

# The Exchange

A PUBLICATION OF SYNERGY & LEADERSHIP EXCHANGE



## Outstanding Educators Receive Awards Totaling \$70,000

**O**n Oct. 15, educators from Minnesota received \$10,000 awards from the WEM Foundation at the 13th Annual WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Brunch held at the Oak Ridge Conference Center in Chaska.

Educators and academic coaches from Lakes International Language Academy, Le Sueur-Henderson, Mahtomedi, Mankato, Mountain Lake, St. Paul and West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area were recognized for their outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student achievement.

Two honorees were named in each of three categories: The Teacher Achievement

Award recognizes exemplary teachers who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement; the Academic Challenge Coach Award recognizes classroom teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges endorsed by the Minnesota Academic League Council; and the Ethics in Education Award recognizes exemplary educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum. In addition, this year the WEM Foundation presented the Excellence in Education Award, which recognizes superior contributions of educators whose leadership and dedication inspire a spirit of learning in students of all backgrounds and abilities outside the traditional education system and classroom.

The 2011 WEM Foundation Outstanding Educator Award honorees are:

### Teacher Achievement Award:



Ikhlas Abdelkhalig currently teaches first grade at Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School in Eagan where she has been teaching for six years.



Her principal stated, “Some people spend many years learning how to teach and some people just naturally know how to teach. Ikhlas is one of those people who just naturally knows how to teach. One has to spend time in Ikhlas’ first grade classroom to truly appreciate her talent as a teacher, to see her skill as an instructional leader and to experience her passion for learning.”



Scot Hovan is a Physics teacher at Mahtomedi High School. He has been teaching for 15 years.

His students wrote, “As two seniors whose

academic loyalties lie with the languages and humanities, we never expected to be the least bit interested by physics. Yet after just a week of class with Mr. Hovan, we were suddenly interested, motivated and enthusiastic about science.”

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**Academic Challenge Coach Award:**



Thomas D. Appel is an agricultural education instructor at Mountain Lake High School. He is being honored for his work with the Mountain Lake FFA Chapter where he has been the advisor for

the past 30 years.

A colleague expressed, "When I think of this honor for outstanding academic coach, I picture a person who has helped people achieve successes in their life. This is true for Tom."

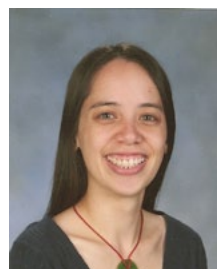


Vergene L. Downs is a gifted and talented specialist at Benjamin E. Mays International Magnet School in St. Paul. She is being honored for her work with FIRST LEGO League and

Math Masters.

One of her students explained, "When I was in a LEGO competition, she motivated me and my friends all the way! She's inspired me since I got to this school."

**Ethics in Education Award:**



Kristina Lee Kofski is currently a sixth grade teacher at Lakes International Language Academy in Forest Lake. She has been teaching for nine years. She was a regional WEM

honoree in 2010.

A parent shared that "Kristina personifies ethical behavior every day and strives for ethical development of all students through classroom interaction, school activities and by adding her own flair to the set curriculum."



Tania K. Lyon teaches Advanced Placement Language and Composition, American Literature and newspaper courses to students in grades 10-12 at Mankato West High

School. She has been teaching for 20 years. Tania was a 2010 WEM Ethics in Education regional honoree.

Her principal said, "In reflection on the ethical values of Dr. Lyon, I am reminded of her clear passion for working with students to help them break down their own stereotypes, reflect on themselves, and act in different ways based on what they know in relation to social inequalities and social issues."

**Excellence in Education Award:**



Art & Barb Straub are the quiet volunteers, known up and down the Minnesota River Valley for their enthusiasm and love

of nature. The Straubs have been living, working, volunteering, educating and contributing in the Le Sueur-Henderson area for decades. Although retired from their formal teaching positions, both remain passionate about education, particularly nature-based education. They have expanded their audience from working with children to educating people of all ages, from preschoolers to the elderly. Students love their furs, feathers, stuffed birds and other artifacts that aide in learning. Students say, "I like their classes because they are very excited about nature and science,; and "Art and Barb are very kind to everyone and will accept anyone who walks into their classroom."

The WEM Outstanding Educator Awards program was created by the WEM

Foundation and is administered by Synergy & Leadership Exchange in partnership with The Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC). The WEM Foundation supports teachers and acknowledges their important role in helping all children achieve academically. The awards program, now in its 13th year, has helped recognize education's often "unsung heroes," educators who meet the challenges and opportunities of teaching in a variety of settings.

Educators are nominated for the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program by students, parents, colleagues or community members. Those who accept the nomination provide additional information for review and consideration by Synergy & Leadership Exchange and a blue ribbon selection panel, which reviews and ranks the nominees.

In addition to the six statewide honorees, 10 additional educators were honored earlier this year as 2011 semi-finalists and each received a \$1,000 award.

