Good to Grow!
The biobusiness realm is hot— and Ridgewater is preparing today’s students for the jobs of tomorrow.

Insde!
Learning in a virtual world
College advice for high school students

Special Insert: 2008 Viewbook

Win Free Gas!
Take our confidential Web survey and get a chance to win a $75 gas card! See page 18 for details.

Ridgewater science instructors Lori Anderson and Shawn Mueske
From the President

These are unsettled times. Worldwide markets fluctuate daily, major businesses heretofore thought to be stable have gone under, governments struggle to figure out how to stabilize the economy, and we are in the process of choosing a new leader for our country. People are also nervous about their investments, and it’s easy to be discouraged. However, as one speaker I recently heard put it: Treading water is not a mode of travel.

In this issue you’ll read about opportunities for students in the fields of bioscience and biotechnology; new partnerships with the University of Minnesota, St. Cloud State University, and local companies such as Life Science Innovations; the impact of virtual worlds on education; a decision to make our campuses healthier by going tobacco free; and the successful reaccreditation of our nursing programs. I hope you find the stories as inspiring and encouraging as I do.

I also hope as you read about Dr. Scott Nyberg’s work as a transplant surgeon, Mark Klema’s work as a civil engineer, and Courtney Roering’s career in the pharmaceutical industry, that you will be as proud as I am of the quality educational opportunities that Ridgewater College’s faculty and staff have been providing for years.

While we can’t predict how our financial investments will perform, it seems clear an investment in education pays dividends not just for the individual, but for society as a whole.

Enjoy the magazine!

Douglas W. Allen
President

Spring into Action!

Registration for spring 2009 courses is underway at Ridgewater. You can find out more—and see the complete schedule at www.ridgewater.edu. Just click on “Course Schedules” on the left side of the home page.
# Table of Contents

“*The research you do today is the practice you’ll be doing 20 years from now.*”  
*Scott Nyberg, page 15*

“Students graduating from Ridgewater in the life sciences are going to be doing cutting-edge stuff that they might otherwise not do until graduate school or at a four-year university.”  
*Shawn Mueske, page 13*

“*It makes me feel really good if I can make somebody’s day by saving them money on a generic prescription or educating them about a drug they are taking.*”  
*Courtney Roering, page 23*

## Fall 2008

3  **10 Questions**  
Q&A with Ridgewater Administrative Support Instructor Judy Field.

4  **News & Notes**  
Ridgewater ramps up its OSHA training efforts, the college goes tobacco-free, summer camps offer unique learning opportunities, and more.

9  **Practical Advice**  
Eight steps to help high school juniors and seniors find and get into the right college for them.

10  **Cover Story**  
**Good to Grow**  
Minnesota’s biotech sector is rich with economic potential and in need of workers with scientific skills. Ridgewater College is stepping up to meet the challenge.

15  **Feature Stories**  
**Singular Pursuit**  
Mayo Clinic transplant surgeon and Willmar native Scott Nyberg is closing in on a long-held goal. The journey started at Ridgewater College.

19  **Brave New World**  
A look at Ridgewater’s efforts to make online virtual-world learning an integral part of the classroom of the future.

22  **Graduate Profiles**  
Mark Klema, Courtney Roering, and Nicholas Baker all used their Ridgewater educations to find fulfilling careers.
10 Questions

Ridgewater Administrative Support Instructor
Judy Field

We recently visited with Judy Field, an instructor in the Administrative Support Department on Ridgewater’s Willmar campus. The Belview native was an adjunct instructor in the Business Department at Ridgewater (when it was still known as Willmar Community College) in the 1980s and early 1990s. After leaving to teach business at Willmar High School, she returned to Ridgewater in 2001 and has been a fixture in the college’s Administrative Support Department ever since. Today she teaches courses on everything from Microsoft Word, Excel, and Access to Administrative Office Procedures, Desktop Publishing, Advanced Word Processing, Project Management, Keyboarding, and Oral and Written Communications.

1. **What's the difference between teaching high school students and college students?**
   College students tend to be a little more serious about their learning, and they come with a focus. I enjoy how the nontraditional students come with work and life experiences that enhance the classroom discussions and make the learning more applicable.

2. **What skills do people need today in business?**
   Communication skills are vital. People also need sharp written skills, strong computer skills, and strong interpersonal skills. We work with students in each of these areas.

3. **Is it your hope that many of your students will go on to become executive assistants?**
   That’s what we’re training our students to be. The skills they’re learning here are applicable to any office job. There are a lot of opportunities out there, especially in bigger cities. Our students can go into a wide range of businesses and industries, from churches to manufacturing. Every organization needs office staff. Our placement rate is between 95 and 97 percent.

4. **What business degrees or diplomas does your program offer?**
   Depending on their goals and how in-depth they want their careers to be, students can choose from a range of 17 to 70 credits. In the Administrative Support Department, options include a 17-credit Microsoft Office Specialist certificate; a 32-credit Office Assistant diploma; or a 48-credit diploma or 68- to 70-credit degree as an Administrative Assistant, Legal Administrative Assistant, or Healthcare Administrative Assistant. With the degree option, students can do an internship, which we strongly recommend. They gain experience and get their foot in the door. If they do well, they get a good recommendation. Some of our students have earned full-time positions as a result of their internships.

5. **What are the biggest challenges and rewards in teaching?**
   The challenge is that our students are busy and juggling many things. We have single moms who are working in addition to going to school, for example. Our task is to maintain high standards. The reward is seeing students learn, grow, and gain confidence in themselves. It’s fun to see the light bulb go on when they catch on to something.

6. **Do your former students stay in contact with you?**
   Yesterday I got an e-mail from a student who graduated from our program a few years ago. When she started here, she had not graduated from high school, but earned her GED, got married, had a baby, and then came to Ridgewater. She wrote, “Thanks so much. I’m really enjoying working in an office. I’m thinking about going back to college, and I’m considering going into social work.” She had gained confidence while she was at Ridgewater and learned that she can do well and succeed.

7. **What makes you good at what you do?**
   I think it’s that I have compassion for students; I care about them. When I was in high school, I was an average student, but I had people who were great to me. I had wonderful opportunities and excellent teachers. What makes me come to work is thinking that I can help someone succeed. This isn’t just a job.

8. **How do you keep up with changes in office procedures and computer programs?**
   I take classes. I got my master’s degree in the fall of 2006. I got my undergrad degree from St. Cloud State in business education with an emphasis on marketing management and got my master’s in management from the College of St. Scholastica. It was a dream of mine to do that. Now I can say to my students, “I’ve been there—I work, have a family, and went to grad school.”

