

2023-2024 Annual Report



Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Kandiyohi County



2023-2024 KCEO Class at their KCEO Gala (February 2024)





Empowering Tomorrow's Innovators: A Message from the Chair of the KCEO Board

Robin Kopel, KCEO Board Chair

As the Chair of our KCEO board, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey of this program and how truly grateful I am for all those who have taken the time to share their talents with our students throughout the year. It is incredible to experience the shared ambition, creativity, and unwavering belief in the power of innovation. As we pause to acknowledge the milestones we've achieved (10 years) and the challenges we've overcome, it's only fitting to express gratitude to all who have played a part in KCEO's success. It takes a village, and this is an incredible village!

To our students, thanks for taking the time to invest in you. It has been amazing to see your growth throughout the year. Your boundless creativity, relentless drive, and fearless pursuit of excellence have been inspiring. You already succeeded in taking that first step. Your passion inspires us. Tap into those business connections. We want you to continue to grow in our community.

To the parents/guardians, the silent heroes who have supported these students every step of the way, thank you! Your unwavering encouragement, love, and belief in their dreams have been a source of strength and inspiration.

To our investors, who believe in this vision and provide the support and resources necessary to bring ideas to life. This program would not exist if it wasn't for the ongoing support from our community. Forever thankful for your financial support, time, talents, business connections, and student encouragement you share to keep the program a success.

To our dedicated school faculty, whose unwavering support and guidance have been instrumental in our journey, we offer our heartfelt appreciation. Your mentorship, expertise, and commitment to nurturing the next generation of innovators have been invaluable. Your belief in the potential of the program and our students has empowered us to dream big.

To our facilitator, the guiding light of the program. Your guidance, encouragement, and belief in the students' abilities have been a source of inspiration and strength. Your dedication to the program's success has been nothing short of extraordinary, and for that, we are truly grateful.

And to our esteemed board members, whose vision, leadership, and commitment have been the pillars of this program, I appreciate you! Your guidance, wisdom, and unwavering support have been instrumental in shaping our strategic direction and ensuring our continued growth and success. This includes the program's fiscal host, Willmar Area Community Foundation. A true gem in our community providing endless talent, support, and knowledge.

Together, we have proven that with passion, perseverance, and a shared sense of purpose, anything is possible. Let us continue to dream big, take bold risks, and push the boundaries of what is possible.

Always stay curious.

Robin Kopel

2023-2024 Board Members

Robin Kopel (Chair)
Tim Mattern (Vice Chair)
Sara Carlson (Fiscal Host)
Megan Erickson & Paul Schmitz
Bonnie Spohn
Quincy McNeil
Kelly Johnson
Jean Geselius
Bradley Pederson
Tiffany Barnard
Bob Mathiasen
Jim Sieben (Past Chair)
Loren Corle (Past Vice Chair)

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
Christianson PLLP, Investor
Southwest Initiative Foundation, Investor
Heritage Bancshares Group, Investor
Nova-Tech Engineering, Investor
Corle Consulting LLC, Investor

Facilitator Update



Kelly Johnson, KCEO Facilitator

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Kandiyohi CEO program, and it has been a remarkable year for our young entrepreneurs. I extend my sincere gratitude to each student in this milestone class for their commitment to the KCEO program. Your dedication to early mornings and lengthier commutes to engage with business leaders, mentors, and supporters is truly commendable. I am confident that the insights gained, stories heard, and advice received will serve as valuable guides as you embark on the next stages of your life's journey. Let us always remember the extensive network of supporters available to assist you, and remember the message from our investors: never hesitate to ask questions.

Furthermore, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to our local investors whose ongoing support is key to the success of the KCEO program. Your contributions of time, expertise, mentorship, and resources are instrumental in shaping the lives of these aspiring entrepreneurs.

To the members of the KCEO board, I am profoundly grateful for entrusting me with the privilege of facilitating this exceptional program. I look forward to the opportunity to continue serving and guiding the next group of young entrepreneurs from the Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City, New London-Spicer, and Willmar School Districts. Your steadfast support and guidance have been invaluable.

