

2024-2025 Annual Report



Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Kandiyohi County



2024-2025 KCEO Class at their KCEO Gala (February 2025)





The Power of Community in Student Entrepreneurship A Message from the KCEO Board Chair

Robin Kopel, KCEO Board Chair

As the Chair of the KCEO board, I am inspired year after year by the generosity of those involved in this program and privileged to witness their investment in action as students embrace the challenges and rewards of entrepreneurship.

At KCEO, we're not just teaching students about business—we're empowering them to become leaders, problem-solvers, and changemakers in our community. A heartfelt thank you to our facilitator, Kelly Johnson, and the KCEO board for creating a space where students can turn ideas into action, dreams into reality, and obstacles into opportunities, all while gaining confidence in themselves.

This program thrives because of the unwavering support of local businesses, individual investors, board members, educators, families, and—most importantly—the students, whose creativity and determination drive everything we do. Your belief in their potential fuels their journey and, in turn, they inspire us all.

As we continue to grow, our mission remains clear: to equip KCEO students with the entrepreneurial mindset, critical thinking skills, and resources needed to thrive as future business leaders. The impact of this program is evident in the stories of past participants who have gone on to launch businesses, strengthen communities, and take on leadership roles.

To everyone who has contributed over the past 11 years—whether through financial support, mentorship, or encouragement—thank you. Your investment isn't just in a program; it's in the future of our community. Because of you, KCEO continues to thrive, and our students continue to inspire and be inspired.

Here's to another year of innovation, growth, and success!

Robin Kopel

Board Chair

An educational collaboration with ACGC, NL-S and Willmar Public Schools



2024-2025 Board Members

Robin Kopel (Chair)
Tim Mattern (Vice Chair)
Sara Carlson (Fiscal Host)
Megan Erickson
Bonnie Spohn
Quincy McNeil
Kelly Johnson
Jean Geselius
Tiffany Barnard
Bob Mathiasen
Loren Corle (Past Vice Chair)
Alex Freiberg

Jennie-O, Investor
Taatjes Financial Group, Investor
Willmar Area Community Foundation, Investor
Willmar Schools
New London-Spicer Schools
ACGC Schools
Facilitator - New London-Spicer Schools
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber, Board Liaison & CDS, Investor
Southwest Initiative Foundation, Investor
Heritage Bancshares Group, Investor
Corle Consulting LLC, Investor
Lakes Area Realty - Ben Hooper, Investor

A special thanks to Bradley Pederson (Christianson PLLP) for his service to the Board.



Facilitator Update

Kelly Johnson, KCEO Facilitator

This year's KCEO program has been a remarkable journey of learning, innovation, and growth for our students. Throughout the year, they have had the opportunity to engage in hands-on experiences, connect with local business leaders, and develop essential entrepreneurial skills that will serve them well beyond the classroom.

Our students participated in over 30 business tours, where they gained firsthand insights into the challenges and successes of running a business. These visits provided valuable lessons in leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability, reinforcing the importance of resilience and creativity in the business world. Through these interactions, students have developed a deeper understanding of local industries and the economic impact of small businesses in our Kandiyohi County communities.

Beyond the tours, students worked on developing both their class businesses while also refining their own individual business ideas. They gained hands-on experience in crafting business plans, conducting market research, and presenting their ventures with confidence. Additionally, they collaborated with mentors and industry professionals, receiving valuable real-world advice and constructive feedback to shape their entrepreneurial visions.

KCEO has not only helped students grow individually but has also strengthened the connection between young entrepreneurs and our local business community. The support from local businesses, mentors, and sponsors has been instrumental in shaping this unique experience, and I am incredibly grateful for each of their contributions.

The future of entrepreneurship in our Kandiyohi County communities is bright, and I am excited to see how these students apply what they have learned as they move forward.

Thank you to everyone who has shaped the lives of our KCEO students and who has supported the KCEO program this year; your contributions have been essential to our success. I look forward to another great year ahead!

Sincerely,

Kelly Johnson
KCEO Facilitator



43 Investors
30 Business Tours
4 Guest Speakers
9 Students
1 Gala
1 Badge Project
9 Start-ups



Meet the Students



Natilee Anderson

Natilee Anderson is a junior at New London - Spicer High School. She participates in the New London Spicer Ambassador program, softball, and NL-S Student Council. She joined KCEO because she loves getting to know all about her community and the businesses that make an impact. Next year, Natilee plans on going PSEO to start her nursing degree, dreaming of one day being a NICU nurse.

p (320) 212-4291

e andersonnatilee@gmail.com

Instagram njepoxyandwoodworking

Business: NJ Epoxy and Woodworking

Natilee is the founder of NJ Epoxy and Woodworking. Where pieces are homemade and crafted with care. With the collaboration of functionality and high-quality craftsmanship at NJ Epoxy and Woodworking projects are not just visually striking but built to last.