9. **If you hadn’t become a teacher, what other career would you have chosen?**
   In ninth grade, when I had to do a career plan, I said I was going to be an interpreter at the United Nations. I had taken French from grade school through high school and was going to take additional classes at St. Cloud State, but I didn’t pursue it. Teaching has served me well. It’s been a perfect match for me.

10. **What makes Ridgewater unique?**
    We care about our students. They know they’re not just a number like they might be at big universities. Smaller class sizes enable students and teachers to have a good rapport. We know them, so when a call comes in for a job opening, we know who would be a good fit.

—Vicki Stavig
Safety Matters
Ridgewater ramps up its OSHA training offerings.

Any business owner will tell you that keeping up with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations is no easy task. They also will tell you, however, that those regulations help prevent work-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths and, if implemented properly, drive down worker’s compensation rates, which has a direct impact on the bottom line.

With those goals in mind, Ridgewater has increased its course offerings to provide training to help area businesses ensure that they are complying with OSHA regulations. “We’ve experienced new growth in the OSHA area in the last six months, which made us realize there is a great demand for training by area businesses,” says Kathy Schwantes, dean of Customized Training and Continuing Education at Ridgewater.

To keep up with those demands, the college also recently added to its staff, which now includes three OSHA experts: Bev Hartzburg, Dave Schutz, and Jill Gould.

Custom-designed training
After assessing a company’s needs, Ridgewater’s OSHA experts design and deliver the training program whenever and wherever the company desires. “We find out what their areas of concern are,” Schwantes says. “That might be a violation, or maybe their insurance company asked that they receive a certain type of training. Then we build a program that meets those needs and conduct the training on their site when it is convenient for them. We’re not just 8 to 5.”

A recent addition to Ridgewater’s roster of OSHA training programs is respirator fit testing for people such as fire-fighters or auto body workers who must wear the devices while on the job to keep from breathing in smoke, dust particles, or fumes. The program addresses everything from use and maintenance to cleaning and storage of respiratory protective equipment. It also includes a respirator fit test that ensures the mask size and model fits the face properly.

“We received the quantitative fit testing equipment in August,” Schwantes says. “It’s an exciting enhancement to our program. That equipment allows the testing of all types of tight-fitting masks, including disposable half- and full-face masks, and provides an objective assessment of facial fit and a direct numerical result called a Fit Factor.”

Industry-specific options
Ridgewater also offers OSHA training targeted to specific industries such as construction, as well as a general course that addresses a variety of topics for general industry safety and health. Other course offerings include basic electrical, blood-borne pathogens, CPR, fall protection, recordkeeping requirements, scaffold erection, soil sampling, and trenching. The college also works with businesses to assist with OSHA audits and understanding regulations.

The need for customized training programs such as OSHA is increasing, and Ridgewater is pleased that so many companies are turning to the college to provide it for them. “In fiscal year 2008, which ended June 30th, our department provided more than 80,000 hours of training to more than 14,000 students,” Schwantes says. “That includes OSHA. We’re seeing steady growth and have great expectations for 2009.”

—Vicki Stavig

Meet Jill Gould
Jill Gould joined Ridgewater in late September as a customized training representative and OSHA coordinator. With a master’s degree in Industrial Safety from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and nearly 15 years of experience, she brings a high level of expertise to the job.

“I was a safety investigator with Minnesota OSHA for 11 years and then spent three years as an occupational health and safety specialist with Affiliated Community Medical Centers in Willmar,” Gould says. “My experience in the private sector adds a dimension of understanding to employers’ day-to-day challenges and industry trends in safety management.”

Gould looks forward to working with Ridgewater clients. “Providing employees with safety training completes a circle of compliance and injury prevention that minimizes worker’s compensation costs and reduces premiums,” she says. “Most importantly, at the end of each day, employees leave work whole and healthy.”

—V.S.
Making the Grade

Ridgewater's two-week Minnesota Manufacturing Camp event offered an innovative way for businesses to connect with a specialized segment of the workforce.

Last June, Ridgewater's Hutchinson campus was one of three sites around the state to host a Minnesota Manufacturing Camp. Designed for young adults at least 16 years old with disabilities, the free camp offered a unique opportunity to explore high-wage manufacturing careers.

The camp met for six hours per day, four days per week, from June 16 to 26 at Ridgewater's Hutchinson campus. Hands-on learning made up a major part of the activities; participants created metal projects by cutting, grinding, and welding with industry equipment in a safe environment. They also got a first-hand look at manufacturing in action by touring area businesses in such realms as machining, metal and plastic processing, computerized machine operations and programming, tool and die making, and more.

The Minnesota Manufacturing Camp program is sponsored by Pathways to Employment, an initiative made up of Ridgewater College, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, the Minnesota Department of Education and its affiliated local school districts, and the University of Minnesota.

For more information on the camps, contact Alyssa Klein of Pathways to Employment at 763-785-6497 or alyssa.klein@state.mn.us.

—Sam Bowen

NON-DESTRUCTIVE ENGINEERING
A Career to Build On

Founded in 1957, Braun Intertec has grown into a national leader in engineering and environmental services. We have built a comprehensive scope of services in engineering and environmental consulting, materials and analytical laboratories, and testing services. We help our clients with site selection and planning, design, construction, operations and property management.

We are seeking entry level and experienced NDE Technicians. Qualified entry level candidates will have an IRRSP card for industrial radiography, a minimum of a Level I (ASNT-TC-1A) guidelines in NDE methods which include magnetic particle, liquid penetrant, and ultrasonic, radiographic and visual inspections. Experienced candidates will have an IRRSP card for radiography, requires a minimum of Level II (ASNT-TC-1A) guidelines in methods of radiography, magnetic particle, liquid penetrant, ultrasonics, and visual. AWS certified welding certification and UBC special inspection certification for structural steel and/or ASNT Level III certifications preferred. All candidates should have excellent communication skills and PC proficiency for preparation of reports and documentation.

Braun Intertec offers an employee-centered culture with competitive salaries and benefits and great potential for career growth and development. Learn more about the company by visiting our website:

www.braunintertec.com

Please send your letter of interest and resume via email to: jobs@braunintertec.com

Braun Intertec, Human Resources,
11001 Hampshire Ave South,
Minneapolis, MN 55438

EEO/AA
Drug Free Workplace
It’s official: Ridgewater is now officially a tobacco-free zone. At the start of the Fall 2008 semester, the college joined other higher education institutions in Minnesota by implementing a no-tobacco policy on its Willmar and Hutchinson campuses.

