

John Molinaro

Vice President - Program
West Central Initiative

John Molinaro is Vice President - Program, for West Central Initiative (WCI). Established in 1986, West Central Initiative is a public foundation that brings people and resources together to maintain and enhance the viability of west central Minnesota. At WCI, John is responsible for grant programs impacting communities and workforce development. In addition, John coordinates WCI's regional planning efforts, provides management and technical assistance to nonprofits, and is responsible for program evaluation, strategic planning, and WCI's computer systems.

John was born in Pittsburgh and grew up just outside a city of 30,000 people in eastern Pennsylvania, where his family owned and operated a packaging and janitorial supply business. At the age of 15, John was extensively trained in group facilitation by the Lutheran Church, where he worked for several years facilitating development of effective church youth groups. John attended college at the University of Pittsburgh where he graduated in 1976 with a major in writing and minors in biology and chemistry. After college, John studied for two years at Hamma School of Theology at Wittenberg University in Springfield Ohio. While at Hamma, John met and married his wife, Barbara Eiden-Molinaro. Shortly after they were married, John and Barbara became foster parents for adolescents involved in the juvenile corrections system.

John's professional career began in Springfield where he operated the local Traveler's Aid program, followed by several years working for an organization that provided planning and evaluation for programs funded by United Way and the Federal Title XX program. In 1979, John and Barbara moved to Moorhead, Minnesota where John worked first as a transportation planner then as executive director of a nonprofit child abuse prevention and family counseling center, and Barbara served as a dean at a Lutheran liberal arts college. While living in Moorhead, John completed a Masters in Community Planning from North Dakota State University and they had one more foster daughter, with whom they remain close.

In 1986, John joined the staff at the newly founded West Central Initiative, where he has worked ever since. He and Barbara now make their home in Fergus Falls, Minnesota where they live a few blocks away from their foster daughter, her husband, and their four children aged 14, 9, 6, and 3. John currently serves as president of their church council and on numerous other nonprofit boards and committees. John's avocations include spoiling his foster daughter's children, reading, scuba diving, competitive target shooting (no he doesn't kill Bambi or any of his friends), and collecting and restoring historic military firearms.