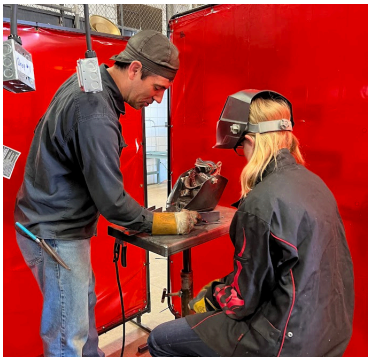
YOUTH CAREER CONNECTORS ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

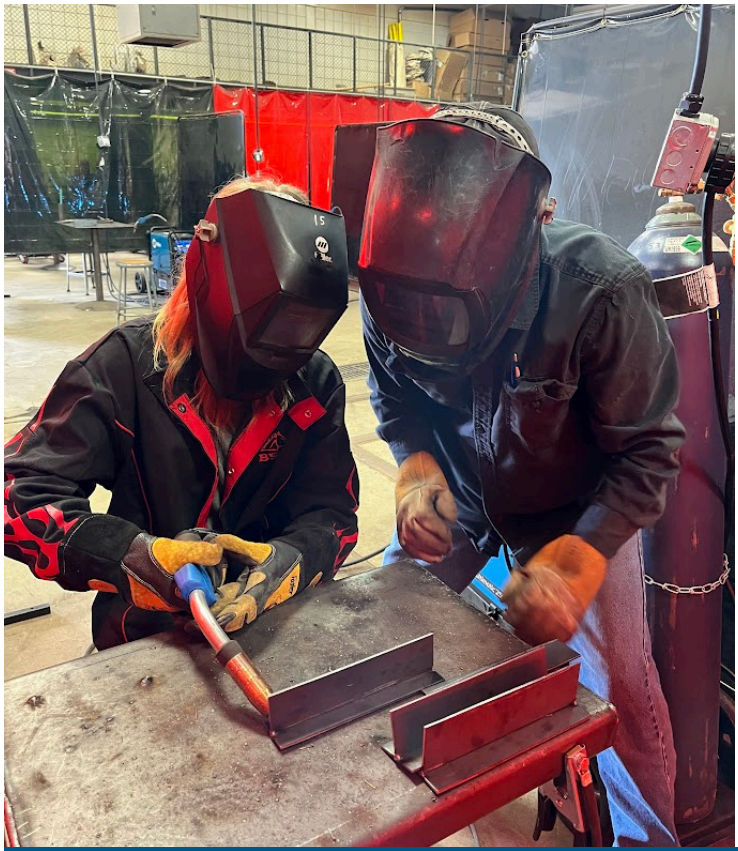
YOUTH CAREER CONNECTORS
SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

Strengthening Southwest Minnesota's Workforce Through Career & Connected Learning and Work-Based Learning

JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025










SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA
PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

WHAT IS A YOUTH CAREER CONNECTOR?

Southwest Minnesota's Youth Career Connectors (YCC) serve as vital intermediaries between schools, employers, and students. By providing customized career advising services and work-based learning opportunities, YCC helps students discover career pathways, gain hands-on experience, and connect with local businesses — ultimately strengthening Southwest Minnesota's future workforce.



THE REGIONAL CHALLENGE

A recent study from The Center for Rural Policy and Development revealed that only 25% of high school graduates in Southwest Minnesota work in a meanigful way in the region six years after graduation. With critical talent shortages in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, transportation, and skilled trades, it is essential to engage students early in CTE and work-based learning opportunities.

Yet, many schools lack the capacity to organize these opportunities on their own. The student-to-school counselor ratio is 541 to 1, the third highest in the region. Career counselors are being asked to do more with less. That's where Youth Career Connectors come in — creating seamless connections between classrooms and industries.

Work-based learning and internships are proven retention and talent development strategies for rural communities.

