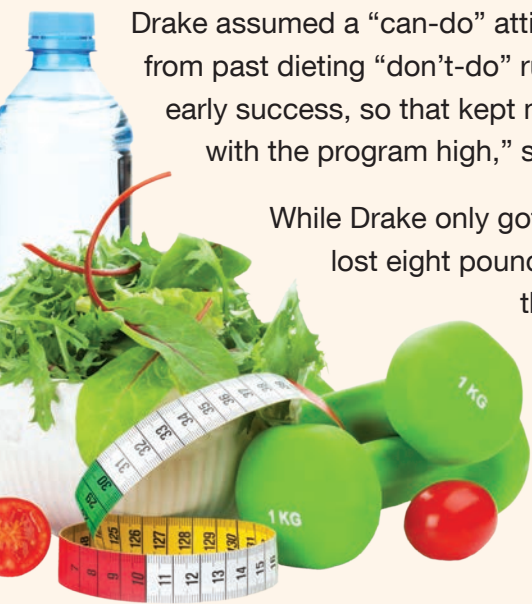
She wanted to see if Omada® could help her reduce some of her own risk factors for developing Type 2 diabetes and heart disease and deliver value to Resource members.

Omada® motivates participants to make small, sustainable behavioral changes with online support and coaching and reports that participants should lose seven percent of their body weight on average over the 16-week program.

Drake first reduced her intake of refined, processed carbohydrates and replaced them with mostly plant-sourced carbohydrates. She also increased her protein consumption while remaining less rigid on the weekends.

When thinking about her newfound nutritional modifications, Drake assumed a “can-do” attitude, a philosophical change from past dieting “don’t-do” rules. “My mindset helped fuel early success, so that kept my motivation to continue on with the program high,” she said.

While Drake only got a taste of the program, she lost eight pounds in three weeks and found the coaching and small changes truly helpful in creating a major shift in her behavior patterns. “Omada® is a well-designed program with easy-to-use technology tools,” she said.



# FAST FACTS

## Omada®



**PROVEN RESULTS**  
Omada® aligns with the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP). Losing even seven percent of total body weight helps lower the risk for developing Type 2 Diabetes.

## CONNECT WITH A GROUP

Assigned groups experience Omada® together and the full website is available when your group begins the program.



**CHARTING PROGRESS**  
Participants receive digital scales that connect wirelessly to an account through a cellular network.

Weigh-ins are transmitted to a private profile and reviewed by a health coach.

## VitalsSmartShopper®



**COMPARISON SHOP AND GET REWARDS** Cash rewards range from \$50 for mammograms, \$150 for CT scans, \$500 for spinal fusions, and the list goes on. Procedures may cost more at one provider versus another, but higher prices don't always buy better care.



**EARN CASH** If you choose a less expensive, qualifying procedure, you could be rewarded with hard, cold cash.

## EASY SCHEDULING

Assistants can help you schedule procedures or move a doctor's authorization.



Members of Resource's insurance pool have access to two new programs to help them improve their health and save money on healthcare. Omada® and VitalsSmartShopper®, rolled out by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, are available to school members starting October 1, 2018, and government and other nonprofit members starting January 1, 2019.



## What is Omada®?

Omada® is a 16-week digital lifestyle change program offered to qualifying members as well as their qualifying adult family members. This interactive program includes wireless smart scales, weekly online lessons, professional health coaching, and small group support that helps them reach the goals that matter most to them. The program's approach focuses on reducing the risks associated with Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Targeted areas of change encompass eating, activity, sleep, and stress.

Participants learn the fundamentals of smart food choices, how to increase daily movement, break mental barriers to change, find lasting motivation, and make healthy choices for life.



**vitalsmartshopper®**  
It pays to shop for better health care

## What is VitalsSmartShopper®?

VitalsSmartShopper® is a healthcare price searching and comparison reward program that gives consumers a cash incentive for choosing cost-effective healthcare options and supports an employer's overall value-focused benefit strategy.