While the college’s new policy is not an attempt to force students or employees to quit using tobacco products, it is asking them to refrain from doing so in buildings and on college property. “This policy change was driven by a number of factors, but primarily by the desire to provide a healthy environment for our students, employees, and visitors,” says Ridgewater President Douglas Allen. “As an institution of higher education, we believe we have a responsibility to take a leadership role on this major health issue, and allowing tobacco product use on our campuses runs counter to that educational mission.”

Over the coming months, the college also will be working with its staff and local medical professionals to develop and offer programs for employees and students who choose to quit using tobacco products or who need assistance in coping with the change.

—Sam Bowen

Stephanie grew up in Marshall, Minnesota, but her medical career has taken her to Iowa, Michigan, Hawaii and Illinois. Now she’s glad to be back. And we’re glad she chose ACMC.

Stephanie says, “If you like being part of a close community, want a safe and fun atmosphere for your family, and want to really know your patients, then ACMC in southwest Minnesota is a great place to be a Physician Assistant!”

Affiliated Community Medical Centers is the largest, fastest-growing multi-specialty health network in outstate Minnesota.

**ACMC currently has exciting practice opportunities for Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners at many of our eleven clinic locations. Call or go online today!**

**Kari Bredberg,** **Physician Recruitment**  
**(320) 231-6366 | karib@acmc.com**

101 Willmar Avenue SW, Willmar, MN 56201 | [www.acmc.com](http://www.acmc.com)
Happy Campers

Ridgewater's summer day camp program offers participants hands-on fun, learning, and a chance to start thinking about their futures.

Many parents will tell you that enticing children to enroll in summer learning programs is no easy task. The parents of some 100 children in Willmar and Hutchinson, however, are singing a different tune. Their children enjoyed the learning experiences they had during Ridgewater College's Summer Camp so much that they were begging for more.

The key to their enthusiasm: an extensive and eclectic mix of classes, all geared to exposing fifth- through eighth-grade students to options they will have as they continue their educations and decide what they want to do with their lives. “The camp provides students with a way to begin thinking about college and their future careers,” says Tari Niemeyer, program manager for the college's Center of Customized and Continuing Education. “They students are full of enthusiasm and don’t want to leave when the camp ends.”

Hands-on learning

And why would they? The hands-on curriculum exposes them to everything from auto mechanics, fireworks, acting, canoeing, and veterinary medicine to cooking, photography, robotics, digital photography, and crime scene investigation. Classes are taught by Ridgewater faculty and staff and by people from the community who are experts in their fields. Members of the University of Minnesota 4H Club and the Minnesota Workforce Center's youth program in Hutchinson also worked with campers on team building and leadership skills.

“This past summer was the fifth year of the program on the Willmar campus and the fourth on the Hutchinson campus,” Niemeyer says. “The camp runs for four days on each campus, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.”

Ridgewater's 2009 Summer Camp is set for July 27-30 on the Willmar campus, and July 20-23 on the Hutchinson campus. New this year, the camps will be open for students who have completed grades 4, 5, 6, or 7. For more information on the camp, contact Tari Niemeyer at tari.niemeyer@ridgewater.edu. Scholarships are also available through the Ridgewater College Foundation and the West Central Integration Collaborative.

—Vicki Stavig
The National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) has granted Ridgewater's associate degree Nursing and Practical Nursing programs continuing accreditation. By meeting all conditions of accreditation, Ridgewater will maintain this status through the next review, which will take place in 2016.

NLNAC accreditation is a voluntary, self-regulatory process that independently evaluates nursing programs against the highest national standards of educational quality. The accreditation process itself focuses on seven core components: mission and governance, faculty, students, curriculum and instruction, resources, integrity, and educational effectiveness. It also helps the college focus on continuous improvement by illustrating areas that need further development and fostering self-examination.

“The greatest benefit of accreditation is to our students,” says Lynn Johnson, Ridgewater’s director of Nursing, “It helps lessen barriers when they elect to advance their degrees. Because it is a peer-review process, other institutions and programs recognize that NLNAC-accredited programs have taken the extra step to strengthen educational quality. Therefore, our investment in continued accreditation for our nursing programs fosters educational access and mobility for our graduates. In addition, there are health care institutions/systems that will only hire graduates of accredited programs, adding further value to our graduates through broad access to employment opportunities.”

For more information on Ridgewater’s Nursing program, go to www.ridgewater.edu, click on “Future Students” and then on “Nursing” in the drop-down menu.

—Sam Bowen
A Simple Plan

Attention high school juniors and seniors! Here are eight steps to help you and your parents find and get into the college of your choice.

As most high school students know, junior and senior years are the time to make big decisions about your post-secondary future. With that in mind, here's a list of sensible steps to help you through this exciting but sometimes overwhelming process.

**Step #1: Answer the big questions**
If you haven't already, make a list of the colleges you're interested in attending and programs/majors you may want to study. While doing so, keep in mind your answers to the following questions:
- Do you want to attend a large university, a small college, or a technical college?
- How do you plan to pay for your education?
- Do you want to live on campus or commute?

**Step #2: Talk it over**
Now's the time to make an appointment with your high school guidance counselor and discuss what you want from a college. Your counselor may be able to make good recommendations and help you find schools with programs and majors that interest you.

**Step #3: Schedule campus visits**
“Your will never know if a college ‘feels’ right until you actually visit the campus,” says Matt Gustafson, a counselor on Ridgewater’s Willmar campus, noting that you should visit several colleges as part of your search process.

Gustafson also suggests meeting with admissions representatives to learn about the cost, admissions process and deadlines, financial aid, and scholarship deadlines. Ask key questions about:
- class size
- ratio of instructors to students
- campus resources
- job placement rates for technical programs
- housing options.

**Step #4: Make a list, check it twice**
You can maximize the value of your campus visits by using the following checklist as a guideline:
- I feel comfortable here.
- The school has the academic programs I want.
- I believe I could get a job in my field with a degree from this school.
- I like the size of this college.
- I like where it's located.

**Step #5: Beef up your test scores**
You may already have taken the ACT and SAT and received your scores, but there's still time to improve them by taking the tests again. While most two-year colleges don't require the SAT or ACT, they're necessary for students wanting to start their degrees at four-year colleges.

**Step #6: Write to the point**
Some colleges require a letter of recommendation, so speak with a favorite teacher, advisor, coach, or employer and ask if he or she will write one for you. Keep in mind that some schools require a college admissions essay.