Logan Conlin

Logan Conlin is a senior at New London - Spicer High School. His hobbies are fishing and working out. Logan joined KCEO because he's always wanted to own his own business. After high school, Logan plans to join the workforce pouring concrete.

p (320) 894-3210

Instagram powerofgodgymattire

e powerofgodclothing7@gmail.com

Business: Power of God Apparel

Power of God Apparel is a Christian fitness clothing brand dedicated to blending faith and fitness. Specializing in high-quality athletic apparel, the brand offers shirts featuring inspiring Bible verses, allowing customers to express their faith while staying active. With a focus on motivation and spiritual strength, Power of God Apparel aims to empower individuals on their fitness and faith journeys.



Eli Heinen

Eli Heinen is a senior at Willmar High School. When he is not working or at school, Eli is fixing trucks, playing sports, or hanging out with friends. After high school, he plans to attend college at NDSU where he will pursue a construction management degree. Eli joined KCEO to get a better understanding of the business in the community and how they operate.

p (320) 295-3425

Instagram - Shifted_Perspectives_Photo

Tik Tok - @shifted_perspectives

Business: Shifted Perspectives Photography

Shifted Perspectives Photography specializes in high-quality vehicle photography, offering creative and detailed shots that highlight the design and personality of each vehicle. Targeting car dealerships, individual car owners, automotive brands, and e-commerce sellers, the business provides a range of packages, including action shots and event photography, to meet diverse client needs. With a focus on unique perspectives, dynamic imagery, and exceptional service, Shifted Perspectives aims to become a leader in the automotive photography market.





Lucas LaBrie

Lucas LaBrie is a junior at New London-Spicer High School. Outside of KCEO he enjoys football, track, lifting, and pursuing his business ventures. Lucas joined KCEO to explore his passion for business and gain insight into the industry. He wanted to experience the business world firsthand and determine if it was the right field to pursue in college.

Business: Wheel & Wave Detailing

Wheel and Wave Detailing is a car and boat detailing service.

p 605-759-6570

e WaveWheelDetailing@gmail.com

Instagram Wheel_2_Wave_Detailing



Cole Laughlin

Cole Laughlin is a junior at New London-Spicer High School. Cole loves to collect sports cards and participating in baseball, football, and basketball. Cole joined KCEO to explore potential college interests and gain a deeper understanding of his dad's business. Cole believes this class is good for learning about business development and expansion in our community.

Business: Elite Diamond Academy

Elite Diamond Academy is a baseball training business offering pitching, hitting, and fielding lessons for kids ages 6-13, operating out of the Willmar/Spicer area. The business aims to make a positive impact on youth through skill development and injury prevention.

p 651-706-0687

e coletl2008@gmail.com



Angel Martinez-Rivas

Angel Martinez-Rivas is a Senior at Willmar Senior High School. Angel is passionate about linguistics, reading, inter-religious studies, weightlifting, and is an active participant in the Kandiyohi County Entrepreneurial Opportunities (KCEO) program. He joined KCEO to gain hands-on experience in business and deepen his understanding of entrepreneurship within his community. From a young age, he has been driven to start his own business, and the knowledge and skills he has acquired through this program will serve as a strong foundation for his future endeavors.

After high school, Angel plans to become a teacher in the Willmar area, where he hopes to make a meaningful impact on students and the community. In addition to teaching, he aspires to be a serial entrepreneur, launching businesses that contribute to the local economy and create lasting opportunities. His goal is to establish a strong presence in the community by turning innovative ideas into successful ventures while staying committed to education and personal growth.

p (320) 310-2347

e mtlawnmn@gmail.com

Business: M&T Lawn

M&T Lawn delivers professional, reliable, and high-quality lawn maintenance services tailored to keep your property looking its best. We take pride in our attention to detail, customer satisfaction, and commitment to excellence. Whether it's mowing, trimming, or full lawn care solutions, M&T Lawn ensures a greener, healthier lawn every time.



Meet the Students (Cont'd.)



Autumn Tortorella

Autumn Tortorella is a junior at New London - Spicer High School. She enjoys playing volleyball and being active in drama, speech, the student council, and the National Honor Society. Outside of school, she cooks, crafts, and adores her two dogs.

Autumn joined KCEO to become a successful entrepreneur. After high school, Autumn plans on attending college for a business degree and hopes to continue growing her business.

e ReadyPrepLifestyle@gmail.com

Instagram: @ReadyPrep_Meal_Planning

Facebook: ReadyPrep Meal Planning

Business: ReadyPrep

ReadyPrep is a meal prep and planning service that helps alleviate the stress of planning what to eat for the week. ReadyPrep can give you a chance to learn how to cook by providing the ingredients and recipe or providing you with a homemade meal with minimal packaging waste.



Kevin Jiménez

Kevin Jiménez is a junior at Willmar Senior High School. When Kevin is not at school, he spends his time working on his businesses and exploring new ways to grow his brands. He also enjoys skateboarding. Kevin loves the business world and aims to build a company that allows him to be independent before graduating high school. He joined KCEO to learn from local business owners to have a better understanding of all aspects of business.

p (504) 518-1831

e mn.kovect@gmail.com

Instagram: mn.kovect

Business: Kovect

Kovect is a marketing and web development agency focused on helping small businesses establish a strong online presence in the digital world. Kovect specializes in creating and maintaining websites, branding, and digital marketing strategies to help businesses grow in the digital world.