The transformative growth witnessed among our students from September to May is truly remarkable. Beginning with initial apprehension and uncertainty on their first business project in class, they have evolved into a cohesive unit, adept at collaboration, problem solving, and critical thinking. Their successful navigation of the gala event is a testament to their hard work, resilience, and teamwork. I am inspired by their passion and dedication as they embark on their own small business venture. I can't wait to see what your futures hold.

In closing, I extend my gratitude to all who continue to support the KCEO program. I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to guide future Kandiyohi entrepreneurs through this transformative program.

With gratitude,

Kelly Johnson
KCEO Facilitator



- 43 Investors**
- 41 Business Tours**
- 15 Guest Speakers**
- 14 Students**
- 1 Gala**
- 1 Badge Project**
- 12 Start-ups**





Michaela Anderson

Michaela is a senior at AGCC. When she is not working or at school, Michaela is riding horses, playing sports, or hanging out with friends. After high school, she plans to attend college where she will pursue a business degree and keep studying entrepreneurship. Michaela joined KCEO to get a touch with what the business world is actually like and to see how entrepreneurship has affected Kandiyohi County.

p (320) 979-6985
e michaela.marie.accessories@gmail.com
@michaela.marie.accessories

Business: M&M Accessories

Michaela teamed up with Marie Kragenbring (KCEO student) and created the business M&M Accessories. They create accessories that are designed to accessorize your everyday life, specializing in key chain rings, beaded necklaces, and graphic tees.



Rebecca Bergh

Rebecca is a senior at the NL-S. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, baking, and taking care of her bunnies and dogs, as well as figure skating which she has been a part of for 16 years. After high school, she plans to attend SMSU. Starting in July, she will be a Mustang Pathway Program participant. In the Fall, she will pursue a degree in Hospitality Management focused on the Culinary Arts.

Instagram annlavender_sweets
Facebook Ann Lavender Sweets
e becca.bergh@icloud.com

Business: Ann Lavender Sweets

Rebecca is the founder of Ann Lavender Sweets. She has the passion to connect people and memories through baked goods and that is the foundation of her brand. Rebecca curates a variety of flavors in cupcakes ranging from vanilla bean to matcha lavender. Ann Lavender Sweets is a charming little company that strives for personalized service for you and your memories with loved ones. Her overall goal is to help make events a little more memorable with something sweet.



Saul Bustos

Saul is a junior at Willmar Senior High School. He plays two sports, soccer and Nordic ski; both of which he is the varsity captain. He has three jobs working at Walmart, working on a pig farm, and home care. "I like working and hanging out with the people I love. I joined KCEO because it made me think of what was needed in our community and that was a safe place for all."

p (320) 295-2348
e sauldbustos@icloud.com

Business: YourSafePlace

YourSafePlace is a safe place for people with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. The target market is young children and adults who wish to make a change.



Maximus Engebretson

Maximus (Max) is a senior at NL-S. "I joined KCEO because I heard you get donuts on some tours; how could I say no to that? I actually joined KCEO because I was interested in starting my own business. Throughout my life, I've had ideas for businesses I have never been able to go through with." Max is an avid downhill skier, and he trap shoots for NL-S. After high school, he plans to attend the University of Minnesota Duluth, majoring in Biology.

p (320) 212-8944
e MaxEngebretson@outlook.com
https://www.instagram.com/high-rollers_rolledicecream/

Business: High Rollers Rolled Ice Cream

Creating custom rolled ice cream orders out of a trailer.





Amyra Gamez

Amyra is a junior at NL-S. She participates in tennis and golf. "I joined KCEO to learn more about business. I knew what a business was and knew many business owners, but I didn't know what all a business entailed. What intrigued me is that I would get to go into businesses behind the scenes and learn the ins and outs of what a business is and how to run one."

p (320) 979-5016
e Amyra.j.tennis@gmail.com
@ajs_tennislessons

Business: AJ's Tennis Lessons

AJ's Tennis Lessons provides tennis lessons to kids ages 6-13. There will be weekly one hour group lessons throughout the summer, and an option to learn one on one with private lessons. There will also be a tennis camp on July 8th and 9th. "I am so excited that I have the opportunity to use my skills to teach others tennis and share the love I have for the sport."