**Step #7: Check out financial aid options**
Begin researching ways to pay for school (scholarships, financial aid, etc.). You and your parents need to complete your income tax forms as soon as possible after January 1 of your senior year, as you need those figures to fill out the Free Application for Financial Student Aid form. (For more detailed information on financial aid, go to www.ridgewater.edu, click on “Future Students” and then on “Financial Aid” in the drop-down menu.)

**Step #8: Talk it over and get to work**
Talk with your parents about which schools they would like you to consider, narrow down your list, and begin filling out applications. There's no rule about how many schools you can apply to. Seniors typically mail their applications in fall or winter. Applying early has its advantages, Gustafson points out. “Popular technical programs at Ridgewater, for example, fill up quickly,” he says. “Some might require that students apply in early September for the following school year.”

To apply to Ridgewater, all you need is an application form, a $20 application fee, and your high school transcript (or GED certificate). To find out more, go to www.ridgewater.edu, click on “Future Students” and then on “Admissions” in the drop-down menu.

Once you are admitted to college, you may be required to take placement tests, attend orientation sessions, etc., so it’s important to stay in communication with your chosen school before you even step foot on campus as a freshman.

Gustafson suggests that students be involved throughout the entire process with their parents’ guidance. “Choosing a college is one of the most important decisions you will make, so do as much research as possible and be involved in every step,” he says.

Keep in mind, he adds, that the goal is to find a college that suits you and provides an environment where you can flourish. The process can be overwhelming, but relax: You've been preparing for this for the past couple of years. "It's also important to know there's help," Gustafson says. "We're here to help students make a successful transition from high school to college."

To schedule a visit at Ridgewater College, call 800-722-1151. Or visit www.ridgewater.edu and click on the “Future Students” link.

—Liz Wolf
The 21st Century has often been described as the Age of Biology—a time when scientists’ growing knowledge of living organisms will lead to huge advances in medicine, agriculture, environmental science, and technology. It’s an era that demands scientifically literate citizens and workers with top-notch training.

Minnesota’s long history as a leader in the medical device industry—the world’s first pacemaker was developed here in the late 1950s—makes the state particularly primed to grow biotech businesses. One state study indicates that Minnesota is 24 percent more dependent on biotech businesses than other states. That’s not a bad thing, though. On average, workers in the biobusiness realm earn wages more than one-and-a-half times higher than other private enterprise workers. And every job in biobusiness generates nearly six other jobs. To remain competitive in this important sector, however, the state “needs to make sure the workforce is there,” says Jenni Swenson, dean of instruction at Ridgewater College.

As Swenson adds, part of that workforce will be trained at Ridgewater. In the past year, the college has revised degree programs, formed new partnerships, purchased new equipment, and expanded its focus on working with local companies to improve its ability to train workers for biobusiness. Here’s a look at these efforts—which have attracted significant funding from the state to carry them out and which are positioning the college and the region to prosper for decades to come.

Lori Anderson and Shawn Mueske

Good to Grow

Minnesota’s biotech sector is rich with economic potential and in need of workers with scientific skills. Ridgewater College is stepping up to meet the challenge.
When complete, Ridgewater’s Biobusiness Clearinghouse will offer a powerful resource for area biotech businesses and educators.

As biobusinesses grow in Minnesota, the need for collaboration and knowledge sharing among companies and educational institutions is increasing. Pulling together the resources of education and the needs of business will be a primary focus of the new Biobusiness Clearinghouse to be located at Ridgewater College.

Funded with a $375,000 grant from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU), the clearinghouse will be a “one-stop shop,” for businesses and educators, according to Lori Anderson, a Ridgewater biology instructor who is involved in developing the clearinghouse. The clearinghouse will include links to a variety of resources for those teaching biology and working in bio-based businesses, such as notices of conferences, professional development and internship opportunities, educational materials, and networking events.

It also will be a repository for a wide range of experiments and lessons that organizations can use to increase knowledge of workers and students on biotechnology issues. Learning object repositories, as they are called, are powerful tools for spreading information because they bring together resources from a wide area, says Jenni Swenson, dean of instruction at Ridgewater, who helped set up learning object repositories in a previous position at the University of Minnesota. The learning objects are all discrete, reusable, and digital, and users can easily search the repository to find the material they need. “A learning object can be anything that can be used in a classroom,” Swenson says. “It could be a PowerPoint presentation, an important picture, a crossword puzzle for high school students, video clips that show a process, or a laboratory experiment with complete instructions. The clearinghouse will eventually have vast resources that anyone in Minnesota can use.”

Setting up the clearinghouse will be a multi-year process because it involves not only collecting the learning objects, but making sure that they have been reviewed by experts in the field and that they can be made available without violating copyright or intellectual property laws. The Biobusiness Clearinghouse is expected to go online in 2010, says Anderson, although the project will not be completed for at least three years.

For more information on the Biobusiness Clearinghouse, contact Jenni Swenson at 320-222-5204, jenni.swenson@ridgewater.edu.

Sophisticated new lab facilities are opening new doors for Ridgewater biology students.

When students step into Ridgewater’s biology laboratories, they are entering a world far more advanced than the familiar realm of beaker tubes and slide smears. A host of new equipment that has been purchased by and donated to the college is allowing students to perform advanced experiments and training them on state-of-the-art tools similar to what is used in today’s biobusiness industry.

“The growth in biotechnology has been coming for a long time,” says Shawn Mueske, a Ridgewater science instructor who has been involved in redesigning the college’s biology programs. “Students graduating from Ridgewater in the life sciences will be doing cutting-edge stuff that they might not otherwise do until graduate school or at a four-year university.”

In addition to enhancing biology classes, the new equipment will be used by students studying forensics, agriculture, and environmental science, says Mueske. The equipment gives Ridgewater students the opportunity to develop expertise on machines they are likely to encounter in biotech industry jobs. For instance, Willmar-based Epitopix, which develops and manufactures vaccines for use in the veterinary field, recently donated a fermenter to the college. Fermenters are used to grow microorganisms under
“Students graduating from Ridgewater in the life sciences will be doing cutting-edge stuff that they might not otherwise do until graduate school or at a four-year university.”

—Shawn Mueske

controlled conditions and are key to biotech processes such as ethanol manufacturing. Another example: Through connections with Bushmills Ethanol in Atwater, Ridgewater science instructors are developing a laboratory exercise during which students will make ethanol, just as it is done at Bushmills. “We’re basically taking their design and replicating it for a college classroom,” says Mueske.

Another new piece of equipment in the lab is a polymerase chain reactor, which allows students to replicate DNA via a process used in forensics and other biotech-related fields. The college also recently purchased an electrophoresis unit, which is used in cell biology to separate molecules and study molecular genetics.