**Academic Challenge Coach Award**

Christopher Lenius – Chaska High School and Chanhassen High School, Eastern Carver County Schools  
Robert Ihrig – Mankato West High School, Mankato Area Public Schools  
Patrick Hiltner – Lincoln Junior High School, Glencoe-Silver Lake Public Schools

**Ethics in Education Award**

Christine Butler – Sibley East High School, Sibley East Schools

**Teacher Achievement Award**

Eric Koser – Mankato West High School, Mankato Area Public Schools  
Rick Purrington – Marshall High School, Marshall Public Schools  
Nora Whalen – Avalon School, St. Paul  
Alece Henderson – Noble Academy, Minneapolis  
Ken Ahlberg – Hermantown Middle School and High School, Hermantown Community Schools  
Katie Zuehlke – Bendix Elementary, Annandale Public Schools

**Nominate an Outstanding Educator Today!**

Do you know educators who are making a difference in the lives of students? Nominate them for a WEM Outstanding Educator Award. If chosen as a state honoree, they could win \$10,000.

Visit [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org) and click on WEM Foundation Outstanding Educator Awards under the Celebrate tab to place your nomination! Nomination deadline for the 2012 awards program is Feb. 6, 2012. Nominations are accepted year-round.

**Minnesota Schools Honored at National Character Conference**

By Joyce Swenson

**S**an Francisco was the backdrop for the Character Education Partnership's (CEP) 18th National Forum on Character Education Oct. 19-22.

Lakes International Language Academy (LILA), a 2011 Minnesota School of Character and Promising Practice award recipient, attended and was honored as a NSOC finalist and Promising Practice honoree. Also attending were Sibley East High School representatives who received national honors for their Promising Practice, "Sibley East School Garden." Three other Minnesota schools, Area Learning Center in Northfield, Shirley Hills Primary in Mound and The Blake School in Minneapolis, were also honored for their Promising Practices.

LILA is a Spanish Immersion charter school in the northwest suburbs of the Twin Cities, MN. LILA was also recognized as a 2010 National School of Character "Profiles in Character" award winner by CEP. Only 18 schools across the United States were selected for the honor, which was based on an evaluation of each school's strengths in areas such as social-emotional learning or meeting individual student needs within the CEP's Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education. LILA is one of Minnesota's fastest growing and highest performing schools.

The Sibley East School Garden began in 2010 when the Agriculture Department planted a one acre vegetable garden with the intention of providing fresh vegetables for the school lunch program. The program gave many students from different paths of life the opportunity to communicate, help each other and work together on a common goal. It increased classroom attendance and grades in students who were struggling and resulted in a more positive attitude towards school. Students became specialists in something, built confidence and used a positive attitude to educate others about a subject. The school garden provided a great teaching tool to enrich curriculum, improve physical health and build character.

Representatives from 39 states, nine foreign countries and Puerto Rico celebrated three days of learning about character education and networking with passionate proponents at the National Forum. Synergy staff attended in support of the Minnesota honorees and also presented a breakout session titled, "Synergize Your State's Character Footprint." This session represented work of the organization on the MN State Schools of Character and Promising Practices award program along with the Ethical Citizens for Minnesota's Future initiative.



Julie Lundgren accepts the NSOC finalist and Promising Practice awards for Lakes International Language Academy at CEP's National Forum.



Sibley East students work together to maintain the School Garden.

## School and Community Character Education Practices Honored at the State Capitol

On May 19, Synergy & Leadership Exchange (formerly the Center for Academic Excellence), in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), held the fourth annual Minnesota State Schools of Character and Promising Practices Award Ceremony in the Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda.

Special guest speakers included Deputy Commissioner of Education Jessie Montano and Secretary of State Mark Richie. Montano and Richie joined Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy) Executive Director Les Martisko and Director Wanda Sommers Wall in congratulating the honorees and distributing recognition awards to schools in Minnesota for the successful implementation of character education programs. A reception followed the ceremony in the Minnesota State Capitol Great Hall.

Laura Bloomberg, co-chair of the Ethical Citizens for Minnesota's Future initiative, presented the first Minnesota Ethical Citizens Award to Speak Your Peace: The Civility Project. Senator Roger Reinert accepted the award on behalf of the Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation and the Millennium group

2011 honorees included:

### 2011 Minnesota School of Character

- Lakes International Language Academy, Forest Lake

### 2011 Honorable Mention – Minnesota School of Character

- Waseca High School, Waseca

### 2011 Minnesota Promising Practice Awards

- The Blake School, Minneapolis for The Service Paths: Reflection and Recognition
- Lakes International Language Academy, Forest Lake for Classroom Agreements and The Action Cycle
- Northfield Area Learning Center, Northfield for Soy Scents Candle Company
- Northfield Middle School, Northfield for Systematic Student Management Plan
- Shirley Hills Primary, Mound for Caring for Our Community
- Sibley East High School, Arlington for Sibley East School Garden

In addition, Lakes International Language Academy was selected as one of 50 National Schools of Character (NSOC) finalists by the Character Education Partnership (CEP). They were recognized at CEP's 18th National Forum as a school on the NSOC path to excellence Oct. 20-22 in San Francisco.