YOUTH CAREER CONNECTORS
SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

← *learn more from these reports*

5026
STUDENTS RECEIVED YCC SERVICES

30
SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED

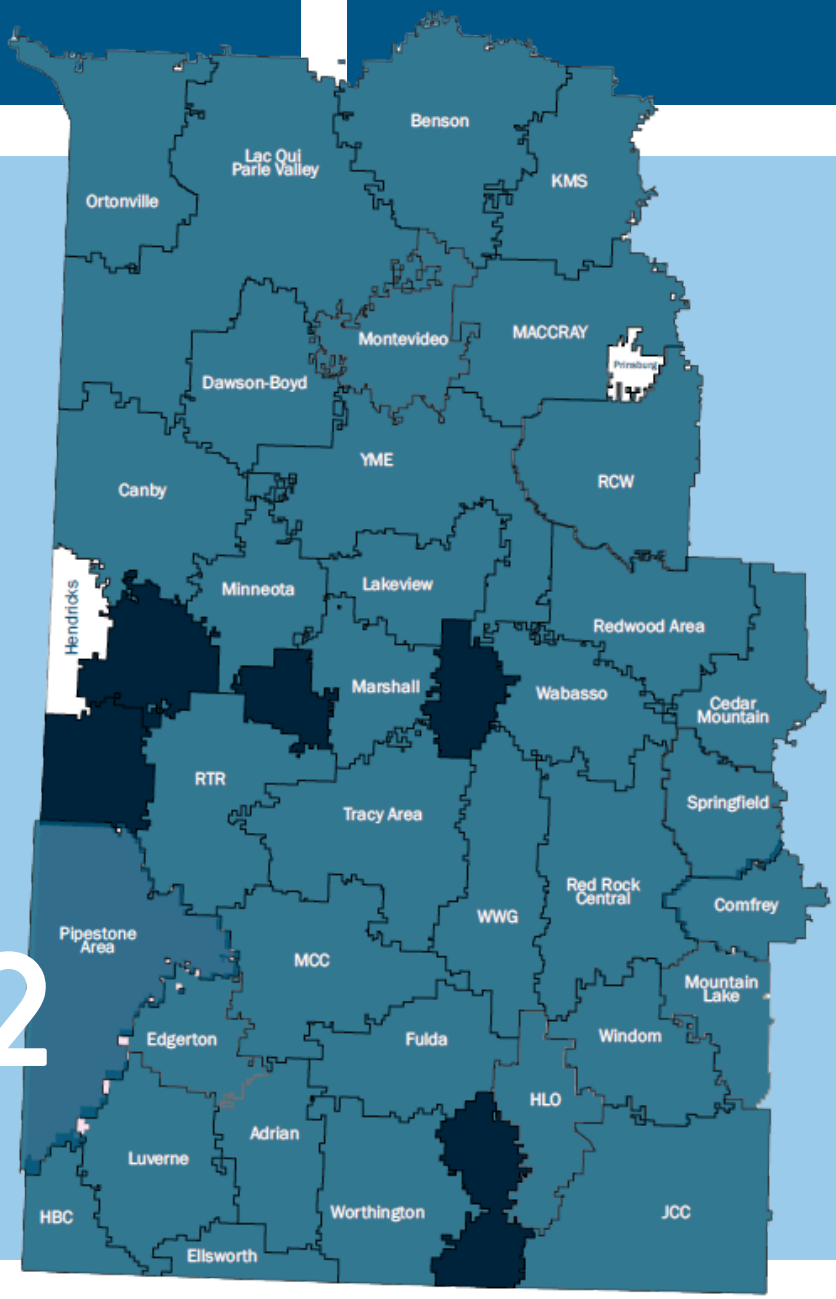
230
LOCAL BUSINESS PARTNERS

FACILITATED

255
MOCK INTERVIEWS

701
JOB SHADOWS & INDUSTRY TOURS

2,002
STUDENTS ATTENDING CAREER FAIRS

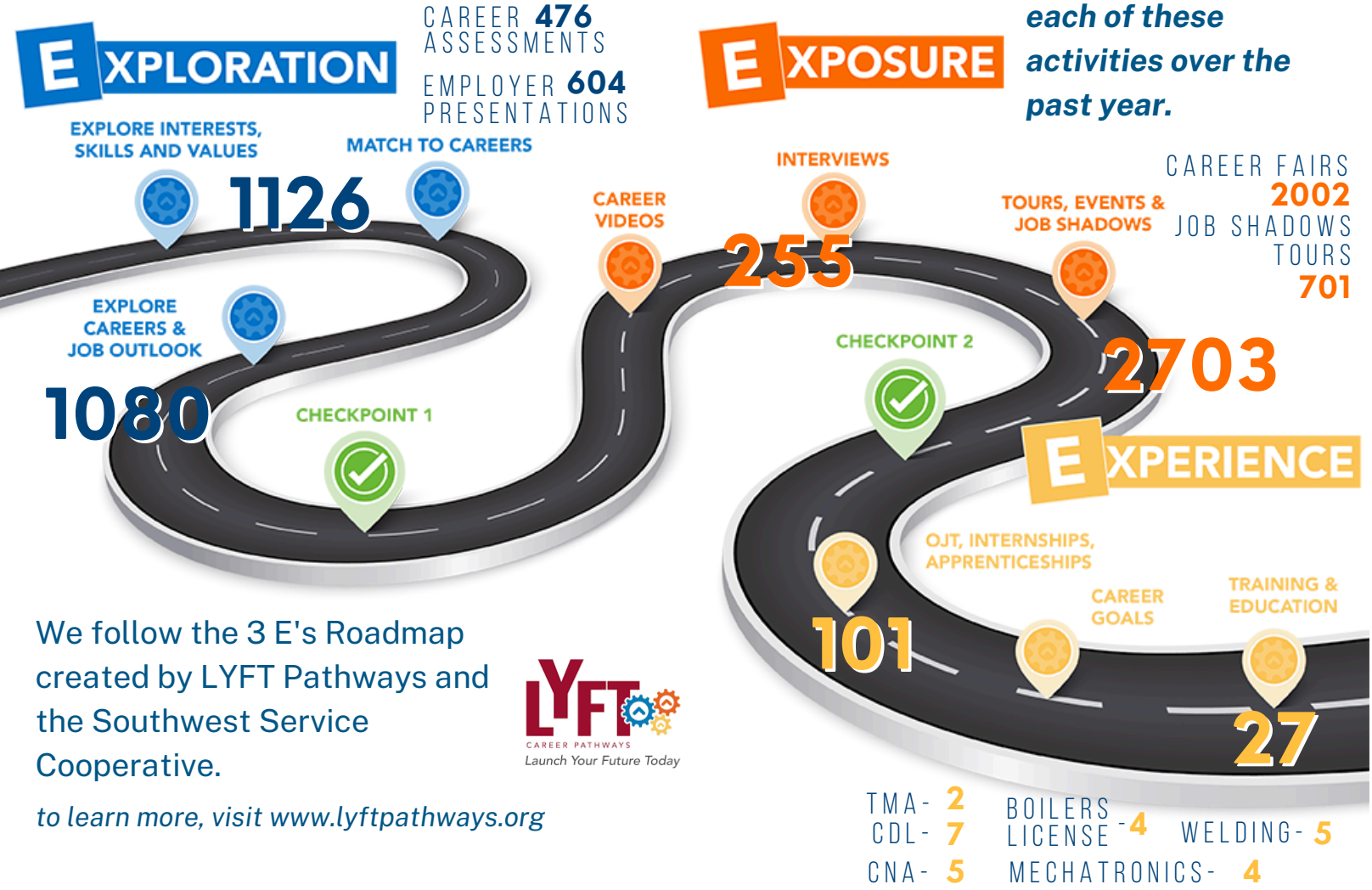


SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA
PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

SWMNPIC
No School
Did not work with

3 E'S ROADMAP - LYFT PATHWAYS

The numbers on the map indicate the number of students we worked with in each of these activities over the past year.



We follow the 3 E's Roadmap created by LYFT Pathways and the Southwest Service Cooperative.

to learn more, visit www.lyftpathways.org

LYFT CAREER PATHWAYS
Launch Your Future Today

EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

- Skills/Interest Assessments
- Employability Skills Class
- Interpersonal Skills Presentations
- Life Skills Event
- Summer Transitions Tours

EXPOSURE ACTIVITIES

- Tour of Manufacturing
- Senior Career Day
- Business Tour Day
- Job Shadows
- Breaking Traditions
- Job Shadow Day
- Career Fairs
- Tour of Health Care

EXPERIENCE ACTIVITIES

- Summer Internship Program
- Work-Based Learning Classes
- Internships
- Career Pathways Classes
- Paid Work Experience

CAREER FAIRS

We coordinated six career fairs throughout Southwest Minnesota, giving students direct access to local employers.





Success Story: Lisbeth

"At 19, welding is more than just joining metals – it's a study in strength and precision. As I master this craft, I'm not only building structures but also constructing a resilient future, proving that determination and skill can forge the path to success."

JOB SHADOWS

Tailored job shadows help students explore real workplaces based on their YouScience career assessments, a tool identifying aptitude-based career matches. The Westbrook Walnut Grove Job Shadow Day is a standout annual event, providing job shadow experiences for over 96 students in a single day.