Marie Kragebring

Marie is a senior at ACGC. She is also a full-time PSEO student at Ridgewater College. Marie joined KCEO because she wanted to learn more about the business world and start her own business. After she graduates, she plans on going to The Salon Professional Academy in Fargo ND. She will open her own salon after graduation putting the background and skills learned from the KCEO class. When she is not in school or at work she likes to spend quality time with family and friends.

p (320) 979-6985
e michaela.marie.accessories@gmail.com
@michaela.marie.accessories

Business: M&M Accessories

Marie teamed up with Michaela Anderson (KCEO student), and created the business M&M Accessories. They create accessories that are designed to accessorize your everyday life, specializing in key chain rings, beaded necklaces and graphic tees.



Drake Monson

Drake is a senior at Willmar Senior High School. In his free time, he enjoys spending time outdoors. He likes to fish, hunt, spend time with friends, play fetch with his dog, and play hockey. After high school, he plans on going straight into the work force in the construction trades. "I joined KCEO to explore a new opportunity and to take up a new challenge. I also wanted to meet new people in Kandiyohi County."

p (320) 737-0685
e drakemonson4@gmail.com
@ElementWaterfowl

Business: Element Waterfowl

Element Waterfowl is a waterfowl outfitter that markets a clothing brand, photography, future guided hunts, and a growing social media page. "The outdoors is when I'm in my element and hunting is my passion."



Austin Okuly

Austin is a senior at NL-S High School. Hobbies include: video games, snowboarding, all outdoor sports (tennis, football, spike ball, disc golf, etc), and hanging out with friends. He was a part of ski club last winter. He was also one of the team captains of the tennis team at NL-S. "I originally joined KCEO for the opportunity to create my own business. However I've come to realize that life, for me, is taking a different path. This is why I'm doing a partnership with a friend of mine. I'm still going to get the small business experience, but share the responsibilities." His plans after high school is to attend Ridgewater College to pursue Computer Programming.

p (320) 444-3869
e Ajpalm2@icloud.com

Business: A&A Dock Removal

A&A Dock Removal is a co-ownership between Austin and his friend, Adam Palmer. The business is pulling out docks and putting in docks in the fall. This business is short-term.



Meet the Students (Cont'd.)



Adam Palmer

Adam is a senior at NL-S High School. His hobbies include snowboarding, hanging out with friends, playing games with his friends, which includes playing the Wii U and spike-ball on Green Lake beach. He also surfs a lot. Adam played varsity tennis for New London in the Spring and works during the summer for Jennie-O. His plans after high school will be attending Minnesota State Technical College for HVAC. "It's very hands-on work and I'm looking forward to starting a new chapter in my life."

p (320) 444-3869
e Ajpalm2@icloud.com

Business: A&A Dock Removal

A&A Doc Removal is a co-ownership between Adam and his friend Austin Okuly. The business is pulling out docks and putting in docks in the fall. This business is short-term.



Lauren Petersen

Lauren is a junior at NL-S. She enjoys working at Paffrath Jewelers and at Happy Sol. When she has time to herself she likes to play tennis, participate in teaching dance classes and spending time with her family and pets. "I joined KCEO to fully understand how to become a business owner and how to be successful in doing so. To me, KCEO looked like a good opportunity to get ahead in my business journey."

p (320) 905-7308
e lppetsitting24@gmail.com
Instagram: @lppetsitting

Business: LP Pet Sitting

LP Pet Sitting is a company that will care for your fur friends while you are away. Whether that means vacation or a date with your spouse, LP Pet Sitting is here to care for your pets.