Shirley Hills Primary



Sibley East High School



Waseca High School



Lakes International Language Academy, Forest Lake



Northfield Middle School



Northfield ALC



Waseca High School

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Secretary of State Mark Ritchie addresses the honorees and guests.



Dignitaries from around the state congratulated the 2011 honorees.



Honorees and guests celebrate character education in Minnesota

The Minnesota State Schools of Character Award is modeled after the National Schools of Character (NSOC) program sponsored by CEP and based on their Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education. The program recognizes schools and/or districts that excel in exemplifying the eleven principles and demonstrate outstanding character education initiatives, yielding positive results in student behavior, school climate and academic performance. Program requirements mirror those of the national award and state award winners are forwarded for national consideration. National honorees were announced in June.

The Minnesota Promising Practices Award recognizes schools in Minnesota that have developed and implemented a practice promoting character development in their schools. These practices must be specific, unique and transferable, provide measurable results and impact, and encompass at least one of the eleven principles.



Deputy Commissioner of Education Jessie Montano

## Speak Your Peace: The Civility Project Receives First Minnesota Ethical Citizens Award

On May 19, Ethical Citizens for Minnesota's Future, as part of the Minnesota Schools of Character and Promising Practices Awards Ceremony, presented the first Minnesota Ethical Citizens Award to Speak Your Peace: The Civility Project (SYP). The SYP campaign was developed by the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation and the Millennium Group to improve the civility of public discourse by promoting nine tools of civility that support respectful communication. Expecting people to have differences of opinion, the campaign adopted the slogan, "It's not what you say. It's how you say it," to encourage disagreeing in a healthy and civil manner. Since its kickoff in 2003, the nine tools have been adopted by city councils, county commissions and school boards as ground rules for meetings. Additionally, SYP curriculum has been provided to schools, and thousands of wallet cards and other items promoting SYP have been distributed. To learn more about this project, visit SYP's website at <http://www.dsaspeakyourpeace.org>.



Senator Roger Reinert accepts Minnesota Ethical Citizens Award on behalf of the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation and Millennium Group.

**NOMINATIONS** are now being accepted for the 2012 Minnesota Ethical Citizen Award, which will be presented on May 17, 2012 at the State Capitol. This award recognizes work that exhibits evidence of community-wide collaboration, can be replicated and demonstrates impact on the development of good character and ethical leadership. To nominate an individual or organization for this award, please visit [www.synergyexchange.org/Collaborate/EthicalCitizens.aspx](http://www.synergyexchange.org/Collaborate/EthicalCitizens.aspx) to download and submit the form. Nominations are due April 1.

## Promising Practice Applications Sought

As part of the Minnesota Schools of Character recognition program, Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy) is also awarding Promising Practices Awards. These awards recognize schools in Minnesota that have developed and implemented a specific practice that promotes character development in their schools. These practices must be: specific, unique and transferable, provide measurable results and impact, and encompass at least one of the eleven principles.

Synergy is currently seeking schools and districts to make application for the 2012 Promising Practices awards programs. Share specific practices that promote character development in your school or district by applying for the Promising Practices Award. Applications may be downloaded by visiting [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org). The Minnesota Promising Practices application deadline is March 1. Visit the Synergy website for details.



## Ethical Citizens for Minnesota's Future Initiative

Ethical Citizens for Minnesota's Future (ECMF) is a multi-sector initiative promoting good character in our citizens and leaders. The initiative's focus is to encourage individuals and organizations to make decisions that positively impact themselves and others. ECMF's efforts are concentrated on developing, supporting and celebrating efforts of good character across the state. More than 70 individuals and organizations have endorsed the initiative's vision, mission and goals. Visit [www.synergyexchange.org/Collaborate/EthicalCitizens.aspx](http://www.synergyexchange.org/Collaborate/EthicalCitizens.aspx) to learn more about the initiative and sign on as an endorser!



### ECMF Featured Resources:

*Featured Resources* is designed to support your ongoing efforts to promote good character in our citizens and ethical leadership in our organizations and institutions. Future updates will contain information and links for resources such as articles, curricula and other tools for educators, families, schools, businesses and others. This information is being provided for information sharing purposes. *Synergy & Leadership Exchange does not endorse any specific product, company or candidate.* Send your ideas for future Updates to [bbergseth@synergyexchange.org](mailto:bbergseth@synergyexchange.org). Thank you for all you do to make Minnesota a 21st Century leader!