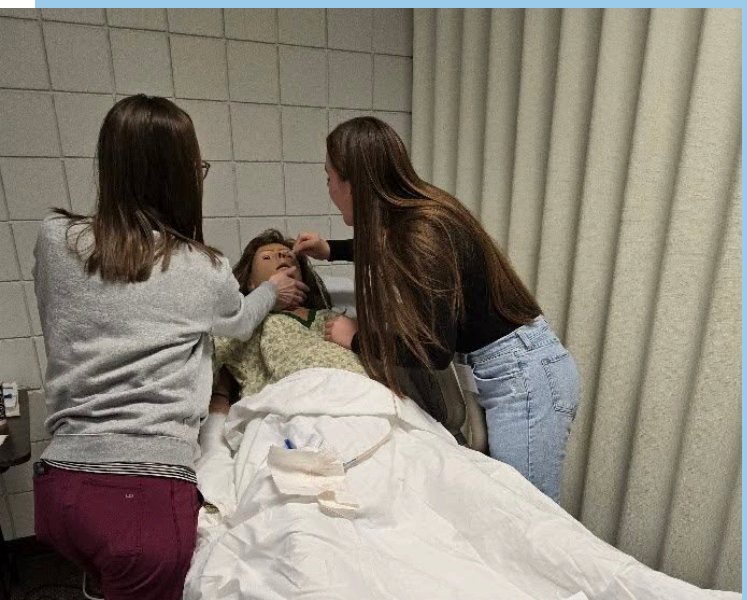
CAREER ASSESSMENTS

*This year, **476 students** completed a YouScience career assessment, helping them identify personal aptitudes and career interests. This data helps guide job shadows, mock interviews, work-based learning placements, and future career interests.*

YOUTH INTERNSHIPS AND PAID WORK EXPERIENCES

Youth Career Connectors actively support work-based learning placements and internships. By collaborating with local employers and schools, we build bridges into high-demand occupations like welding, manufacturing, healthcare, and diesel mechanics.





BRING YOUR A GAME

Youth Career Connectors teach the engaging "Bring Your 'A' Game" curriculum to students. The curriculum focuses on building seven foundational workplace skills, including Attendance, Appearance, Attitude, Ambition, Accountability, Acceptance, and Appreciation.

SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Now in its third year, our paid summer internship program offers college students meaningful work experience in their field. It operates in Nobles, Swift, and Murray counties.



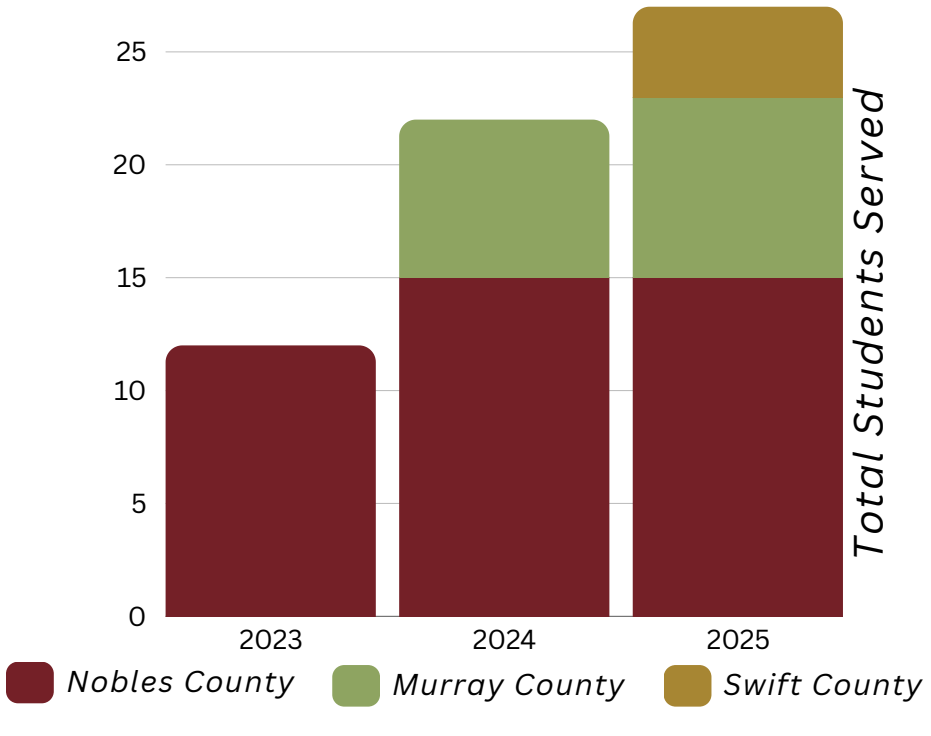


This experience has exposed me to many new concepts, which has opened doors to new opportunities. - Bailey

