

20 selected for Southwest Minnesota CEO program

By [Jen Burris](#) | on April 25, 2018 | **Pipestone County Star**

Twenty students have been selected for the Southwest Minnesota Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program for the 2018-19 school year. Seven of the selected students attend school in Pipestone County: three from Pipestone Area Schools (PAS), three from Edgerton Public and one from Southwest Christian.



Thirty-six students turned in applications from the seven school districts participating in the program: Luverne, Pipestone, Edgerton Public, Edgerton Southwest Christian, Adrian, Ellsworth and Hills Beaver Creek, according to CEO program facilitator, Cody Henrichs.

The CEO program, offered by the nonprofit Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship, is an entrepreneur class that gives juniors and seniors in high school access to real world, real life opportunities and experiences through area businesses. While enrolled in the program, students visit businesses, create a class project and are mentored by area business leaders. By the end of the program, students will have added about 150 people to their professional network, and will have created their own business.

“This is the only time I’ve ever seen a class where you’re experiencing actual real-life scenarios and you’re building your own business,” said program facilitator Cody Henrichs, who was hired for the program in late 2017. For the past five months, Henrichs has been recruiting students for the 2018-19 school year, handing out some 350 applications in the process, he said. The application required a personal narrative under strict guidelines and three letters of recommendation. After the applications were submitted, the southwest Minnesota CEO program board, featuring business leaders from each community, selected 20 applicants who were qualified for the class.

The southwest Minnesota CEO program had a goal of 50 supporting businesses in the seven school district areas, according to Henrichs they have exceeded that number, which will help fund the program. Additionally they received a grant. Launch Your Future Today (LYFT), a program committed to collaborative school districts, gave the southwest Minnesota

CEO program \$50,000 that will pay for computer technology for the students to be a 1:1 device class.

Henrichs hopes the program shows the students how many opportunities there are locally through area businesses or by creating their own business, like he did.

"I work as a practicing artist so the idea of hands-on learning and active learning is how I learn anyway," Henrichs said. "So to promote that in a non-traditional education setting seemed exciting."

Henrichs graduated from Luverne High School in 2001 before moving to St. Paul, then later to Rhode Island. He returned to Minnesota four years ago, eventually moving back to Luverne. As the southwest Minnesota program came to fruition several business owners recommended he apply for the facilitator position.

Henrichs will serve as an example of a former student who came back home after living far away and built a business in a small town.

"I committed to a community," he said.

Henrichs opened Lord Grizzley Gallery and Coffey Contemporary of Arts and the artist in-residency program on Luverne's Main Street. He runs the business with his wife, Nicole. He'll teach the CEO program in the morning and be available for advice in the afternoon.

Henrichs will spend the rest of April and May visiting with the 20 students to get to know them better. In August, he will hold a parent and student meeting to discuss expectations of the class.

He said he is thankful for the dedicated board and area businesses, both of which have shown interest in the future of students in the area communities. "Growing up in Luverne I did not think that the Luverne business owners were interested in what my future was," he said. "What I've realized in working with business owners, many of them on our board, is it couldn't be farther from the truth. That what they want more than anything is the success of these kids in the communities."