

# Heartbeat

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## Giving Hearts Day donors raise over \$40,000

After Giving Hearts Day on Feb. 12, the Unity Medical Center Foundation was able to meet several goals set for UMC.

The first goal was to raise the remaining \$15,000 of a \$100,000 UMC Pharmacy renovation, which was a carryover goal from the 2025 Harvest Auction. The Pharmacy project has begun with TL Stroh providing preliminary floorplans that involve turning three separate offices (formerly operating/delivery rooms for St. Joseph's Hospital) into one room including three workstations for staff, as well as counter space and shelving for the 500-700 medications on hand at any one time (the current medication storage room has outgrown its space). This would allow the move of an IV mixing room from down the hall into the existing Pharmacy in the future.

The second goal was to purchase three bladder scanners for Grafton Family Clinic and Park River Family Clinic, both owned by UMC, as well as the hospital. UMC currently owns one bladder scanner that is frequently used and shared by the hospital, clinic, Emergency Department and Surgery Center in Grafton.

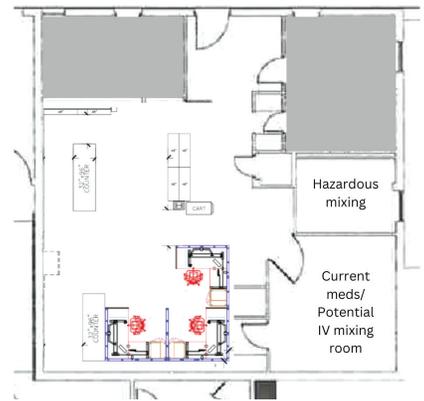
The Foundation held its Giving Hearts Day Open House at its office north of the hospital Feb. 12, showcasing



UMC staff show off their Giving Hearts Day t-shirts in this group photo.

ing the LUCAS automated CPR device purchased with last year's funds. Guests got to see it in action and learn more about the UMC Emergency Department (see Page 3).

Matching gifts totaled \$10,550 from 17 companies and individuals, including Gary Babinski, Don & Susan Barclay, Choice Bank, Dakota Medical Foundation, First United Bank, Grafton Drug, Jean Kieley, Legacy CPA Services, NAPA Auto & Truck Parts, Nilson Farms, North Star Community Credit Union, Old National Bank, Polar Communications, Brad & Nadine



Preliminary Pharmacy floorplans

See GIVING HEARTS DAY on page 3

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I recently had the opportunity to attend the American Hospital Association's Rural Healthcare Leadership Conference, along with members of the Unity Medical Center Board of Trustees, our UMC Foundation



Board and our senior leadership team. The conference brought together leaders from across the country who all share the same goal: making sure small communi-

ties continue to have access to quality health care close to home.

As a health care system serving Grafton and the surrounding area, many of the conversations felt familiar. Rural health care is facing challenges: finding enough staff, uncertainty about reimbursement, rising supply costs and increasing regulations. Even so, the conference reinforced something we experience every day: Rural hospitals truly matter. UMC is not just a place where people go when they are sick. We are a major employer, an important community partner and a steady presence that families depend on.

Workforce is a buzzword for a reason. Nearly every rural hospital is working to recruit physicians,

nurses, clinical specialists and the team members who keep our departments running. The most successful approaches centered on partnerships with training programs, student rotations and strong connections within the community. We are grateful for our relationships with the University of North Dakota, North Valley Career & Technology Center and CHI Friendship to name a few. They support us, challenge us, and encourage us to welcome and introduce future workers to rural health care. For me, the message has always been clear: Facilities and technology are important, but the people inside our buildings are what truly make the difference.

Financial stability was another major focus. Programs like the Critical Access Hospital designation, swing-bed services, telehealth and the 340B drug program are not extras for rural hospitals; they are our lifeline to keep services local, maintain our emergency department and continue expanding outpatient care. UMC and rural health care everywhere operates in a delicate balance, and our funding sources are constantly under review. Fragile strength is a concept that I think of often in this context. Continued awareness, advocacy and operational agility remain especially important to our growth.