#### Be Big!

A national campaign to make the world a better place. Based on the Clifford book character, Clifford's Big Ideas include: share, play fair, have respect, work together, be responsible, be a good friend, help others, be truthful, be kind, believe in yourself. Be Big in Your Community Contest, free lesson plans for teachers, and other resources. <http://www.scholastic.com/cliffordbebig/>

#### ACT (Assets Coming Together) for Youth

A positive youth development initiative that helps communities create the conditions for young people to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Features include research and free publications and presentations on topics ranging from adolescent development to youth engagement. <http://www.actforyouth.net>

#### Cyber Smart!

Free resource on cyber-bullying including a K-12 curriculum and prevention activities for school, families and community. <http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/cyberbullying/ncaa/>

#### Ethics Resource Center (ERC)

A private, nonprofit organization devoted to independent research and the advancement of high ethical standards and practices in public and private institutions. Online resources include newsletters, webcasts, publications, and an ethics toolkit with tools to design an organizational ethics program. Research includes the National Business Ethics Survey. <http://www.ethics.org/>

#### Hope survey

A tool for schools to assess school environments by measuring student perceptions of autonomy, belongingness and goal orientations as well as their resulting engagement in learning and disposition toward achievement. <http://www.hopesurvey.org/about-the-hope-survey>

#### Articles:

- Schools add student-leader training
- Doing the Ethical Thing May Be Right, but It Isn't Automatic
- Culturally Responsive Teaching Awards

**Legislation:** H.R. 2437: *Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2011* is a bill to support evidence-based social and emotional learning programming. It was introduced and referred to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education.

## Annual Gathering of Champions Recognizes Academic Achievement in Minnesota's Students

Students were the stars Aug. 5 at the Mall of America during the 20th Annual Gathering of Champions sponsored by Synergy & Leadership Exchange (formerly the Center for Academic Excellence). The recognition ceremony honored students nominated by their educators and academic coaches as Academic All-Stars.

More than 3,000 students, friends and family attended one of 10 45-minute shows where All-Stars and their guests enjoyed entertainment by Peter Bloedel of Perpetual Vaudeville, followed by Minnesota trivia questions where students had the chance to win exciting prizes donated by universities, companies and organizations throughout the state. Each ceremony included VIPs from education, business and industry, including the Assistant Commissioner of Education Rose Chu, executive directors from educational organizations, Minnesota Academic League Affiliates and state award-winning students, who congratulated the 2011 All-Stars. More than 50 VIPs congratulated the All-Stars while Ameriprise Financial retirees served as volunteers for the recognition event.

The ceremonies closed with the All-Stars walking across the stage, shaking hands with the VIPs and receiving their certificates of achievement. As they exited The Great Room, All-Stars signed their names on the giant roster of All-Stars and returning All-Stars enjoyed searching for their names on the banners from previous years.

Before and after attending their recognition ceremony, All-Stars and their guests enjoyed discounts at stores throughout the mall and rides in Nickelodeon Universe®.

Founded in 1990, the annual Gathering of Champions event is designed to recognize and celebrate the academic excellence of K-12 students statewide. Students were selected as Minnesota's Academic All-Stars by their schools, with the recommended selection criteria including: top academic achievers, as measured by school policy or practice; students who have made a dramatic, positive turnaround in their academic work and achievement; or students who have finished first in a regional, state, national or international academic competition endorsed by the Minnesota Academic League.



### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:



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THE 2011 GATHERING OF CHAMPIONS IS SUPPORTED IN TOTAL BY VOLUNTEERS AND SPONSORS.



## Cast Your Vote for the 2012 Gathering of Champions Logo Contest

Entries have been submitted by MN students, and now it's your chance to help choose the winning design! The winning entry will become the logo for the 2012 event. It will be featured on programs, t-shirts, magnets, banners, certificates and other promotional materials. Vote today at [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org).

## Nominate Your Students as Academic All-Stars and Join Us at The 2012 Gathering of Champions August 3!

To nominate your students for the 2012 Gathering of Champions, please look for our email broadcast in March or visit [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org) for details.



## Would You Like Your Program to Be Part of Reach for the Stars?

The Minnesota Academic League Council accepts for endorsement academic challenges and competitions, awards and recognitions, classroom enrichment, conferences and institutes, and leadership development programs available on a statewide basis in Minnesota. To download an endorsement inquiry form, please visit: [www.http://synergyexchange.org/Educate/AcademicLeague.aspx](http://www.http://synergyexchange.org/Educate/AcademicLeague.aspx)

The print version of Reach for the Stars is distributed directly to every public school district in Minnesota, to our member schools and districts, and to public, private and charter schools through our partnering education associations and service providers. In addition, Reach for the Stars is available in an electronic format at our website [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org).

## Thank you to our 2011-2012 Reach for the Stars Affiliates, whose donations help defray the catalogue publication fees.

Academic Decathlon  
 Academic Triathlon Challenger/Cross Trainer  
 Concordia Language Villages  
 Continental Math League  
 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program, Minnesota State Contest  
 Gathering of Champions  
 LifeSmarts  
 Math Masters  
 MATHCOUNTS  
 Minnesota FCCLA  
 Minnesota Future Problem Solving  
 Minnesota High School Music Listening Contest  
 Minnesota Regional Future City Competition (FCC)  
 Minnesota Student Inventors Congress  
 Minnesota YMCA Model Assembly  
 Minnesota YMCA Model United Nations  
 Mock Trial Program  
 MTEEA Super Mileage Challenge  
 National Current Events League  
 National Geography Challenge  
 National Language Arts League  
 National Science League  
 National Social Studies League  
 Scholars of distinction Award Program  
 School Chess Association  
 WordMasters Challenge  
 World Savvy Challenge  
 Work for Water Art and Design Contest  
 Youth Energy Summit

### Affiliates:

Don't forget to send us your program news items for future editions of "The Exchange." Photos are welcome. Be sure to include captions.