The purchases are part of an ongoing initiative. Ridgewater’s laboratories were renovated about five years ago, and several pieces of equipment were added then, including laminar flow hoods, which allow students to safely work with microbes and other organisms that could be dangerous if airborne, and autoclaves, which are used to sterilize lab equipment. Having experience on up-to-date equipment not only helps students when they move to four-year institutions to complete a bachelor’s degree, but also gives an edge in the job market to those students who move from Ridgewater to full-time work, says Mueske.

Partners in Progress

An innovative partnership between Ridgewater and St. Cloud State University is creating a host of new opportunities for biology-minded students.

Students interested in pursuing an associate’s degree in biology at Ridgewater in the future will encounter a more rigorous curriculum and a guarantee of acceptance to St. Cloud State University’s (SCSU) biology program, if they successfully complete the program.

As part of its efforts to strengthen bioscience programs at Ridgewater, the college is negotiating a partnership with SCSU to coordinate introductory courses for biology majors and smooth the transition of Ridgewater graduates into the programs at SCSU. Instructor Shawn Mueske designed the new program during a recent sabbatical from teaching. He worked with area biotech firms to determine the kinds of skills future employees would need. “The companies had a whole litany of skills they were looking for,” Mueske says. “A lot of the labs we have are designed around these local needs.”

In the new curriculum, students will take year-long courses in biology and chemistry during their first year at Ridgewater. They also will take courses in organic chemistry and microbiology, as well as required courses in communications and math. The new curriculum also includes a class entitled Introduction to Bioscience Technology, which Mueske considers a “flagship course to get people interested in biotechnology.” Other courses will be offered in areas such as biotech regulation.

For students who may not be interested in pursuing a bachelor’s degree through SCSU, Ridgewater faculty are working to develop a third-year option, says Mueske. This option would require an additional year at Ridgewater, more coursework, and an internship at a local biotech company. A timeline for that program has not been determined yet.
Chris Huisinga is a Ridgewater graduate who wanted to stay in the area. After earning an associate's degree from Ridgewater, he graduated from the University of St. Thomas and asked for a job at Life Science Innovations (LSI), a Willmar-based firm that his family runs. He was gently told to go prove himself elsewhere. He did just that, going to work for Wells Fargo for much of the next decade. Eventually, he made his way back to the family business. “This is probably the most anti-nepotism company anywhere,” says Huisinga, who now works as director of business development for LSI, which is a holding company for 14 businesses that all sprang from his great-grandfather’s turkey hatchery, Willmar Poultry Inc. “This company has always done a lot of research and development, and some of the ideas that came from that were so good that they became companies.”

While the family firm may be anti-nepotism, it is pro-Willmar and its surrounding areas. In 2005, while looking for additional space for two of its companies, LSI executives toured the old Willmar State Hospital property, which consisted of 110 acres with more than 500,000 square feet of space overlooking Willmar Lake. Local officials were hoping to redevelop the property, which had been closed by the state. “Fortunately, our leadership could see through the cracked paint to the potential of the property,” says Huisinga.

Now called the MinnWest Technology Campus, the property is home to 14 companies, including LSI subsidiaries Willmar Poultry, the country’s largest turkey hatchery; Epitopix, a supplier of veterinary medicines; and Midwest Data, a diversified communications company with expertise in custom billing. Other organizations on the campus include agricultural technology businesses, marketing and design firms, and legal assistants. MinnWest recently signed an agreement with the University of Minnesota to open a research and outreach branch on the campus, and technology companies from as far as Seattle have considered moving to the site. For leaders of these high-tech organizations, the region offers both personal and business benefits. “Many scientists are sick of the rat race in metro areas,” says Huisinga, who lived in Minneapolis, San Francisco, and south Florida before moving back to Willmar. “Here they can have a more reasonable commute and a more holistic lifestyle.”

In addition, the location on a campus with other businesses in similar industries provides tangible and intangible benefits. LSI has invested about $10 million in the project to bring the historic buildings to the standard necessary for technology businesses. Companies on the campus share a cafeteria, a day-care center, an auditorium, and an exercise area with a pool. In addition, being located near other technology businesses encourages collaborations among firms and a cross-pollination of ideas, says Huisinga, who adds that he believes the campus and its critical mass of technology companies will attract even more tech talent to the area.

**Workforce development**

Another key draw for LSI and the other businesses is the steady development of a workforce that will enable them to continue to produce and fill jobs as the biotech
industry grows over the next several decades. Partnerships with Ridgewater and other MnSCU institutions are part of that growth plan and may include having a classroom on the campus, having Ridgewater provide custom training for companies based on the campus, greater internship opportunities for Ridgewater students, and increased outreach to area high school students. “We want students to be excited about the opportunities available to them in their hometown,” says Huisinga.

While specifics of the partnership with Ridgewater have yet to be worked out, LSI executives have been “extremely supportive of us,” says Swenson. “Because they have workforce needs, we are trying to figure out what we can do to assist them. With businesses growing there as fast as they are, they will need the numbers of students. It’s a great partnership.”

Mary Lahr Schier is a Northfield-based writer.

“We want students to be excited about the opportunities available to them in their hometown.”

— Chris Huisinga

Biological Sciences at Ridgewater

Ridgewater 64-credit Biology A.S. degree program is designed for students interested in such fields as cell biology, environmental science, fish and wildlife management, forestry, genetics, and microbiology.

For more information, go to www.ridgewater.edu, click on “Programs and Courses,” and then click on “Biological Sciences.”
After years of schooling, training, and research, Mayo Clinic transplant surgeon and Willmar native Scott Nyberg is closing in on a long-held goal. The journey started at Ridgewater College.

By Meleah Maynard

Ask Scott Nyberg what inspired him to become a surgeon and you’ll get an answer that you probably weren’t expecting: golf. As a boy, growing up in Willmar, he got to know a local surgeon who lived a few doors down. The doctor, who was well respected in the community, was very busy. But he always had time to play golf. “I remember thinking to...
from the Women’s Auxiliary,” he recalls. “The whole experience was a good transition for me, and I had one-on-one time.”

Fast forward to today. Not only is Nyberg a good golfer, he’s also a transplant surgeon at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester and a professor of surgery in Mayo’s medical school. He is also chair of surgical research and director of the Mayo Liver Support Laboratory. Founded by Nyberg in 1996, the laboratory is funded by the National Institute of Health and develops support devices for patients with liver failure and sepsis.

