

# Heartbeat

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## Foundation Luncheon showcases clinic, cafeteria expansions

In April, the Unity Medical Center Foundation invited donors from calendar year 2024 to the annual Friends of the Foundation Luncheon to see first-hand the impact of their support, specifically the recently completed clinic and cafeteria expansions.

Approximately 80 people attended over two days. The program recognized the top 20 donors from 2024, as well as 91 Giving Clubs members (seven new). Foundation Executive Director Jessica Sobolik highlighted the impact of donor gifts over the past year, including new automated medication dispensers, which were highlighted in a video of Pharmacy Director Karalynne Price. To view the video, scan the adjacent QR code.



Donor impact also included a surgical table that pairs with the da Vinci robot, and the clinic and cafeteria expansion projects. The Foundation also awarded two scholarships for staff pursuing nursing and speech pathology degrees, and continued its support of the Tree of Lights Community Remembrance Ceremony and nutrition programs at UMC.



Grafton Family Clinic Manager Kari Novak shows the clinic expansion space to Luncheon attendees.



UMC Dietician Rondee Feltman shows the cafeteria expansion space to Luncheon attendees.

See LUNCHEON SHOWCASE on page 3

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Dear friends,

It's been a wonderful transition from spring to summer. We received some very badly needed rain and have had some nice weather following. Hopefully the farmers were able to finish planting and are looking forward to a promise of a productive harvest.



It's been a busy time at Unity Medical Center. Our annual Scrubs Camp was a well-attended event (see Page 7), and it is very rewarding to see the level of interest that the high school students show as they explore potential careers in health care. We actually hosted two events from several different schools in the region. A big thanks to Maggie Suda and many others who help with the planning of the event. I am still amazed by how focused these young people are when they spend time in our facility. Tomorrow's health care team is enthused about their future.

UMC also hosted our annual Employee Awards Banquet at the Minto Community Center (see Page 3). We had a turnout of close to 200 people, awards were given to employees based on their tenure, and many wonderful prizes were also given out. Thank you to the team at Beaver's Café for the wonderful hosting and the fine meal they provided. Many UMC employees were involved with the setup and tear-down of all activities.

Our annual DAISY Award winner was selected blindly by a group of her peers in the nursing department (see Page 6). This year's winner was Destiny Stedman. Destiny is presently a registered nurse at Unity. Prior to that, she was an LPN and, before that, a CNA. A big congratulations to Destiny!

UMC received notice recently that we will again be receiving the Best Places to Work award for 2025. This will be the fourth consecutive year that UMC has received this award (see Page 7). Congratulations to the wonderful team that works at UMC. They are so dedicated and

willing to work together, not only in the patient care areas but also whenever there is a need in any department. UMC will find out our final ranking in the annual awards banquet in Nashville in October. Over the past two years, UMC has ranked as the No. 2 critical access hospital (out of 1,300) in the U.S. Congrats to the UMC team.

We are looking forward to the annual UMC Foundation Golf Tournament on July 10. It is always a wonderful event. Please be sure to sign up (see Page 4).

Lastly, I want to thank Karen Bigwood for her 30 years of service to UMC. She worked as a registered nurse for many years and then as a grant writer. As I looked back on this, I found she was responsible for close to \$3 million in grant funding for UMC equipment and programs. We recently held a retirement party for her (see Page 5). Enjoy your well-deserved retirement, Karen!

Alan O'Neil  
Chief Executive Officer  
Unity Medical Center

## REAL RECOVERY STARTS HERE

### *Mental Health & Substance Use Disorder Counseling*

Tanner Grimsley, licensed behavioral health counselor and owner of Turning Point Behavioral Health offers mental health and substance use disorder counseling services at Grafton Family Clinic on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Call **701-352-2000** to make an appointment.



**TANNER GRIMSLEY, LCAC, LPC**  
Licensed Behavioral Health Counselor



Unity Medical Center is an Equal Opportunity Provider



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# UMC Employee Awards Banquet honors milestone staff



Evonne Altendorf



Janet Nelson



Karen Salwei



Denise Moe

Unity Medical Center recently celebrated staff milestones at its annual Employee Awards Banquet held in April, which followed a Hawaiian theme.

Nurse Evonne Altendorf celebrated a very impressive 50-year work history with UMC. “I started with Dr. Countryman at the Countryman Clinic,” she recalled. She also worked with Drs. Hafeez, Teevens, Eaton, Sheflo and Kotnik, among others. She has been most impressed with the innovations in imaging over the years (e.g., MRI, CT scans), as well as medications. “Back in the day, we gave everyone penicillin,” she said. “Now, not so much.”

Medical Lab Manager Janet Nelson celebrated her 35th work anniversary, while Surgery nurse Denise Moe celebrated her 25th anniversary. The Business Office’s Patient Financial Representative Karen Salwei celebrated her 15-year anniversary.

Five employees celebrated their 10-year work anniversary: Kristi Kertz, Liz Ladouceur, Sami LaFreniere, Shanna Littlejohn and CEO Alan O’Neil.