Visit the Synergy & Leadership Exchange page on Facebook and become a fan!

## News from Reach for the Stars Affiliates

### Math competitions add up to fun!

Every year, Math Masters of Minnesota provides Math competitions for 5th and 6th grade students. There are 39 sites throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin that will host competitions this spring. Math Masters is designed to challenge students to use critical thinking and problem solving skills as well as give recognition for academic effort and achievement. These competitions are the culmination of special preparation during which students work to improve their math skills.



Students are excited to be able to join teammates throughout the year to work on Math.

"It's fun. Math is one of my stronger subjects. I especially like being able to get together with friends and work on the problems," said Ben, a fifth grader from Albert Lea.

Math Masters of Minnesota started in 1995 and continues to grow every year. It provides a fun competitive atmosphere and every student who participates in the competition receives a t-shirt, pencil and participation certificate. Students who score highest at each site are awarded plaques, medallions and ribbons. Last year, Math Masters awarded the top

scorers statewide with Minnesota Twins tickets. These students were recognized during the game.

Coaches, students and parents share through evaluations how much they appreciate the Math Masters experience. Teachers and parents express their appreciation for the opportunities offered by Math Masters through a competition in math at these grade levels.

There is a competition in your area! For more information on Math Masters of Minnesota go to [www.mathmastersmn.org](http://www.mathmastersmn.org), e-mail [mathmasters@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:mathmasters@austin.k12.mn.us) or call 507-460-1843 or 507-884-9932.

### Did you know?

- There are more than 39 sites hosting Math Masters competitions in the spring of 2012.
- More than 5,000 5th and 6th graders throughout Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin will compete in Math Masters.
- Math Masters is designed to provide educational resources and opportunities for young students.
- Students compete both as individuals and teams.
- Math Masters of Minnesota provides practice materials that help coaches prepare students.
- MN Statute 126C.10 2(b) provides funding to school districts for gifted and talented education. It is possible for districts to use these funds for expenses associated with Math Masters of Minnesota.
- Math Masters has been motivating students since 1995.
- Registration begins in late September. Go to [www.mathmastersmn.org](http://www.mathmastersmn.org) to register!
- Register early as some sites fill up quickly!

## MATHCOUNTS Meets Minnesota's Midway Stadium

If the first six jersey numbers are 1, 2, 5, 10, 17 and 26, then what is the seventh jersey number?

That was the math question posed at Minnesota's Midway Stadium, home of the St. Paul Saints minor league baseball team. In early summer, the Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers (MnSPE) held a fun spring social with their families and other members of the Minnesota Federation of Engineering, Science, and Technology Societies ([www.mfests.org](http://www.mfests.org)). The engineers held a tailgating picnic beforehand.

The Saints are known for holding a variety of wacky events during the game. At this particular game, Midway Stadium posted on their scoreboard a baseball-related math question while the engineering groups were introduced to the crowd.

When the question was announced, the MATHCOUNTS logo was also displayed. This was a great way to recognize the group of engineers and MATHCOUNTS chapter coordinators while doing something fun and math-related that gave MATHCOUNTS some good exposure.

Katie Jamieson, Minnesota state MATHCOUNTS coordinator, spearheaded the effort. She is the associate director with the Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers and is in her eighth year of coordinating MATHCOUNTS in Minnesota. She oversees chapter competitions and plans and runs the state competition. *The answer to the math question? 37.*



## Enrichment In and Out of the Classroom

By Cheryl Whitesitt

We are often asked how some coaches get so much time to prepare their students for an academic competition. Kids are busy these days, especially in the middle and high school years. They have jobs, their music and often sports. We feel that we are spending more energy on competing for time than on preparing for the competition.

The MN Future Problem Solving Program (FPSP) believes that it's more than the trophy. Yes, it's nice to win, but the real trophy is sending kids off with real life problem solving skills; creative, critical thinking skills. We also believe that all students need these skills. So how do we go about reaching all students? I'm excited to report that we now offer a course.

This course is a curriculum for the classroom, targeted for middle level students the equivalent of grades 5-8. (In this article I will remain focused on this age group. Contact [cheryl@mnfpssp.org](mailto:cheryl@mnfpssp.org) for suggestions for younger and older students.) The course includes a "Preparation for Problem Solving" section which includes seven activities and is followed by eight full problem solving experiences – five experiences are based on pieces of literature of increasing sophistication, and three experiences are focused on real-world topics. The material is flexible and can be implemented in a variety of ways.