While he clearly enjoys all of his work, Nyberg describes his research in the lab as the culmination of a dream that began with a comment a teacher made when he was a high school senior taking classes at Ridgewater College (then known as Willmar Community College) in 1977. This was long before the Post-Secondary Enrollment Option program allowed high school students to take college-level classes. So Nyberg and his teachers had to make a good case for why he should be allowed to attend community college since so few students were doing so at the time. “I remember I got in and my first year’s tuition was even covered by a scholarship from the Women’s Auxiliary,” he recalls.

After attending his high school classes in the morning Nyberg, who also participated in swimming, football, and golf, would head to Ridgewater to take courses in the afternoon. Though he excelled in science and math, he wasn’t sure what he wanted to study in college. He talked about this with his Ridgewater chemistry instructor, who told him “that I needed to do something with my life, something meaningful.” Nyberg says. “I thought a lot about that.”

**Steps along the way**

It was Nyberg’s high school math and science teachers who suggested he attend Ridgewater College. A straight-A student, he was also a member of the school’s math team, which regularly competed in and won state contests. Ridgewater, the teachers reasoned, would help bolster Nyberg’s learning before he went on to a four-year college. They were right. “The instruction there came straight from the teacher who knew it best,” he says. “There was a lot of one-on-one time.”

Nyberg was valedictorian of his high school class in 1978. After high school, he studied at Ridgewater for a year as part of a pre-engineering group. The students took all of their classes together and spent long days working on projects. “We were all pretty close,” Nyberg remembers. “The whole experience was a good transition for me, and I had access to classes that I wouldn’t have access to otherwise because [Willmar’s high school] didn’t offer Advanced Placement courses at that time.”

But Nyberg had yet to find out just how beneficial his Ridgewater experience would be. The same high school teacher who urged him to go to community college also pushed him to apply to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He jumped at the chance.

During his application interview at MIT, Nyberg was asked by the chairman of the mathematics and physics department what textbook he had studied at Ridgewater. “I told him and he said, ‘Oh, I know the author of that book. It’s a good book,’” he recalls. “So now I always joke that a year of physics at Ridgewater was equal to a year and a half at MIT.”

Nyberg did well at MIT, earning As in every class and graduating in three years with a double major in chemical
engineering and economics. Toward the end of his junior year, he also won an ARCO Chemical Co. scholarship awarded to the top student in class. Given his community college background, his success was somewhat perplexing to his peers and his teachers. “Instructors would say, ‘You went to community college? How could you do so well?’” he recalls. “But what could they say? The proof was in the test scores. I got the basics of physics and calculus at Ridgewater and I was very well prepared when I got to MIT.”

In 1982, Nyberg went on to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore to study medicine. He’d worked part-time in an MIT lab on a research project looking at EKG patterns and trying to understand how the heart works and who is at risk for heart attacks. He’d also performed heart surgery on animals and he thought he wanted to be a heart transplant surgeon. “However, the reality is that there just aren’t enough hearts to do transplants on a regular basis,” says Nyberg.

While at Johns Hopkins, Nyberg worked with renowned surgeon John Najarian, whom he saw as “a sort of father figure.” Najarian encouraged Nyberg to enhance his medical skills by earning a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering. “He saw the value in developing new techniques,” Nyberg explains. “And he had this expression: The
research you do today is the practice you’ll be doing 20 years from now.”

In 1986, Nyberg took Najarian’s advice and began work on a Ph.D. in biomedical and chemical engineering at the University of Minnesota. After completing it, he spent five more years at the U of M as a surgery resident and another year on a fellowship training to be a transplant surgeon. It was during this time when, in 1989, he began work on developing an artificial liver.

Pursuit of the goal became Nyberg’s passion, and his research continues today at Mayo. While he still golfs and enjoys his time away from the lab, creating an artificial liver is that all-important chance to do something meaningful with his life. “You never want to be overconfident, but I very much enjoy what I’m doing right now,” he says. “I take care of patients and I run this lab where we’re developing this device, so it’s what I’ve always wanted to do.”

Meleah Maynard is a Minneapolis freelance writer.
Online virtual-world learning is quickly becoming a reality. Ridgewater is ramping up its efforts to make it an integral part of the classroom of the future.

Anyone who’s paged through a science textbook knows roughly what a molecule looks like. But how many people have been inside a molecule, walking through it and studying its chemical properties and component atoms? Well, nobody, of course. That sci-fi future is still a ways off. But a simulation of such otherworldly experiences for students is a reality now, thanks to the educational applications in the online virtual world environment known as Second Life.

Ridgewater is currently working with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU) to develop an environment in which Second Life becomes far more than a novelty or a supplement to the learning experience. The idea will someday be to make Second Life an integral part of the classroom.

Virtual worlds
What exactly is Second Life? It’s the kind of technological phenomenon that people either know everything about or nothing about. For the uninitiated, it’s an Internet-based virtual world (located at www.secondlife.com) in which “residents” can create an identity (known as an “avatar”), meet people, buy land and build their own environment, or purchase an existing one. It’s technically a free online role-playing game, but there are no rules and no boundaries—users (there are more than 9 million around the world) have total freedom to create places and scenarios, and to interact as if they were indeed living a second life.

Many Second Life cultures are formed around arts, sports, and games, but groups can also be formed that represent real-life communities. For instance, a number of major corporations, including Coca-Cola and Adidas, participate in

“We want these educational settings to be truly immersive, and to present ways of learning that you wouldn’t have access to in the real world.”
—Jenni Swenson

MnSCU Island on Second Life.
Second Life as a means of marketing and team building. Or, as the administrators of Second Life itself put it, the application allows residents to “use simulation safely to enhance experiential learning while allowing individuals to practice skills, try new ideas, and learn from their mistakes.”

Given Second Life’s potential to simulate environments and bring people together, it was only a matter of time before educational institutions began seeing what it had to offer. Second Life also has educational applications in areas that benefit from environments that simulate real-life situations. For example, a number of hospitals use Second Life in nursing training, setting up scripts in which a virtual patient speaks to students, who then must respond to the patient accordingly.

Ridgewater in Second Life
A growing number of universities such as Harvard and Princeton have begun offering classes in Second Life, and now MnSCU and Ridgewater are in the process of establishing their own Second Life presence. Late in 2006, MnSCU established a space—MnSCU Island—in Second Life to conduct a range of pilot programs and classes in immersive virtual worlds. While some pilots will be in instructional technology and student services, MnSCU also plans to explore applications of virtual worlds in others areas of information technology.

