

Andrea Koczur

CATEGORY ONE WINNER



I began my journey with the Clay-Wilkin Head Start program 23 years ago as a young, single mother. Today, I am happily married with five children – four of whom have gone through the Head Start program.

During my early years as a mother, I enrolled my kids in Head Start so I could work my way through college at Minnesota State University – Moorhead. I was raised by a single mother living in poverty, and I was determined not to repeat the cycle.

When my second child started preschool, I became very active in Head Start. I enrolled in a home-based program and even helped get a Head Start classroom up and running in my hometown. When I was elected Policy Council Chairperson, I really began to believe in my potential as a leader.

In addition to the Policy Council, I also joined the Ulen-Hitterdal Early Childhood Family Education Advisory Board. Living in a small, rural school district with limited programming, it was very important to me that all children have access to quality early childhood education. I served on the Ulen-Hitterdal board for 12 years, and I am currently serving as the vice-chair. In this role, I was able to help secure a multi-million dollar bond for the construction of a new K-12 school in Ulen, Minnesota.

All of these experiences helped me learn and grow as a person. My role as a community advocate led to my election as clerk of our township and secretary of the Minnesota Association of Town Boards. I was responsible for assisting local residents access services, as well as training clerks and treasurers around the state. I've served in the local township for 13 years and for the past three years, I have been a member of the Clay County Planning Commission.

I have served nine years on the Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership Board, three of which I served as chair, I am retiring from the Board this year. I'm proud to say that all of my children are in college, or preparing to enter college or the military. Head Start gave our family the support, education and confidence to grow into healthy, successful, contributing members of our community. It would be a tragic loss for communities across Minnesota to lose access to these essential programs because of congressional budget cuts. Head Start changes lives on a daily basis. I hope our elected officials recognize the power of Head Start and do the right thing when it comes to protecting and serving the people in their districts.