Several possibilities for implementing the course:

- 1. Full Semester Course:** A full-time course that meets for the equivalent of a semester of 18 weeks. This timeline allows for the incorporation of many of the extension activities. Without using those activities, the course may fit into a 12 week session.
- 2. Year-Long Integration:** Integrated throughout the year in a classroom or core subject area
- 3. Two-Year Implementation:**
  - a. Year 1: "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 1-4"
  - b. Year 2: Review of "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 5-8"
- 4. Three-Year Implementation:**
  - a. Year 1: "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 1-2"
  - b. Year 2: Review of "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 3-5"
  - c. Year 3: Review of "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 6-8"
- 5. Four-Year Implementation:**
  - a. Year 1: "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 1-2"
  - b. Year 2: Review of "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 3-4"
  - c. Year 3: Review of "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 5-6"
  - d. Year 4: Review of "Preparation for Problem Solving" and "Problem Solving Experiences 7-8"
- 6. Cross-Curricular Studies:**
  - a. Language Arts: "Preparation for Problem Solving" and the first five problem solving experiences, which are based on literature
  - b. Science: "Problem Solving Experience 6," about smart clothes
  - c. Social Studies: "Problem Solving Experiences 7/8," about digital music rights and prejudice

It is not necessary to complete every activity or experience. If you decide to skip some of them, it is recommended that you review the missed experience to see what new skills or extensions of skills are introduced so that you can include those in your next set of activities.

Competitive Problem Solving: This course is intended as instructional material. However, the instruction does parallel skills needed for competition. Students could move from this curriculum into competitive problem solving at any point if there is an interest in doing so. Problem Solving Experience 8, the final one, includes information on competitive evaluation and could serve as a strong transition into competitive problem solving. It is not necessary to complete this entire course before considering a competitive program.

Check out our website at: [www.mnfpssp.org](http://www.mnfpssp.org) for more information about engaging your students in real life challenges while having fun doing it!



## MN Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) hosts National Cluster Conference in November

MN FCCLA members hosted the National FCCLA Cluster Conference in Minneapolis in November. Over 1,900 youth attended from many states to learn more about programs areas such as STOP the Violence, and Student Body to Eat Right, Be Fit and Make Healthy choices. Other workshops to teach members ways to utilize technology in projects, develop service-learning community, and participate in competitive events. More information about MN FCCLA is available on [www.mnfccla.org](http://www.mnfccla.org).

### National FCCLA President is Minnesota FCCLA member

Kaylen Larson from East Grand Forks, MN was chosen National FCCLA President of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America through a rigorous election process at the annual conference in July. Kaylen is a senior at East Grand Forks HS and previously was a MN FCCLA State Officer who provided leadership for service-learning projects throughout the state. Kaylen is one of 10 national officers who have made social media efforts part of their annual work plan. Kaylen will preside until July 2012 at the National FCCLA Leadership Conference in Orlando, Florida. More information about National FCCLA and Kaylen Larson can be seen on [www.fcclainc.org](http://www.fcclainc.org).

### MN FCCLA Officers featured on WCCO TV Life to the Max Show

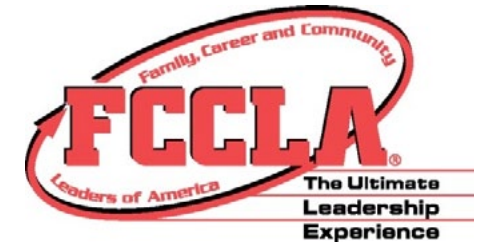
The Dec. 3 "Life to the Max" show featured several MN FCCLA youth leaders who have gained valuable skills for speaking, leading and planning youth events for MN FCCLA members. "Life to the Max" is a show that highlights stories of perseverance, tenacity and winning attitudes. Skylar Borchardt, State President from Litchfield spoke about how FCCLA has changed him from a shy student to a person who takes up new opportunities for speaking and traveling. Olivia Wicklund, President-Elect of MN FCCLA spoke about organizing a walking school bus project in her community. Kaylen Larson, National FCCLA President from East Grand Forks spoke about becoming a national youth leader through her FCCLA experiences. MN FCCLA, founded in 1946,

promotes for civic engagement, leadership development, character development, service and career exploration for its students. More information about the show can be seen on [www.lifetothemax.tv](http://www.lifetothemax.tv).

### Minnesota FCCLA youth leaders take on preventing teen distracted driving issues as a national initiative.

Minnesota State FCCLA Officers have taken teen distracted driving prevention with the National Organization for Youth Safety (NOYS) in order to bring awareness to the number one cause of death for teens- teen driving accidents. One preventable cause of teen crashes in distractions. Driving while texting, using cell phones, changing CD's or doing other activities greatly increase the accident rate for drivers. In 2009, 20 percent of all injury crashes involved reports of distracted driving. The age group with the greatest proportion of distracted drivers was the under 20 age group, of which 16 percent of those in fatal crashes were reported to have been distracted while driving (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