Other presentations highlighted quality and innovation. Because our rural teams know our patients personally, we are often able to coordinate care in ways larger systems cannot. The future of rural health care will depend on strong primary care, managing chronic conditions locally, and using technology to connect patients with specialists without requiring long and expensive travel.

For me, the conference was a balance of challenge and opportunity. UMC is doing well, but continuing to grow and improve requires ongoing investment in our people, equipment, facilities and services. Vital to our ongoing success is the community support that makes a real difference. Your participation in our events, programs and fundraising efforts helps us to do all the things that make this place special. In the end, your generosity allows friends, neighbors and family members to receive care right here at home.

I came back especially proud of what this community has built together. Rural hospitals succeed when their communities stand behind them, and UMC is fortunate to have that support. Thank you for being part of our mission as we continue to serve this region.

Mark Bertilrud  
Chief Executive Officer  
Unity Medical Center

**45 is the new 50!**  
*for colorectal cancer screening*

**Colorectal cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer related deaths in ND, but it is preventable WITH SCREENING and is highly treatable when detected in the early stages.**  
*Source: ND Cancer Coalition*

*A variety of screening of options are available, and as your health care provider we can explain these options to you and answer the questions you may have. Please contact us to set up the screening option that is right for you.*

**Unity**  
MEDICAL CENTER

Grafton Family Clinic | 701-352-2000 | Park River Family Clinic | 701-284-6663  
*Unity Medical Center is an Equal Opportunity Provider*

## Giving Hearts Day: Continued from page 1

Schanilec, Simmons Multimedia, Tollefson Funeral Home and the UMC Auxiliary.

The Silo Boutique also donated a portion of its sales from the week of Giving Hearts Day at its Grafton location. Bean Dash and Cabin Road Coffeehouse had QR codes on its coffee sleeves for a month leading up to Giving Hearts Day in support of all nonprofits in northeastern North Dakota.

This was the 11th year that the UMC Foundation has participated in Giving Hearts Day. Overall, more than 600 charities in the Red River Valley raised \$30.4 million. The campaign was created by Dakota Medical Foundation in Fargo.



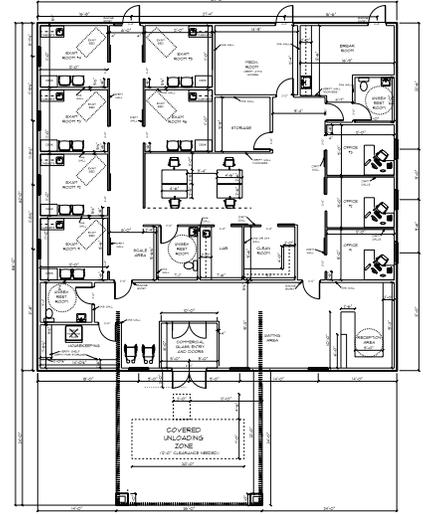
The Silo Boutique donated a portion of its sales from the week of Giving Hearts Day at its Grafton location.



Susan Shuley, a teacher at the North Valley Career and Technology Center, brought her Financial Literacy classes over to learn more about Giving Hearts Day and the impact of the LUCAS.

## Park River Family Clinic update

Construction of the new Park River Family Clinic will continue this spring, after experiencing some delays over the winter. Roof trusses are on site, and work is now scheduled to be complete in fall 2026.



The building, located just off Highway 17 next to Dollar General, will replace the clinic's current facility adjacent to Ye Olde Medicine Center, further west on Highway 17.

The new 3,800-square-foot clinic will include six exam rooms and three staff offices (see floor plan). The current clinic has only three exam rooms and no staff offices.

## Lifetime Giving Wall additions

The Unity Medical Center Foundation recently added four new names to its Lifetime Giving Wall, which recognizes cumulative giving of its donors. All four new plates recognized donors who recently crossed the \$10,000 cumulative giving mark.

Mark and Pam Bertilrud's support dates back to Golf Tournament and Harvest Auction events over the past several years. Since moving to Grafton, their appreciation and support for the organization continues to grow.

Tim and Cori Dvorak have also supported several Harvest Auction events, as well as Giving Hearts Day.

Mark and Mia Presteng have been long-time supporters of UMC's Golf Tournament and Harvest Auction.