A handful of MnSCU schools have either become involved directly with the ongoing development of the island, or are planning to. Ridgewater is among the schools that intend to jump in feet-first. The college recently received a grant from MnSCU that it’s using to build a “Best Practices Pavilion” on MnSCU Island, says Jenni Swenson, Ridgewater’s dean of instruction. “When you get into Second Life—with its 9 million people, and everyone having their own islands—it’s really daunting to try to find educational value,” she says. “It’s packed with it, but there’s so much to see and do that it’s time-consuming to find the quality education.”

Swenson notes that Ridgewater’s pavilion will house several clickable Second Life links—or SLurls—that mark particularly valuable Second Life locations. The pavilion also will include a number of tools that visitors can use, such as whiteboards, a PowerPoint presentation builder, and tours of islands related to class topics. Another valuable tool is the universal translator, which can instantly turn English text into another language for non-English speakers, or vice-versa. “If you type in something in English, somebody else can read it in Spanish,” says Swenson. “That gives us opportunities to work with people globally.”

Next steps
In developing the Ridgewater pavilion, Swenson and other Ridgewater faculty members looked at programs at various MnSCU universities, and themes within those programs in an effort to provide something of value for as many students as possible. Among the study program areas that will likely have a presence on the island are industry; manufacturing; trades and training; science tech; engineering and math; humanities and education; health sciences; human and public services; communications and information technologies; and administration, business finance, and marketing. “Those are areas that we’ll be grouping these different islands in, and where we’ll collect the tools that might apply to each one,” says Swenson. “If we find a tool that’s specific to marketing, we’ll make sure it’s in the marketing area on the pavilion.”

From an educational standpoint, the Second Life experience promises to be most vivid when it’s used to take students places they could never go in real life: studying the formation of lava inside a
volcano, walking through the ruins of a Roman coliseum, or as mentioned, examining microscopic matter from the inside. “We want these educational settings to be truly immersive, and to present ways of learning that you wouldn’t have access to in the real world,” says Swenson. “It’s those kinds of things that make Second Life so valuable.”

Paradigm shift
At Ridgewater, Swenson and her staff spent last fall preaching the Second Life gospel to faculty, who are enthusiastically getting on board with the project. A number of instructors are now working with Swenson to figure out ways in which the classroom experience can be enhanced or even re-created in Second Life. “Our project is to reach all MnSCU faculty who are interested in pursuing any educational opportunities that are presented by Second Life,” she says.

MnSCU Island already has gathering places such as amphitheatres, according to Swenson. With Second Life’s voiceover and translating capabilities, it’s already being used by Ridgewater’s Spanish instruction faculty to allow them to interact online with students. “Eventually, the idea is for us to figure out which classes would be appropriate for being conducted entirely in Second Life,” she says.

Educators from all over the world are scouring Second Life for its educational value, all the while developing learning communities and discussing how to use this brave new virtual world to provide an enhanced learning experience for students. “People aren’t always quick to understand what Second Life is about, but once they do, they get on board quickly,” Swenson says. “It could drastically change the way classes are conceived and taught.”

Dan Heilman is a St. Paul-based freelance writer.

“People aren’t always quick to understand what Second Life is all about, but once they do, they get on board quickly. It could drastically change the way classes are conceived and taught.”

—Jenni Swenson
There was never any doubt in Mark Klema’s mind that he would start his higher education at Ridgewater. It was affordable, he lived nearby in Kerkhoven, and all four of his older siblings had attended the college and were working successfully in their chosen fields. But he did have some doubts about what he wanted to do for a career.

“I wanted to consider a couple of different options—a technical degree as well as preparing for a bachelor’s degree—so I started out taking some general courses before I figured out that engineering was a career I would enjoy,” says Klema, age 27. “And whether [you want to go into] chemical, civil, or electrical engineering, the first two years are basically the same courses.”

Experience as a summer intern at the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) headquarters in Willmar after his freshman and sophomore years reinforced his career-path choice. “Mn/DOT does a lot of civil engineering for roads and highways,” he says. “I liked the work and it gave me a peek at what it would be like to be a civil engineer.”

Klema graduated from Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg High School in 2000 and entered Ridgewater the following fall. “Some people think that if you go to a community college instead of a university, you get an inferior education,” he says. “I believe you can get a good education anywhere if you apply yourself. You just have to find the place that’s the best fit for you.”

Ridgewater was an ideal fit for Klema. “The instructors are fantastic and I can’t say enough about how challenging and applicable the classes were,” he says. “It’s amazing what I learned. Ridgewater gave me a sound educational foundation and it made the transfer process to the University of Minnesota smooth and easy.”

Klema completed the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum at Ridgewater in the spring of 2002 and transferred to the U of M that fall. “If you do well at Ridgewater and apply to the U as a transfer student, you will likely be accepted,” says Klema. “My friends and I were well prepared for our junior year in engineering and we were all accepted at the colleges of our choice. I hit the ground running and was ready to grow.”

Klema gives credit to the character and quality of the Ridgewater faculty and staff. “They are very focused on teaching,” he says, singling out physics instructor Bill Benson (now retired) and his son, chemistry instructor John Benson. “Any [Ridgewater faculty member] could teach the same subjects at the U of M.”

As a typically busy student, Klema had a work-study assignment in Ridgewater’s chemistry lab, was an English tutor, and played the trombone in the community band for college credit. He did not have a full- or part-time job. “I was blessed with some scholarships, I took out a few loans, and I worked at Mn/DOT over two summers,” he says. “That way, I could really enjoy my college experience.”
An organic chemistry course at Ridgewater not only fulfilled a pharmacy prerequisite for Courtney Roering, it introduced her to a new hobby—making root beer in her kitchen.

Roering, age 24, earned an A.A. degree from Ridgewater in 2004 and became a licensed pharmacist in July 2008. She took all of her prerequisites at Ridgewater before transferring to the University of Minnesota’s College of Pharmacy and receiving her Ph.D. A key step along that path was the organic chemistry course taught by Ron Haraldson. “He made the class interesting and fun,” says Roering. “It was a close-knit class of about 10 students, so when one of our fellow students quit smoking, we all went out to lunch to celebrate, including Ron. We also learned to make TNT and set it on fire. It was a small quantity and only a little spark, but it was pretty cool.”

Roering, who grew up in Belgrade and went to Belgrade-Brooton-Elrosa High School, started taking college courses at Ridgewater while she was still in high school and continued at the college because she liked the instructors, it was affordable, and it was close to home. It was also a natural fit in that three of her 11 siblings attended the college. “I really appreciated Ridgewater when I started taking courses at the University of Minnesota,” she says. “Adjusting to the bigger campus and larger classes was a bit of a struggle the first year. At Ridgewater, the instructors are more willing to help you and give you individual attention. I think they really care more.”