Ten employees celebrated their five-year work anniversary: Lisa Andreen, Terry Demester, Cindy Flaten, Lindsey Gellner, Mary Hurtt, Marc Mamporte, Kristi Midgarden, Kobee Pastorek, Jauna St. Vincent and Stephanie Steele.



Above: left to right: Lisa Andreen, Jauna St. Vincent, Lindsey Gellner, Kobee Pastorek and Terry Demester. Left: left to right, Sami LaFreniere and Alan O’Neil

## Luncheon Showcase: Continued from page 1

UMC Chief Operating Officer Mark Bertilrud shared his experience at UMC and in the Grafton community in the past eight months since taking his new position.



UMC COO Mark Bertilrud visits with Glora Halliday, a long-time supporter of UMC.



Luncheon attendee Richard Geiger shares with his tour group his experience with UMC Cardiac Rehab in the Cardiac Rehab space.

In late February, our board President Brian Van Bruggen and I had the opportunity to travel with a group from Unity Medical Center to the American Hospital Association's Rural Health Leadership Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

We attended this conference two years ago as well, and it was beneficial to learn what challenges are affecting rural health care nationwide and to note what had changed over the past two years since we last attended the conference.



For example, in a session titled Strengthening Rural Health Through Board and Philanthropic Alignment, speakers highlighted donor advised funds (DAFs) as a way to donate illiquid assets to charities. DAFs have been around since the 1930s (created with the support of John D. Rockefeller Jr.) and were first recognized in federal tax code in 2006. They are now more popular than pri-

vate foundations, according to the Institute for Policy Studies, although the UMC Foundation has only benefited from a handful thus far. Still, these weren't discussed much in fundraising circles two years ago. That has changed.

This conference took place less than two weeks after President Trump had signed an executive order instructing federal government agencies to significantly reduce their workforces, an initiative led by the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). At the conference, there was discussion about DOGE cutting funding to the National Institutes of Health, Medicaid, and higher education institutions including Harvard and Yale. Conference speakers and attendees were still trying to make sense of everything that was happening regarding federal funding. One conference speaker advised everyone, "Don't hope the worst won't happen. Go home and prepare for what to do when the worst does happen." While I'm sure some hospitals have been affected by these cuts, so far it seems UMC is unfazed.

Another relatively new conference topic was artificial intelligence (AI), which when used correctly can be helpful but can also malfunction if not used correctly. Still, I was surprised when a speaker from Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., said that Mayo was "doubling down" on AI. "If you're a doctor who won't embrace AI, you are obsolete and will be replaced," he said. AI is something we continue to learn more about but haven't implemented yet in fundraising at UMC.

Another takeaway regarding board governance was to avoid "downplay recruitment." This is a practice where someone calls a prospective board member and tells them that joining their respective board "won't be that much work. They only meet a few times per year!" The speaker advised all of us to "stop doing that! They are a lot of work. They should be a lot of work! But it's important work." I would have to say I agree!

Jessica Sobolik  
Executive Director  
Unity Medical Center Foundation



35th Annual  
Unity Medical Center Foundation

## GOLF TOURNAMENT

For UMC staff recruitment/  
retention needs

Thursday, July 10, 2025  
Fair Oaks Golf Course  
Grafton, ND



Sponsor



Register

## Provider Spotlight: Chris Frisby

Chris Frisby recently joined Unity Medical Center and Grafton Family Clinic as a social work designee with more than 20 years of experience in the mental health field. Currently, she is working closely with Unity's Health and Wellness coaches whose patients have chronic care management needs. She is also getting to know everyone who works at the hospital and clinics to see how she can expand her services to greater meet the needs of the community.

Chris moved to the Grafton area two and a half years ago from Duluth, Minn., so that she could be closer to her grandchildren. While in Duluth, she worked in the school system as a special education paraprofessional while she raised her children, then transitioned to social work. Prior to joining Unity, she worked as a social worker at the Good Samaritan Society in Park River. At Unity, she is impressed by the great working relationship between management and staff, noting there are "no stiff lines."

When asked what her favorite thing about social work is,



Chris Frisby

Chris shared, "I love the people! I'm a people person, not a paper pusher!" Being a "people person" is key to being a successful social worker as people skills such as communication, listening and empathy are imperative to effectively engaging with patients, she noted.

In her free time, Chris loves to spend time with her dog, cats, horse and mule. She also loves gardening and making needle-felting art with wool. Welcome to UMC, Chris!

## Karen Bigwood retirement celebration



UMC celebrated Karen Bigwood's retirement in late May. She served as UMC's grant writer and, before that, a nurse for a total of 30 years. She will spend retirement in Kentucky with her family.



Emily Balsdon

## Service Spotlight: ADHD Testing

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a chronic condition marked by attention difficulty and impulsiveness. ADHD often begins in childhood and can persist into adulthood. It may contribute to low self-esteem, troubled relationships, and difficulty at school or work.

Grafton Family Clinic offers ADHD testing for people ages six to 60 with Family Nurse Practitioner Emily Balsdon. Testing for ADHD includes a detailed history of the individual's symptoms and how they impact daily life; a 15- to 20-minute test on the computer, which provides a score on the likelihood of the patient having ADHD; interviews with parents; behavioral rating scales; and potentially psychological or neuropsychological testing.