Along with more than 200 traffic safety leaders, MN FCCLA Officers participated in the (NOYS) 2011 National Teen Distracted Driving Summit in Washington DC with workshops provided by traffic safety expert organizations and companies. The MN FCCLA Distracted Driving Prevention Team will implement distracted driving prevention efforts by putting into action trainings and sessions for their peers. MN FCCLA is planning a State Teen Distracted Driving Summit on April 19 which will include The Peer Foundation to demonstrate its AWARE III Portable Road Simulator. The Distracted Driving Simulator is designed to realistically show students the dangers of texting and driving. As opposed to simulators that try to imitate both the vehicle and the road using artificial environments, the AWARE III models the road with the actual vehicle. During the training in Washington DC, The NOYS team heard presentations from key national leaders from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



(NHTSA), National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), AT&T, the Allstate Foundation, and many others. FCCLA State Officers attending were Amy Wolff, Clinton Graceville Beardsley HS; Kelsey Heppler, Fulda HS; Rachel Eiler, Spring Lake Park HS; and Olivia Wicklund, Litchfield HS.

### MN FCCLA youth leaders present at National Youth Service Institute in Philadelphia

MN FCCLA State Officers and Seniors Chloe Hanson, Lake Park Audubon HS and Bryce Weets, Russell-Tyler-Ruthton HS presented a session in October about FCCLA's obesity prevention projects for a Youth Service Institute (YSI) in Philadelphia. The YSI Institute, conducted by Youth Service America, brought together over 75 Lead State Agencies and organizations that will provide leadership to Global Youth Service Day efforts. Chloe and Bryce presented various projects that MN FCCLA members have done to encourage their peers to Be Fit, Eat Right and Make Healthy Choices in as FCCLA program called Student Body.

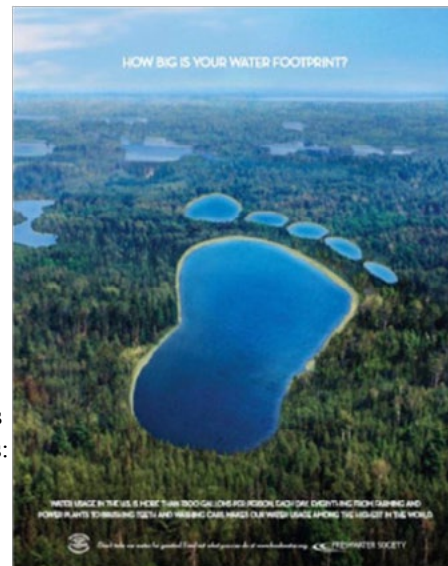
Also attending the YSI Institute was Skylar Borchardt, Litchfield HS senior who is a member of the National Youth Council for Youth Service America, (YSA). As a council member, Skylar helps to guide the strategic plans and grant making efforts of YSA. Global Youth Service Day is April 19-22, 2012, the largest youth service initiative in the world. YSA helps to distribute over \$1 Million in YSA grants support to over 800 projects. Annually MN FCCLA has encouraged over 75 service project efforts during GYSDAY. Skylar is currently the State President of MN FCCLA. E mail: [wendy.ambrose@state.mn.us](mailto:wendy.ambrose@state.mn.us) Mail: MN FCCLA, PO 131386 Roseville, MN 55113

## 2012 Work for Water Art and Design Contest

This year's contest is a call to action! We are looking for high school students to inspire Minnesotans to take action to protect our waters. Students in grades 9-12 have two opportunities to creatively convey the issue of urban runoff and motivate others to respond through simple behavior change, while understanding why their actions are important!

The Work for Water Art and Design Contest builds on the last seven years of successful Water is Life Art Contests. The Work for Water Art and Design Contest will not only highlight the importance of water in our lives, but also educate and provoke citizens to take simple steps to protect our waters. The Freshwater Society, in collaboration with Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy) and the Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC), ask students to create graphic design, short videos, photos, paintings, drawings, etc. to be used as messaging tools to engage Minnesotans in protecting water. They will become tools inspiring change! Visit our partner websites for details: [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org) or [www.freshwater.org](http://www.freshwater.org).

**Note important deadlines:** All entries must be submitted to [www.freshwater.org](http://www.freshwater.org) by midnight on: 1st contest - Jan. 13, 2012; 2nd contest - April 30, 2012.



## 23rd National Service-Learning Conference: Our World, Our Future

The National Youth Leadership Council and youthrive, the Upper Midwest Affiliate of PeaceJam International have joined forces for 2012 to bring you one outstanding event.

Join them April 11-14, 2012 at the Minneapolis Convention Center for the most comprehensive service-learning professional development opportunity in the world! Attend the 23rd Annual National Service-Learning Conference® and youthrive PeaceJam Leadership Conference. Visit: <http://nslc.nylc.org/> for details.