Chemistry and curiosity
Roering isn’t sure what initially drew her to the pharmacy field, but she liked the combination of science and interacting with people. “I was interested in chemistry, I have a curious nature, and not many people know much about drugs,” she says. “I also love the contact with people. It makes me feel really good if I can make somebody’s day by saving them money on a generic prescription or educating them about a drug they are taking.”

Roering worked for Target as a pharmacy intern during the four years she was at the U of M. In her final year, she “shadowed” pharmacists in different locations—doing what they do—and learned more about the business side of the pharmacy industry. She liked the business aspects so much, in fact, that she has moved to St. Cloud and is now taking prerequisites for the MBA program at St. Cloud State University. She also continues at Target as a “floater,” filling in for pharmacists on vacation or sick leave. “I want to use my pharmacy and business degrees to make a bigger impact on more patients,” she says. “Pharmacy careers are changing. Laws are changing. Patients are getting drugs from multiple physicians and pharmacies. But no one sits down and focuses on a patient’s entire drug therapy—including over-the-counter medications and herbal supplements—in order to optimize their care. I want to be able to develop this service for the retail setting.”

Whenever Roering is in Willmar for the day, she stops at Ridgewater to see Ron Haraldson and, a few times, she has spoken to his class about pharmacy school. She also has also knocked on the office doors of retired physics instructor Bill Benson; his son, John Benson, who teaches chemistry; and Sam Nelson, who made history more interesting for her. Says Roering: “Ridgewater is where my roots are, and these professors are my personal friends.”

Given her schedule, Roering hasn’t had much time to pursue her root beer hobby lately, but she does want to perfect her recipe in the future.

Chemistry at Ridgewater
Ridgewater offers a 64-credit Chemistry A.S. degree that can be a springboard to various advanced degrees at four-year universities and colleges.

For more information, go to www.ridgewater.edu, click on “Programs and Courses,” and then click on “Chemistry.”
Last summer, Nicholas Baker was among the first responders to go to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, when the Cedar River overflowed its banks and flooded the city. As a member of the Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office’s (HCSO) communication technicians team, he and his colleagues answered Iowa’s call for help by programming and distributing portable and mobile radios to fire, police, and rescue squad units from neighboring cities and states, enabling them all to talk to each other on the same radio frequency.

“There were a lot of people in need there,” says Baker, “so a coworker and I handed out food and bottled water and cleaning kits. We were even the first on the scene of a traffic accident caused by the flooding situation.”

It wasn’t his first time on the front lines. After the I-35W bridge collapsed in 2007, Baker worked at the HCSO facility in Golden Valley—setting all the radios for the various agencies involved in the search and rescue operations. “It was a great feeling to be able to help,” he says.

Baker, age 22, grew up in Kerkhoven, Minn., and went to Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg High School. Soon after graduating from Ridgewater’s Wireless Communications program in 2006, he went to work for HCSO as a communications technician. “I always liked to take things apart to see how they work and then put them back together again,” he says. “And I was always interested in new technology. I wanted to be a part of that.”

When it came time to go to college, Ridgewater was a logical choice. “It is the best-known electronics program in the area and its graduates are well-known for getting hired by the FBI and other big companies and government agencies,” he says, adding that he met and chatted with FBI agents in Cedar Rapids, and they all knew about Ridgewater’s program.

**Solid fundamentals**

Charles Venske, a 1976 Ridgewater graduate, is HCSO’s technical supervisor and Baker’s boss. He was on the hiring panel that interviewed Baker for the job. “We look at Ridgewater graduates more closely than others because we know they’ve been given a good, basic set of tools and they score highest in our scoring system,” says Venske. “We interviewed several other candidates who had the required two years of field experience, but Nick stood out from them. We felt he would fit into the team the best.”

One reason why, according to Baker is the rigorous nature of Ridgewater’s Wireless Communications program, which emphasizes radio frequency fundamentals and offers hands-on work in systems integration, networking, and component troubleshooting and analysis. As Baker adds, the program also offers plenty of variety; he especially liked an experiment that involved a remote control, a camera, and a motorized vehicle for kids. He also enjoyed going to local high schools to help recruit students for the program. And he had a lot of fun at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where people from all over the world were showing off new technologies for the future.

Baker is quick to give credit to Ridgewater instructors. “I learned a lot from them,” he says. “They were always there to help, even after class, and we had a lot of opportunity to get one-to-one and hands-on experience.”

Responding to emergencies is an important part of the HCSO communication team’s responsibilities, but on a day-to-day basis Baker and his coworkers are busy installing, maintaining, and “stripping” (taking out old and replacing with new) electronic equipment in more than 6,000 law enforcement and public works vehicles—plus 911 dispatchers and ambulances—throughout Hennepin County. Baker describes his job as the “backbone” for all the county’s law enforcement agencies. “We communicate with all of them and help them communicate with each other,” he says. “It’s a great public service and I’m happy to be doing it.”

**On the Right Frequency**

Curiosity about new technologies led Nicholas Baker to a Wireless Electronics diploma from Ridgewater and a job with the Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office.

**Wireless Electronics at Ridgewater**

Ridgewater offers an AAS degree and diploma in both Electronics Technology and Wireless Electronics. The 72-credit programs take two years to complete, and prepare graduates for work in the electronics technician and wireless communications fields.

For more information, go to www.ridgewater.edu, click on “Programs and Courses,” and then click on “Electronics.”

One of the largest turkey processors and marketers in the world and the leader in the turkey industry, Jennie-O Turkey Store has a hand in everything from breeder farms, hatcheries and feed mills to live haul and processing plants. With more than 7,000 employees across the country, we offer rewarding career opportunities to talented people with a drive to excel.

Get to know Jennie-O.

Learn more at www.jennieo.com
The Willmar Lakes Area has the perfect balance of opportunities and amenities, making it a great place to live, work, play, learn and do business:

- Winner of the 2005 All-America City Award
- Wide range of quality, affordable housing options, including lake properties & single family homes
  - The area’s regional medical center for west central and southwest Minnesota
  - A growing economy that supports a wide range of employment opportunities
- Over 100 lakes and countless county, city and community parks in Kandiyohi County
  - 22-mile Glacial Lakes Trail connecting to Sibley State Park
- Quality public, private, continuing and advanced educational institutions
- A thriving private Technology Campus and Industrial Park geared for business growth and relocation
  - A highly skilled and available workforce
  - Municipal airport

800.845.8747
www.willmar.com

Everything about Willmar only a Click Away!
At Glencoe Regional Health Services, we’ve helped hundreds of health care professionals answer that call through educational opportunities, mentoring experiences, internships and careers.