When your healthcare provider recommends a medical service, visit VitalsSmartShopper® online or call a VitalsSmartShopper® Personal Assistant to help you find high-value options in your area. Choose a service or procedure based on the information VitalsSmartShopper® provides. Once your claim is paid, VitalsSmartShopper® verifies that the service location qualifies for an incentive and triggers a reward payment to you.







# How does this garden grow?

By Jennifer Morrisette Hesse  
Photos by Bethany Drake

**Resource honors Mora Schools and Kanabec County with the Bridge Award**



**Above right:** Kanabec County Extension Master Gardeners Val Prax (left) and Roberta “Ro” Haight (right)

**Photos above left to right:** Mora Elementary School “Gardening is Science” plot; Girl Scout Troop 850 volunteers Brie Struwve, Lauren Kohlgran, and Annelise Moe; Recovering Hope volunteers Tabitha Dick (left) and Sherry Bittner (right)

**“It’s the vegetable ladies!”**

Roberta “Ro” Haight, University of Minnesota Extension Kanabec County Master Gardener, recalls the excited greeting she and colleague, Valerie Prax received from Mora Elementary School students as they arrived for a classroom vegetable tasting

party. The students’ undeniable enthusiasm for garden vegetables is one reason why she considers the “Gardening is Science” program a success. Students learn the science behind how food grows, how collaboration brings good things to the community, and much more.

Resource Training & Solutions honored Kanabec County and Mora Schools with the Bridge Award for their work in developing the “Gardening is Science” project. The Bridge Award celebrates Resource member organizations who

advance innovative solutions, demonstrate meaningful community progress, and advocate for positive change going beyond regular responsibilities.





**LEARN MORE**

- ✓ Find the Kanabec County Master Gardeners on Facebook
- ✓ Start your own garden  
<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden>

**Far left:** Kanabec County and Extension Master Gardeners with the Bridge Award  
**Left:** Mora School Board members and Extension Master Gardeners with the Bridge Award

and Annelise Moe work in the garden and donate some of the produce to the Mora Food Shelf. “Our troop is able to stock the food shelf with fresh vegetables instead of processed food,” Moe said. “That is better for people.”

Haight also works with residents from Recovering Hope, an addiction treatment center for women. The residents also get the opportunity to learn about gardening and work in the Mora Elementary School garden over the summer. Sherry Bittner, a resident says, “The way Ro teaches is great. She takes her time to explain things and I love learning new things.” Fellow resident, Tabitha Dick, agrees and hopes the volunteer work leads to good job references later on.

“Being an addict, it’s a struggle to get back into society,” Bittner said. “For me, this work is a privilege and a chance to contribute.”

Thor credits the project’s extensive community collaboration to the team’s willingness to ask for help. “We’ve had so many groups step up,” she said. “My advice to anyone starting a project with community partners is to not be afraid to reach out for help.”

### Gardens Help Students

Haight and Prax wanted to get youth involved in gardening projects because of their ability to teach a multitude of concepts. They allow students to plan, make predictions, conduct experiments, practice math skills, discuss the history and politics of food production, and learn about nutrition.

Prax used the Junior Master Gardener curriculum from the Cooperative Extension at Texas A and M University as a planning starting point and inspiration for her own project. She presented her ideas to Mora Elementary School fifth grade teacher, Kayla Thor, who liked the idea of teaching students in the natural environment with hands-on planting experiences. “It amazes me how many kids don’t have gardening experience, even though we live in a rural community,” Thor said.

Principal Randy Qual supported Thor as she began collaborating with Prax and Mora Elementary Curriculum Director, Lois Adams, to develop their own gardening curriculum focusing on third and fifth grade science learning benchmarks.

### Building It Together

With a plan, the school secured initial grants for materials from the Mora

Education Foundation (MEF) and the Jeffers Foundation.