## Save the Date: Tech Boot Camp

Join us for a week of technology sessions for educators at Tech Boot Camp July 23-26, 2012. Morning and afternoon sessions are offered a-la-carte. Synergy & Leadership Exchange members receive discounts on sessions. Don't miss this great opportunity. More information will be available on the Synergy website in April

Nominations are being accepted for the National History Teacher of the Year award. For 2012, history teachers of grades 7-12 can be nominated, by colleagues, students, former students, parents or supervisors. Winning teachers receive \$1,000, a collection of excellent classroom materials and a recognition celebration. Each state winner is also eligible for the national award. The nomination deadline is February 1, 2012. Visit <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/education/htoy> for details.



## We Want to Hear From You!

Help us recognize your school, students or educators for their hard work and achievements in the next issue of "The Exchange"

**"Stellar Students"** — Educators, help us recognize student achievement at your school! Tell us about a student or group of students who deserves recognition. We want to know about students who:

- Make a difference in their school
- Have made academic gains
- Are consistently a top academic performer
- Set a positive example for other students
- Display positive character traits on a daily basis
- Have overcome obstacles
- Have performed well in academic challenge events

**"Making a Difference"** — Parents and students, help us recognize teacher achievements at your school! Tell us about educators who deserve recognition. We want to know about teachers or administrators who:

- Go out of their way to ensure student learning
- Make a difference in their school
- Help students overcome obstacles
- Go above and beyond on a daily basis
- Motivate students to learn and succeed
- Set a positive example for students and teachers

**"Outstanding Character"** — Educators, help us recognize character in your school! In a brief summary, tell us what your school or district is doing to promote this character trait or tell us about a student or group of students who demonstrates the featured character trait. This quarter's feature trait is:

**Responsibility** – *Being accountable in word and deed; having a sense of duty to fulfill tasks with reliability, dependability and commitment.*

## Become a Member of Synergy & Leadership Exchange Today!

Great things are happening at Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy). We invite you to be a part of them! Your donation helps foster collaboration to advance the development of ethical citizens, provide educational resources, and celebrate achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities. Visit our recently updated website, [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org), for more information.

Your donation helps Synergy administer outstanding recognition programs including the Gathering of Champions, the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program, and the Minnesota Schools of Character and Promising Practices awards programs. You may also support the Ethical Citizens for Minnesota's Future ethics initiative, professional development and classroom enhancement opportunities across the state.

With your donation to Synergy, you will receive a free one-year membership, which provides access to the "Members Only" page of our website where you will find discounts on Synergy endorsed products and services including professional development opportunities, teacher and parent resources and opportunities to highlight educators and students in "The Exchange," our quarterly newsletter. Synergy is a qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Please consider donating to the Synergy help us raise education to new heights – "We can't put student success on hold!"



## Calendar of Events

### January 2012

- 13 • Work for Water Art and Design Contest #1 Entry Deadline
- 15 • Voting deadline for 2012 Gathering of Champions Logo Contest
- 20 • Work for Water Contest #1 Regional Finalists Notified
- 22 • Minnesota Academic League Council Meeting
- 27 • Work for Water Contest #1 State Finalists Chosen
- MNSOC Honorees Announced, Status Letter Sent To All Applicants

### February 2012

- 1 • National History Teacher of the Year Nomination Deadline
- 6 • WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Nomination Deadline
- 27 • WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Application Deadline
- 28-29 • National Schools of Character Finalists Posted on CEP Website
- 2012 Gathering of Champions logo design winner announced

### March 2012

- 1 • Promising Practice Applications Due
- 12 • 2012 Academic All-Stars Online Nominations Open
- 30 • WEM Outstanding Educator Award Blue Ribbon Panel

### April 2012

- 1 • Nominations for Minnesota Ethical Citizens Award Due
- 11-14 • National Service-Learning Conference & Youthrive PeaceJam Leadership Conference
- 30 • Work for Water Art and Design Contest #2 Entry Deadline
- Registration opens for 2012 Gathering of Champions
- Minnesota Academic League Council Meeting

### May 2012

- 7 • NSOC Honorees Announced
- 7 • Work For Water Contest #2 Regional Finalists Notified
- 14 • Work For Water Contest #2 State Finalists Chosen
- 17 • Minnesota Schools of Character, Promising Practice and Minnesota Ethical Citizens Awards Ceremonies
- Promising Practice Honorees Announced
- WEM Outstanding Educator Award State Honorees Announced
- The National History Teacher of the Year Award State Winners announced

### June 2011

- 30 • Gathering of Champions Academic All-Star nomination deadline
- WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Regional Honorees Announced

### July 2012

- 23-26 • Tech Boot Camp
- 27 • Gathering of Champions pre-registration deadline

### August 2012

- 3 • Gathering of Champions

Watch for our email broadcasts or visit our website for more information on these and other programs.

## The Exchange

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**The Exchange** is a publication of Synergy & Leadership Exchange. Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy), formerly the Center for Academic Excellence (CAE), is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering collaboration to advance the development of ethical citizens, providing educational resources, and celebrating achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities.

To become a member of Synergy & Leadership Exchange or to make a donation, please visit our website and click on "Membership & Strategic Partners." Synergy is a qualified 501(c)(3). Join or donate today to Celebrate, Educate and Collaborate.

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