ADHD treatment mainly includes medication with regular follow-up visits every three months.

The benefits of treating ADHD include improved focus and attention, better impulse control, improved organization, and improved ability to multi-task and complete tasks.

If you would like to make an appointment with Emily, please call Grafton Family Clinic at (701) 352-2000.

## Kringstad family honors Roy at UMC

Christmas can be a tough time for any family who has lost a loved one. This was the case for the tight-knit Kringstad family from rural Drayton, who had lost their father Roy just a few days before Christmas 2023.

Recognizing that Christmas 2024 would be difficult, Roy's son Scott and his wife Stayce arranged to memorialize Roy at Unity Medical Center by making a donation to support the rural health care facility that had treated and cared for Roy several times in his life. They chose to name one of the Emergency Department's treatment rooms in his honor—the Roy M Kringstad Treatment Room—and they presented this honor to Scott's mother Renee as a present at Christmas 2024.

"I was quite surprised," Renee said. "And Roy's birthday was December 28, so it was sort of like a Christmas slash birthday present. For Scott to think of doing that was really something."

During his life, Roy kept busy raising his seven children, in addition to raising several animals including pigs, mink and silver fox (his favorite). He also worked at the John Deere dealership, Williamson's Creamery delivering milk, the Grafton State School and at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Pembina. He passed his hard work ethic on to his children, and Renee noted that all of their children are hard workers in their own respective fields, including many construction trades. "Everyone had to pitch in at the farm," she said.

Roy struggled with his health in his later years, but ran his long oxygen hose out to work with his silver foxes as long as he could. When it became difficult to travel, Roy's growing family would return to the farm for holidays and special occasions, making cherished memories. He was very excited to meet his first great grandchild. "He loved his family, his animals and his country," Renee said.

Roy served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War and was stationed there for over a year. During that time, Renee, a beautician student in Bismarck, just happened to be fixing Roy's sister's hair, and she shared pictures of Roy. "She asked if I would write to him," Renee said. "So I did, and then I met him when he came back. The rest is history."



Roy Kringstad

## Daisy Award given to UMC's Destiny Stedman

During National Nurses Week in May, Unity Medical Center gave a DAISY Award to Nurse Destiny Stedman for her dedication to her patients and profession.

Nine UMC nurses were nominated. Destiny was selected based on a nomination letter written by a family member of a patient, who was admitted to the hospital, where she met her day-shift nurse Destiny before her health took a rough turn. Destiny, aware that the hospital was busy, stayed and worked the next shift to care for this patient.

"The next day, she took no credit for this, telling us that all nurses on staff would have provided the same care," the letter said. "We are forever grateful that she could be there for Mom and all of us."

The DAISY (Diseases Attacking the Immune System) Award honors and celebrates internationally the skillful, compassionate care that nurses provide every

day. It was established by the family of J. Patrick Barnes after he died from complications of an auto-immune disease in 1999. During his hospitalization, they deeply appreciated the care and compassion shown to Patrick and his family. When he died, they felt compelled to say thank you to nurses in a public way and encourage others to say thank you by sharing their stories of how a nurse made a difference they will never forget.



# UMC wins Best Places to Work 2025 award

Unity Medical Center has been selected by Modern Healthcare as one of the 2025 Best Places to Work in Healthcare for a fourth year in a row. This annual award program identifies and recognizes 150 outstanding employers in the healthcare industry nationwide. Half of these organizations are a combination of healthcare providers and insurance companies while the other half are vendors.

Workforce is the No. 1 challenge facing all health care providers nationwide and in spite of the challenge, two hospitals in North Dakota are continually creating an environment where employees are voicing their satisfaction with their work environment and are ranked at the top nationally. Identical to last year, Unity Medical Center and Jamestown Regional Medical Center are the only hospitals in North Dakota that made the list for 2025.

## BEST PLACES TO WORK™

### Modern Healthcare 2025

Modern Healthcare partners with Workforce Research Group on the assessment process, which includes an extensive employee survey with questions pertaining to how well employees feel they are treated by the organization, if they feel they are recognized appropriately, and if they are engaged with their work and helping to identify opportunities/strategies to improve the workplace culture and productivity.

UMC will find out its ranking on the Best Places list and be celebrated at the 2025 Best Places to Work in Healthcare Awards Gala taking place Oct. 8, in Nashville, Tenn.

# UMC hosts high school students for Scrubs Camp



Grafton students visit Respiratory Therapy.



Valley-Edinburg students visit Respiratory Therapy.

Unity Medical Center held its fifth annual Scrubs Camp for 110 ninth grade students on April 2 and 9. Grafton and Minto students attended the first week, and Drayton, Midway, Park River and Valley-Edinburg students attended the second week. The students enjoyed a full day of hands-on activities and explored 11 different health care careers, including Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapy; Emergency Medicine; Surgery; and Pharmacy.



Minto students visit the Emergency Department

## Memorials and Thank You To Donors (February 25-May 25, 2025)

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 their 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.

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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)



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