Chi Schneider

Christopher (Chi) is a senior at NL-S. His hobbies include sports like baseball, football, and basketball. He loves to hunt for deer, ducks, geese, and turkey. Chi also loves to fish and enjoy being on the lake. He was on our math league team that went to state this year and took 6th place. He has committed to playing baseball and study business and finance at Upper Iowa University. "The reason that I joined KCEO is because I wanted to know how to run a business and what the difficulties of owning operating a larger business are."

p (507) 606-5351
e chi.schneider8@gmail.com
@Green_Lake_Pressure_Washing

Business: Green Lake Pressure Washing

Green Lake Pressure Washing is a company that assists in the cleaning of properties. We help with the presentation of how a home looks because the first thing you see as you drive into a house is the driveway and siding.



Maynor Vega - Maynor is a junior at Willmar Senior High School. When not at school, he enjoys working on cars, playing paintball, and fishing. Mayor joined KCEO because his dad and family members have their own mechanic shops and he would like to start his own business too.

e maynoris123@gmail.com

Business: Maynor's Car Detailing

This new small business is a car cleaning business that will help your car look brand new.



Taylor Vejtruba

Taylor is a senior at ACGC. She rides horses in her free time. She shows her horses in 4-H and takes them camping on overnight trail rides. Taylor also participate in horse judging through 4-H and FFA. "I joined KCEO to learn more about entrepreneurial business." After high school, she plans on attending Ridgewater College and majoring in either Business or Ag Business.

p (320) 905-8973
e taylorred.tate@gmail.com
@taylorred.tate

Business: Taylored Tate

Taylored Tate is a personal Western-wear shopper experience. Our styles will be specific to the Western industry, including equine shows.



Aiden Whetston

Aiden is a junior at NL-S. His hobbies involve motorsports, He enjoys riding dirt bikes, four wheelers and working on his vehicles. He's ridden, owned and maintained his own dirt bikes since he was little. "I joined KCEO because my mom owns her own business and it really interested me. I wanted to see the work side of the small business world from my own eyes. What is a better way to do that than KCEO?"

p (320) 212-6245
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@mudlakemotors

Business: Mud Lake Motors

Mud Lake Motors is a small engine repair shop that works on most engines on recreational vehicles and lawn care tools.

What I Learned in KCEO



“ The Kandiyohi CEO Program helped me through the intensive planning process it takes to start my own business. The program has also helped me learn the importance of having connections with a variety of people. ”

- Rebecca Bergh

“ I joined KCEO to explore a new opportunity and to take up a new challenge. I also wanted to meet new people in Kandiyohi County. I accomplished both of my goals. ”

- Drake Monson



“ I joined KCEO because my mom owns her own business and it really interested me. I wanted to see the working side of the small business world from my own eyes. What is a better way to do that than KCEO? ”

- Aiden Whetston



2023-2024 Mentors

Mentor

Levi Schimschock
Dave Baker
Sarah Klaassen
Mark Litchfield
Bill Pattison
Loren Corle
Robin Kopel
Colleen McNab
John Kennedy
Derik Peterson
Lyle Lange
Dave Henle
Andy Neis
James Miller
Jean Geselius

Business/Organization

The Schimmy Shack
Baker Hospitality
Anderson Larson Law Firm
Kovalus Separation Solutions
West Central Steel
Corle Consulting LLC
Jennie-O
Nova-Tech Engineering
Nova-Tech Engineering
Nova-Tech Engineering
Lange Ag Systems
Heritage Bank
Marcus Construction
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber
Ten Oaks Design Studio



Try. Fail. Grind. Learn. Repeat.

2023-2024 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
Baker Hospitality Inc
Bollig Engineering
Bremer Bank Willmar
Central Counties Co-Op
Christianson PLLP
Concorde Bank
Conway Death 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
Kensington Bank
Lake Region Bank
Lakeland Broadcasting
Company
Lange Ag Systems
Marcus Construction
MinnWest Foundation
Northern Factory Sales/
Northern Radiator
Northern States Supply
Rambow Inc.
RELCO LLC
Remodeling Solutions Inc
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

2023-2024 Partners

Kandiyohi County Economic
Development
Printmasters
Schwegman's Cleaners
Ten Oaks Design Studio



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/