Many community partners came forward to get the garden started. The Mora High School Applied Math and Construction class designed and constructed six raised bed structures and D&M Excavating, a local business, donated the soil for filling them. Bassett’s Greenery in Mora donated seed packets. The Mora High School Agriculture and FFA loaned garden tools and a portable greenhouse to the group so classes could start seedlings. Parents of local Girl Scouts built a fence and a sign for the garden, and Mora Elementary art classes created ceramic pieces to decorate the plots.

### How Does this Garden Grow?

Thor’s students work with Prax and Haight to design garden plots by theme. One class chose “pizza” and planted tomatoes, onions, garlic, peppers, oregano, and basil. Another chose “dessert” and planted melons, carrots, beets, spearmint, and peppermint.

The students start seedlings, select plants, and learn how to transplant them in the garden plot. “Every kid has something to do. They are busy and interacting with the environment and each other. There is no

behavior management for me as their teacher, because everyone is engaged,” she explains.

The gardening curriculum includes exposure to vegetables that may be new to students, like jicama, and kale. Students learn not only about garden plants themselves, but also about healthy eating and nutrition. Research shows this leads them to taste produce that they wouldn’t otherwise choose and fosters lifelong healthy eating habits.

Students build on what they learn about with their own garden by taking field trips to other growing locations. Classes have toured Sapsucker Farms where they learn about beekeeping, apple growing, the maple syrup making process, hoop houses, and mushroom growing. They have traveled to see the WaterWays Exhibit at the Audubon Center of the Northwoods, and have toured the Mora Community Garden. Thor tries to expose students to wildlife, habitats, and the natural world that connect to the school garden plot but also extends beyond it.

### Community Partners

When the school year ends, and classes depart for summer vacation, community volunteers pitch in to keep the garden growing through its most important season. Girl Scout Troop 850 volunteers Brie Struwve, Lauren Kohlgran,

**Resource Bridge Award**

Learn more: [www.resourcetraining.com/Page/MemberAwards](http://www.resourcetraining.com/Page/MemberAwards)

Contact Member Care Coordinator, Martha Roth:  
(320) 255-3236 ext. 314 or [mroth@resourcetraining.com](mailto:mroth@resourcetraining.com)  
to nominate your organization for the Resource Bridge Award



# BADGES

## Creates Positive Payoff for Kanabec County



Collaboration is key in community outreach, but securing good volunteers can be challenging. The Kanabec County Sheriff's Office was looking for helpers for the "Shop with a Cop" program—a program that pairs underprivileged children with shopping companions to buy needed items during back-to-school time or the holidays. Deputy Justin Strom (pictured left) was initially reluctant to volunteer.

"My biggest hesitation was my time," he said. "Officers work many different schedules and spend a lot of time away from our own families as it is, so to volunteer on our days off seemed difficult."

Despite his reservations, Strom agreed to help. As he prepared to shop, a boy told him that he had never owned a new pair of shoes and always wore hand-me-downs. Strom imagined that a new pair of shoes would be the first item on the list. Instead, the young shopper asked for Strom's help to work out a budget so he could buy bed pillows for each of his family members because not everyone in his house had one.

Deputy Strom's attitude about volunteering for "Shop with a Cop" completely changed that day. "Showing kids that there are people in their community that care about them is great," Strom says. "The program helps teach

many of the kids how to budget and shop." Strom appreciates that his department supports this opportunity for officers to connect with local youth and build positive relationships.

"Shop with a Cop" is part of the Kanabec County Sheriff's Office's "Building Awareness to Develop, Grow, and Educate our Society" (BADGES) initiative. From the onset, program founder and former County Sheriff, Steve Schultz, saw collaboration as central to achieving the mission of BADGES. Schultz believed all sheriff's department employees could positively interact with the public in enjoyable community activities where both employees and citizens could participate. For example, sheriff department employees and community members are able to run in the annual "Running with the Law" 5k race or volunteer to help with it. Proceeds from the race benefit other outreach efforts in the county.