Tollefson Funeral Home has supported several events over the years, as well as the 2008 Capital Campaign that added space for the Medical Laboratory and Radiology Department.



Thank you to each of these donors and to all 98 donors recognized on our Lifetime Giving Wall.

## Executive Director UPDATE

We recently finished up another successful Giving Hearts Day, and each year I marvel at the sense of community, camaraderie and pride that this event produces, not just for Unity Medical Center but for all of the Red River Valley.

There are 17 nonprofit organizations in northeastern North Dakota who participate, ranging geographically from two groups in Langdon and Frost Fire Park near Walhalla down to Nelson County Health System in McVille, then back up to Walsh and Pembina counties. There are five nonprofits in Grafton alone, two in Cavalier and one in Park River. We all meet monthly year-round, but leading up to Giving Hearts Day, we share a marketing budget and work to get the word out about all of our charities and the good works we do.

This year, our joint marketing came in the forms of radio, Google and Facebook advertising, as well

as coffee sleeve stickers and grocery bag stuffers. This was in addition to the TV and other advertising led by Dakota Medical Foundation based in Fargo.

One might say we nonprofits all compete for resources, and to some extent that is true. But we are also quick to share resources and ideas with each other, and cheer each other along. The truth is, we are all doing wonderful work in our communities, and I appreciate that we support each other in that work. As the saying goes, “a rising tide lifts all boats.”

On a separate note, I wanted to call attention to a new event we’re hosting at the end of March, called Muffins with Mark. (Muffins and Coffee with Mark was too long of a title but is more accurate.) Ultimately we wanted to give community members a chance to informally sit down with UMC CEO Mark Bertilrud and ask questions about the ever-changing health care landscape, nationwide or locally. We’re starting in the early morning to catch people before they have to go to work (see Page 6 for details), but we

may test out a few different times to see what works for our audience. It’ll start at the UMC Foundation office, but if the crowd is big enough, we may move it to UMC’s event space. We’ll schedule these quarterly for now. I hope you can join us. No RSVP required!

Lastly, our annual Friends of the Foundation Luncheon has been scheduled for the end of April, and all 2025 UMC donors will receive an invitation in the mail soon. At this event, with lunch catered by Beth Sundberg, we will recognize our top donors of 2025, as well as our top donors of all time. But ultimately we want to thank all of our donors and show them what we are doing with their gifts. Specifically, we’ll highlight our Pharmacy and kitchen renovation projects, as well as our Park River Family Clinic construction project.

There is so much going on, and we couldn’t do it without you!

Jessica Sobolik  
Executive Director  
Unity Medical Center Foundation

### Friends of the Foundation Luncheon

All 2025 donors are invited to see the impact of your generous support to UMC.

April 29 or 30, 2026  
Noon-1:30 PM  
Tickets: \$25/person

Unity Medical Center  
164 W 13th St, Grafton  
Third Floor, Door 1 (ER)

UNITY MEDICAL CENTER  
foundation



36th Annual  
Unity Medical Center Foundation

## GOLE TOURNAMENT

July 9, 2026  
Fair Oaks Golf Course  
Grafton, ND

## Provider Spotlight: Dawn Christianson

Dawn Christianson, FNP-C, joined Grafton Family Clinic after earning her Master of Science in Nursing from the University of North Dakota in August 2025. She brings 15 years of nursing experience to her role, including 12 years as a registered nurse and a year and a half serving patients in Unity Medical Center's Emergency Department.

Dawn's passion for health care began early. At just 14 years old, she worked as a certified nursing assistant at Borg Home in Mountain, N.D., where she discovered her love for caring for others and making a meaningful difference in their daily lives. That experience shaped both her career path and her understanding of compassionate, patient-centered care.

Although becoming a nurse practitioner had long been a goal, Dawn intentionally spent years strengthening her clinical skills and gaining hands-on experience before pursuing advanced practice. She believes that foundation helped shape her into a more confident, competent and compassionate provider.



Dawn is passionate about improving the health of individuals and families in her community. She believes health care is about more than diagnosing illness or prescribing medications — it's about caring for the whole person. She values building relationships, earning trust, educating patients and supporting them in making informed decisions that align with their values. For Dawn, the most meaningful moments in care often come from simply listening and helping patients feel understood and supported.