"Through this experience, I have gained valuable insights into the inner workings of a healthcare facility and the importance of teamwork in maintaining an efficient healthcare system. This opportunity has highlighted the collaborative efforts of individuals in providing exceptional patient-centered care."

- Taylor







260 STUDENTS
BREAKING TRADITIONS EVENTS

In partnership with Minnesota West Community and Technical College, this event series introduces students to careers they might not have otherwise considered, especially in non-traditional fields for their gender. Held at 5–6 MN West campuses annually.

33 STUDENTS
LIFE SKILLS DAYS

Day-long workshops focused on career readiness and essential life skills like time management, work ethic, and personal finance. Hosted at MN West and Ridgewater College campuses.

255 STUDENTS
MOCK INTERVIEWS

After career readiness workshops on interpersonal skills, resume writing, and job search basics, students participate in mock interviews with real employers, simulating hiring experiences and receiving actionable feedback.



Minnesota West COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

TOUR OF MANUFACTURING

As part of Manufacturing Month, YCC collaborates with the Minnesota River Valley CTE Collaborative and local businesses to provide behind-the-scenes manufacturing tours, highlighting high-skill, high-wage careers in robotics, machining, and advanced manufacturing. An additional tour is being planned for October 7th, 2025, with Jackson, Windom, and Heron Lake-Okabena school districts.







Success Story: Leonardo

Leonardo joined the Youth at Work program with no job experience and gained his first role at the Benson Public Library. With support from PIC, he found a permanent job at Glacial Plains Cooperative, building skills and confidence for his future college plans.

TOUR OF HEALTHCARE CAREERS

This annual tour introduces students to career opportunities in healthcare through facility tours and hands-on activities in radiology, surgery, lab, and EMS, followed by healthcare program overviews at Minnesota West – Granite Falls.









CAREER ROADMAPS

A new initiative in partnership with LYFT Pathways, visually map career opportunities within local businesses — helping students easily see progression pathways and how CTE programs and apprenticeships fit into those journeys.



RITALKA, INC.

CERTIFICATIONS

Related Experience	2 year degree	Advanced Degree
On-the-job Training	2-4 year degree	2 year - Advanced Degree
Certificate	4 year degree	4 year - Advanced Degree

PAY SCALE

$ up to $50K

$$ $50K - $80K

$$$ $80K +

PATHWAYS

Business, Management, and Administration

Arts, Communications and Information Systems

Engineering and Manufacturing

Human Services and Education

COMPANY INFO

Ritalka, Inc.
(SpecSys, RVI, and Integral dx)

www.ritalka.com

LYFT CAREER PATHWAYS

SOUTHWEST WEST CENTRAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE
SWWC
Education & Administrative Resources

Equal opportunity employer and program provider - upon request the information in this document can be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities by contacting Carrie Bendix at cbendix@swmnpic.org or 507-295-5029.

Labor market information helps individuals make informed career choices by showing which jobs are in demand, what skills are needed, and what wages can be expected.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO CAMPAIGN

This labor market information campaign helps students and job seekers make informed career decisions by presenting accessible wage, demand, and training data for CTE careers in Southwest Minnesota.

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE COUNCIL

CareerForce



OUR BUSINESS, COMMUNITY, AND FINANCIAL PARTNERS

230
BUSINESS PARTNERS

30
SCHOOL DISTRICTS

FINANCIAL PARTERNS

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

GET READY — Preparing Students for Tomorrow.

LYFT CAREER PATHWAYS

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE COUNCIL

Minnesota West COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

NOBLES COUNTY

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Acres Of Opportunity MURRAY COUNTY Est. 1857 MINNESOTA

RC

Swift COUNTY MN

RIDGEWATER COLLEGE

Use the QR code to the right to see the complete list of business and community partners for the past year.