Learn more about BADGES at [www.kanabecounty.org/departments/community\\_outreach.php](http://www.kanabecounty.org/departments/community_outreach.php) or find the BADGES program on Facebook

"BADGES is a reason our community is safer and law enforcement is more approachable."



Want to volunteer for a BADGES activity?  
Contact Ashley Meier: (320) 679-8426 or [badges@co.kanabec.mn.us](mailto:badges@co.kanabec.mn.us)

Most importantly, BADGES seeks to change any negative perceptions about deputies that Kanabec County's citizens may retain based on media influences or past family experience with law enforcement. One of BADGES' goals is for youth to see officers as sources of help and guidance, and the program provides public training, education, and support through positive, volunteer-driven activities.

BADGES has come to flourish in Kanabec County, with now nearly weekly events and ongoing outreach efforts, including a fishing day, an annual 5k race, summer movies in the park, and much more.

Christine Sand from Mora High School says BADGES' positive community impact reaches

beyond just fun. "BADGES is a reason our community is safer and law enforcement is more approachable." Amber Aasen, Ogilvie High School counselor, agrees: "BADGES staff reach out to stay involved within the school. If I need help with an event, they will be the first to volunteer with smiles on their faces. Building these relationships has been so beneficial."

Ashley Meier, BADGES coordinator, hopes more community members start to volunteer alongside dedicated helpers like Deputy Strom, who now knows with certainty about the positive payoffs BADGES creates for Kanabec County. "People assume you need to be an employee to help, but anyone can volunteer."



# New Network

## Student support staff gain outlet to connect, grow

By Jennifer Morrisette Hesse

Students walk into school to a different reality than they did a generation ago. Mental health concerns are on the rise and students look to specially skilled staff members to help them process concerns and equip them with the needed tools to navigate challenges and grow.

### School counselors, social workers and student mental health professionals

provide extensive time, care, and attention to students in schools across central Minnesota. Now, they also are gaining the support they need to recharge, innovate, and better serve their students through a new professional network at Resource.

Resource developed the Student Support Network in response to requests from superintendents who saw the impact that Resource's other networks had on the educational professionals who participated in them.

"There is a growing need for social and emotional support in our schools," said Steve Malone, Ed.D., superintendent from the Becker school district. "This has led to more responsibilities for our social workers and guidance counselors. It is important to give them a group so they can support and learn from each other."

The Student Support Network is one of eight unique networks hosted by Resource each year to serve as connection and collaboration

vehicles for educational specialists who function in solo positions or outside of large teams.

"Networking is valuable because it eliminates the isolation that is often felt among specialists," said Michelle Wang, director of Educational Programs at Resource, "and it allows educational professionals to take care of their needs so they can better support those within their district."

Networks provide connections for participants throughout the year. Members ask questions of others in their field, dialogue on issues they're facing, and uncover new ideas. They share resources and recommendations with each other and receive support from other members of their professional community in a comfortable atmosphere.

They also gain specialized training as Resource occasionally hosts guest speakers on particular topics of interest—professional development that is not often available to solo professionals within their school environment.

"We want to provide support for our counselors and social workers who support our students," said Annette Freiheit, superintendent at Pine City Public Schools. "We want them to share strategies and actions that they find successful in working with them."



STUDENT SUPPORT  
**NETWORK**

## NETWORK IMPACT

for the 2017–18 school year

- 8 networks organized and hosted by Resource
- Serving 52 school districts
- 220 educational professionals involved in a network

"Networking is valuable because it eliminates the isolation that is often felt among specialists."

## LEARN MORE about all of Resource's networks

Contact Michelle Wang, Director of Educational Programs

(320) 255-3236 ext. 317 or [mwang@resourcetraining.com](mailto:mwang@resourcetraining.com) or visit [www.resourcetraining.com](http://www.resourcetraining.com)



# YOUNG AUTHORS YOUNG ARTISTS (YAYA) CONFERENCE

# STUDENTS EXPLORE CREATIVE FIELDS



With pens in hand, students began writing their own tales, chuckling as their plots thickened. A room away, another group designed their own cartoon characters while others explored the power of animation.