Originally from Mountain, Dawn graduated from Edinburg High School in 2000 and has deep roots in the region. She lives in Langdon and enjoys gardening, canning, quilting, reading, walking and spending time outdoors during the summer. Family is especially important to her, and she treasures time with her two daughters, as well as her four cats — two of which are rescues.

Dawn chose UMC because of its strong commitment to patient-centered care and its dedication to providing high-quality services close to home. She appreciates the organization's teamwork-driven culture, expanding capabilities, and focus on ensuring patients in rural communities have access to comprehensive, coordinated care. She is proud to be part of a team that prioritizes compassion, excellence and community. If you would like to make an appointment with Dawn, please call Grafton Family Clinic at (701) 352-2000.

## Service Spotlight: UMC launches Preventive Health and Wellness Outreach Program

Unity Medical Center has launched a new quality-improvement initiative focused on strengthening preventive health and wellness in our community.

As part of this effort, trained staff members will contact patients by phone to assist with scheduling important preventive services, including routine check-ups and recommended health screenings. All outreach calls will come from (701) 922-7934.

This program is not a solicitation or scam. It is a trusted, no-cost service provided by the team at UMC to help patients stay up to date with their health care.

"Our goal is to make it easier for those who entrust their care to us to schedule appointments and maintain their health," said Merideth Bell,

director of quality and patient experience. "By helping patients schedule needed screenings and appointments, we can improve both individual well-being and overall community health."

The outreach program reflects UMC's ongoing commitment to quality improvement and patient-centered care. Team members making the calls are trained to answer questions, provide guidance and connect patients with the care they need.

"Our providers and nursing staff are very focused on ensuring patients are up to date on recommended screenings," said Clinic Manager Kari Novak. "Primary care plays a vital role in keeping people healthy, and annual visits and screenings are an important part of that process."





UMC Auxiliary members with Sandra Lessard.

## UMC Auxiliary makes generous gifts

The Unity Medical Center Auxiliary made two donations to UMC departments recently.

In December, they presented \$500 to Sandra Lessard and the Diabetes Education Department to help fund the purchase of a new table that will directly benefit diabetes education patients.

Then in February, they presented UMC Director of Pharmacy Jaime Osmanski with a \$1,000 check to support the Pharmacy Department renovation. Learn more about the project in the Giving Hearts Day article starting on Page 1.

Auxiliary members meet Tuesdays at UMC, embroidering towels and other handmade items that are for sale in two cabinets in the Grafton Family Clinic waiting room. If anyone is interested in joining the group, contact Auxiliary President Jan Ensrude at (701) 379-3272.



UMC Auxiliary members with Jaime Osmanski.

## New kitchen lighting installed



In early March, new LED lighting was installed in the Unity Medical Center kitchen. Donors provided funding for this project at the 2025 Harvest Auction.

The green brick in the photo will be covered in the near future, ensuring that the kitchen matches the modern cafeteria renovation completed last year. Thank you to our donors for making this happen!

## Muffins with Mark

**March 26, 2026**

7:30-8:30 AM

UMC Foundation office  
147 W 13th St, Grafton

Join UMC CEO Mark Bertilrud for an informal conversation over muffins, coffee or tea served by UMCF staff.



## UMC recognized as a Level 2 Age-Friendly Health System

As an active participant in the Age-Friendly Health Systems movement, Unity Medical Center is proud to have achieved special recognition as an Age-Friendly Health System — Committed to Care Excellence by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement.

This distinction reflects ongoing work to reliably implement the 4Ms Framework, a set of proven care elements designed for older patients:

- What Matters – Listening to and honoring each individual’s goals, preferences and values
- Mentation – Supporting cognitive health, emotional well-being and preventing delirium
- Medications – Using age-appropriate medications and reducing harm from polypharmacy
- Mobility – Promoting safe movement to maintain functional independence



By embedding the 4Ms into everyday practice, the care teams at Park River and Grafton Family Clinics are helping ensure that older adults receive respectful, personalized and holistic care at every encounter.