SCAN HERE

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

OUR EVENTS

SEPT 2024

- Job Shadows - *Worthington*
- Bring Your A Game - *Windom*
- First Impression/Interview Tips – *Murray County Central*
- Career Assessments– *Murray County Central*
- Bring Your A Game – *Worthington*

OCT 2024

- Breaking Traditions – *Pipestone, Lakeview, Westbrook, Clear Lake, Sleepy Eye, Buffalo Lake/Hector*
- Career Assessment – *Montevideo*
- Breaking Traditions – *Pipestone*
- Career Assessments – *Benson*
- Career Assessments – *Wabasso*
- Career Assessments – *Luverne*
- Breaking Traditions – *Lakeview/ Minneota*
- Career Assessments– *Jackson*
- Bring Your A Game – *Lac Qui Parle Valley*
- Career Assessments– *MCC/Slayton*
- Job Search/Resume Prep – *Lac Qui Parle Valley*
- Breaking Traditions – *Worthington, Worthington Learning Center, Lakeview*
- Breaking Traditions – *Worthington, Truman, Sibley, Lakeview*

NOV 2024

- Career Fair – *Montevideo*
- Life Skills – *Montevideo, Echo*
- Breaking Traditions – *Jackson*
- Senior Transitions -*Worthington*
- Career Assessment– *Jackson*
- Employability Skills – *Montevideo*

DEC 2024

- Career Fair – *Minneota*
- Bank Tour – *Worthington*
- Career Fair – *WWG*
- Mock Interviews – *Montevideo*
- Career Assessments – *YME*

JAN 2025

- Mock Interviews – *Worthington*
- Career Assessment– *Maccray*
- Mock Interviews – *Windom*
- Business Tours – *YME, Canby, Minneota, Dawson-Boyd, Lakeview, RCW*
- Career Assessments– *Jackson*

FEB 2025

- Bring Your A Game – *Windom*
- Summer Opportunities Fair – *University of Morris*
- Tour Of Health Care Careers – *Montevideo, Lakeview, YME, RCW, MACCRAY*
- Mock Interviews – *Jackson*
- Career Fair – *Worthington*
- Mock Interviews – *Jackson*
- Business Panel/STEM Program – *Worthington*
- Senior Career Day – *YME*

MARCH 2025

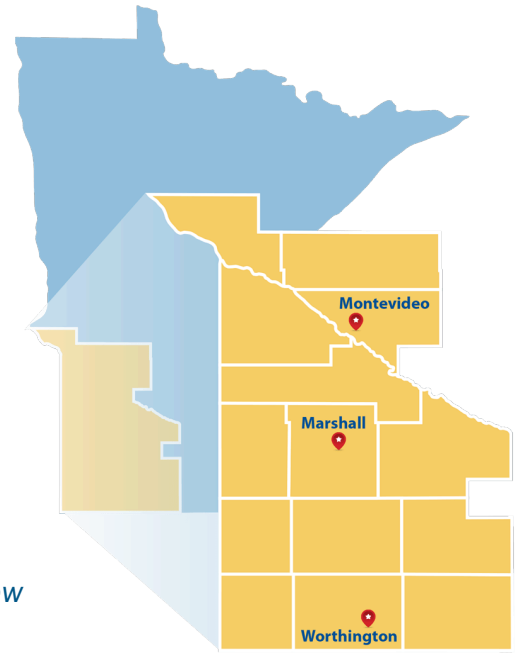
- Summer Job/Internship – *YME, MACCRAY*
- Job Shadows – *Worthington*
- Job Shadows – *Worthington*
- Classroom Presentation – *Lakeview*
- Career Assessments– *Canby*
- Career Fair – *Marshall*
- Career Fair – *Windom*
- Job Shadows – *Worthington*

APRIL 2025

- Tour of Tyler Avera – *RTR*
- Career Fair – *Tracy*
- Mock Interviews – *Wabasso*
- Job Shadow – *Westbrook*

MAY 2025

- Mock Interviews – *Adrian/ Ellsworth, HBC, Luverne, Pipestone*
- Career Institute – *Redwood Valley, Red Rock Central, Wabasso, Cedar Mountain*
- Mock Interviews – *Cedar Mountain*
- Career Fair – *Ortonville*
- Mock Interviews – *Windom*
- Job Shadows - *Worthington*



Interested in participating or learning more?

CONTACT MARIA PETERS AT MPETERS@SWMNPIC.ORG | 507-829-8168