All of them imagining where this could take them some day—a published writer, a Disney animator, or a sports broadcaster.

The possibilities seemed limitless for the nearly 1,500 students at the 2018 Young Authors Youth Artists (YAYA) Conference in May at the College of Saint Benedict. Resource Training and Solutions convened 52 creative professionals to present for this annual event that exposes third

through sixth graders in central Minnesota to a multitude of writing and illustrating activities. This year's event engaged students from 53 schools in specialty breakout sessions covering a variety of creative fields from journalism, cartooning and animation to performance arts, song writing, and publishing.

Keynote Leah Olsen helped the students envision where their creative passions could take them. A professional sports broadcaster and founder of "Rethink the Win," Leah inspired students with her message.

Here's a look at the conference from the perspectives of a student, her mom, and a teacher.



## Hattie Dietz Student St. Francis Xavier School, Sartell

When working on a drawing or writing in her journal, Hattie Dietz now knows a secret tip that helps her come up with exceptional ideas.

"When you have an idea, stick with it, keep adding on to it, and see where it goes," she says. It's a new way of thinking that she learned as a fifth grader attending YAYA.

When she first considered going to the conference, she thought the day might be boring—but during the day, quickly changed her mind. "It was really fun!" she said.

While she enjoyed all of her sessions, she has a definite favorite: the "Bring Your Cartoons to Life" session because she got to draw.

At YAYA, she had an entire day to be creative and try new ways to express herself. Besides that, she felt comfortable navigating the college campus with her friends at YAYA, and that freedom builds her confidence. She says she would definitely attend YAYA again, and encourages her friends to do the same.



Would your school like to participate  
in all that YAYA has to offer?  
Contact Deb Thomes, Educational Programs Manager  
(320) 255-3236 ext. 330 or [dthomes@resourcetraining.com](mailto:dthomes@resourcetraining.com)

Learn more about all of Resource's  
student conferences and programs:

[www.resourcetraining.com](http://www.resourcetraining.com)

### Judy Broekemeier

Retired teacher, Mora Schools  
Presenter at YAYA

Judy Broekemeier has always loved working with students in a creative capacity as an art teacher, but when she attended her first YAYA conference as a chaperone and saw how excited and engaged the students became during their sessions, she just knew she needed to be a part of the event by sharing her own knowledge within a teaching role.

She began presenting on prehistoric rock artists, petroglyphs, and pictographs. In her sessions, students tell their own stories by painting symbols on rocks that depict events in their lives or communicate something about themselves as people. "There's just something special about the material," Broekemeier says. Students are always interested in telling personal stories on material other than paper.

"In my session, kids enjoy the varied media and having time to express themselves," she says. "They make connections to relevant symbols in their world."

Broekemeier feels the experiences students have at YAYA are vital because they expand classroom learning and expose participants to new ways of thinking. "YAYA is an amazing experience for students, presenters, volunteers, and staff. The day is a great opportunity for all of us."



"I never thought I'd be so comfortable just letting them go, even though they were on a college campus, but I was because everything was organized."



### Trina Dietz

Chaperone and parent  
St. Francis Xavier School, Sartell

After sending her oldest child to YAYA, Trina Dietz wanted to experience the conference herself. She joined her fifth grade daughter's class to see the event close up.

"I think good communication skills are so important, and I appreciate that kids who are good at art and writing 'get to belong' at YAYA," says Dietz, a mother of three and communications professional from Sartell.

Dietz also says she was impressed by how well organized the conference was. Chaperones may

attend breakout sessions with students, but Dietz felt very at ease in allowing students to get to their sessions on their own. "I never thought I'd be so comfortable just letting them go, even though they were on a college campus, but I was because everything was organized."

At the end of the day, Dietz knew her daughter and class learned a lot as they excitedly talked about the day and drew in their journals on the bus ride back to Sartell. "YAYA clearly energized their passion," she says.







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*Photo by Bethany Drake*