Maria Rodriguez

Maria is a Senior at Willmar Senior High School. In her free time, she enjoys giving back to her community by volunteering with the Key Club and leading Scout Troop #3324 in Willmar. Maria is passionate about spending time with her family, pets and staying active through sports, especially volleyball and softball.

Maria joined KCEO to learn more about the business world and to start her own business in the future. After high school, Maria plans on attending Ridgewater College to study Accounting, with hopes of continuing a volleyball career at the collegiate level while growing her business.

p (320) 405-5117

e colombianstyle74@gmail.com

Social Media: @colombian.stylewillmar

Business: Colombian Style

Colombian Style specializes in custom clothing and accessories, giving customers the opportunity to create unique designs based on their personal vision. The business serves the local community, small businesses, schools, and special events, offering flexible and personalized service. With seasonal collections and a wide range of customization options, Colombian Style strives to provide the best experience for every customer.

2024-2025 Mentors

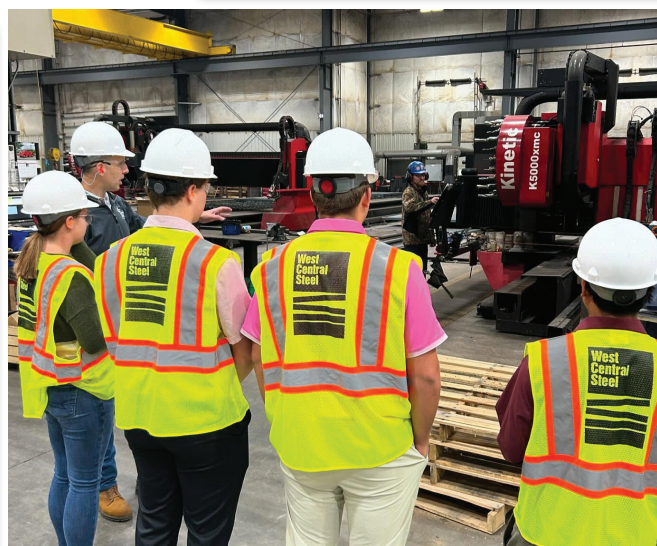
Mentor

Kyle Collins
Jim Ellingson
Tina Erpenbach
Alex Freiberg
Jean Geselius
Dave Henle
John Kennedy
Sarah Klaassen
Derik Peterson
Levi Schimschock
Dean Steinwand
Jami Tanner

Business/Organization

Nova-Tech Engineering
Allergy and Asthma Specialty Clinic
B&F Fastener Supply
Lakes Area Realty
Conway, Deuth & Schmiesing
Heritage Bank N.A.
Nova-Tech Engineering
Anderson Larson Law Firm
Nova-Tech Engineering
The Shimmy Shack
Kensington Bank
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber

Try. Fail. Grind. Learn. Repeat.



KCEO enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year includes 22 students.

2024-2025 Investors

Thank You!

Investors make the KCEO class possible. The schools do not pay for this program. The business and community investors fund the program completely and become the content experts to help teach business concepts. Investor gifts are made via our fiscal partner, the Willmar Area Community Foundation (WACF), and our class facilitator assists in connecting the students to the investor experts.

Allergy and Asthma
Specialty Clinic
Anderson, Larson, Saunders,
Klaassen, Dahlager & Leitch
B&F Fastener Supply
Bollig Engineering
Bremer Bank Willmar
CentraCare
Central Counties Co-Op
Christianson PLLP
Conway Deuth and
Schmiesing, PLLP
Corle Consulting
Crow River Construction
Duininck Inc
Fenstra Insurance
Gurley's Foods
Harvey Anderson-Johnson
Funeral Homes
Heritage Bank
Heritage Exteriors

Holmgren Appraisals LLC
J.D. Kreps Financial Group Inc.
Jennie-O
Johnson, Moody, Schmidt,
Kleinhuizen & Zumwalt, P.A
KCEO Class of 2023-2024
Kensington Bank
Lake Region Bank
Lakes Area Realty - Ben Hooper
Realtor
Lange Ag Systems
Marcus Construction
MinnWest Foundation
Northern Factory Sales/
Northern Radiator
Rambow Inc.
RELCO LLC
Southwest Initiative
Foundation
Spicer Economic Development
Taatjes Financial Group

Terwisscha Construction Inc
TPI Hospitality – Best
Western Plus
West Central Sanitation
West Central Steel Inc
West Central Tribune
Westberg | Eischens
Willmar Area Community
Foundation
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber

2024-2025 Partners

Kandiyohi County Economic
Development
Printmasters
Schwegman's Cleaners



Become an Investor

Contact Sara Carlson, Willmar Area Community Foundation
scarlson@communitygiving.org | 320-235-4380

www.kandiyohiceo.com



Friends of KCEO

The Friends of KCEO Fund, also held at WACF, was established to remove barriers to participation for students who have economic challenges. The Friends fund assists with business casual clothing, transportation support and has also made an investment into laptop computers for class use when planning their major class and individual business ventures. Contact Sara Carlson to make a donation.



www.facebook.com/kandiyohiceoclass/