“This recognition reflects the deep commitment that our care teams have to truly listening to and caring for older adults in our community,” said Dr. Jennifer Shaw. “Age-friendly care is about more than clinical excellence—it’s about

honoring what matters most to each patient, supporting their independence, and treating every person with dignity and respect. We are proud to serve our older adults and grateful for the trust they place in us every day.”

The Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative continues to be an important part of UMC’s overarching vision to provide every older adult in this region with the best care possible. UMC strives to achieve recognition of excellent care from older adults and caregivers in this community.

Age-Friendly Health Systems is an initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, in partnership with the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of the U.S.

## CHNA work group produces Elderly Resources booklet

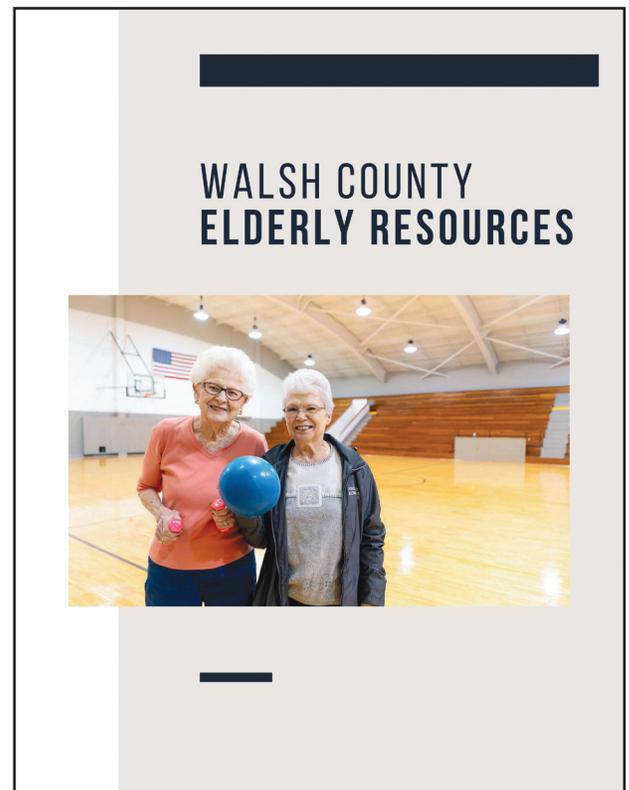
Unity Medical Center is required by the federal government to complete a Community Health Needs Assessment every three years. The process involves surveying community members about their health concerns. From the results, UMC drafts an implementation plan with the help of community health partners such as Walsh County Public Health.

One of the priorities identified in UMC’s Implementation Plan is helping older adults remain safely and comfortably in their homes. To support this goal, UMC and its partners created a resource guide, with printed copies available at the following locations:

- Community Health Service – Grafton
- Grafton Armory
- Grafton Chamber of Commerce
- Grafton Family Clinic
- Grafton VA Clinic
- Lutheran Sunset Home
- Park River Family Clinic
- Walsh County Health District
- Walsh County Food Pantry



The digital guide can be viewed at <https://publuu.com/flip-book/589382/2366777> or by scanning the adjacent QR code.



## Memorials and Thank You To Donors (December 4, 2025-March 1, 2026)

The Unity Medical Center Foundation would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the donors who have donated to UMCF over the past years. It is because of donors like you that UMCF can continue to focus on its mission of supporting Unity Medical Center and improving patient experiences. Every effort is made to include all names accurately. Please notify UMCF if you discover any errors or omissions.

### Terri Abbott

Helen Johnston  
**Gene Anderson**  
Rita Amiot  
Robert & Mary Amundson  
Marlys Bailey  
Odell & Lavonne Berg  
Todd Burianek  
Terry Burns  
Darryl & Vonda Collette  
Bev Demers  
Cyrilla Demers  
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Thomas & Mary Dusek  
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Todd Flaten  
**Donald Young**  
Brian & Kimberly Thompson  
**Don & Lucille Young**  
Ken Halliday

## Foundation Mission

To financially support  
Unity Medical Center, ensuring  
quality health care close to home.

## Philanthropic Priorities

1. Patients
2. Providers/staff
3. Programs
4. Facilities
5. Priority needs (unrestricted)



Donate Now

## Governing Board of Unity Medical Center

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## Unity Medical Center Foundation

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