

# Heartbeat

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## Golfers provide over \$29,000 for UMC staff scholarships

The goal of the 36th Annual Unity Medical Center Foundation Golf Tournament was to raise \$28,000 for UMC staff education via scholarships. On a clear, sunny day in July, 93 golfers (19 teams) took to Fair Oaks Golf Course and made a huge impact on rural health care delivery.

The UMC Foundation board recently approved three scholarships for the 2026-2027 school year, which are paid using Golf Tournament proceeds. One scholarship went to Erica Samuels, who is earning a doctorate degree in Occupational Therapy. Priscilla Stark also received a scholarship as she pursues a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner degree. And Adora Avila is finishing up her Practical Nursing degree with plans to advance her training further. All three scholarship winners expressed their gratitude for the support.



1st place finishers (left to right): Derek Sundby, Zach Mahoney, Warren Jelinek and Aiden McLain (not pictured: Miles Jorde)



Over the past 10 years, the UMC Foundation has awarded 10 additional scholarships, totaling over \$28,000. The program has grown each year. In the years where scholarships weren't awarded due to life circumstances, funds were given to UMC to cover staff continuing education costs, improving mammography and rehab services.

Lance Heck of the Grafton Volunteer Fire Department bravely sat in the Splash Tower to raise funds for both UMC and GVFD.

On the golf course, the competition was close as usual. In the end, the Back in Motion team—consisting of Warren Jelinek, Miles Jorde, Zach Mahoney, Aiden McLain and Derek Sundby—earned first place with an 18-hole score of 54. The Kieley Electric team took second place, while the Old National Bank team won a tie for third.

The tournament started with the fifth annual ball drop. Out of 102 numbered balls dropped on the practice green, only Ball No. 80 went in the hole, which Jess Tanke had purchased that morning.



Jess Tanke with lucky Ball No. 80.

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There is something special about this time of year in North Dakota.

As summer gives way to fall, you can feel the energy of our communities change. Combines begin to move across the fields, trucks fill our



roads, and families put in long days bringing in another harvest.

For so many of our friends, neighbors and patients, this season represents the culmination of months of hard work, patience, uncertainty and faith.

I have always thought harvest provides a good reminder about life. We plant, we work, we care for what has been entrusted to us, and we hope that our efforts will make a difference. Some years are easier than others. There are things we can control and many things we cannot. Yet through it all, there is much for which to be grateful. I feel that same sense of gratitude when I think about Unity Medical Center.

One of the great privileges of serving on the leadership team of this small-town hospital is knowing who we serve. The people who walk through our doors are not simply patients. They are our neighbors, friends, family members, former

classmates, coworkers, and people we see at church, the grocery store, school activities and community events. That makes our work personal, and I believe that is one of the greatest strengths of rural healthcare. Our regional partners do a great job of providing services we simply cannot, and we rely on them, but it's different.

I am continually reminded that Unity Medical Center is not defined by a building, a piece of equipment or a program. It is defined by people. I see that in our physicians, our advanced practice providers, our clinical teams, our business services department, our kitchen staff and everyone else who keeps this organization running every day.

I see people helping one another. I see people stepping in when something needs to be done. I see compassion shown during some of the most difficult moments in our patients' lives. And I see a team that genuinely cares about this organization and the communities we serve.

I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity to work alongside them. I am also grateful for our Foundation and for every individual, family, business and organization that chooses to support Unity Medical Center. Your generosity allows us to invest in our people, equipment, facilities and services. More impor-

tantly, your support sends a message that having strong healthcare available close to home matters. Keeping care local is critical. We do not take that confidence in us for granted.

As another harvest comes across our region, I hope we all find a moment to appreciate the blessings around us. We live in communities where people still know their neighbors, help one another and understand the importance of taking care of what we have.

There will always be challenges ahead—in agriculture, in healthcare and in our communities. Those challenges seem overwhelming at times. But I remain incredibly optimistic about our future because of the people who call this area home.

This harvest season, I simply want to say thank you. Thank you to our farmers, our communities, our patients, our donors and especially the remarkable people who make up the Unity Medical Center team.

I am blessed to be here, proud of the people I get to work with and deeply grateful for the privilege of serving this community. That is something worth celebrating this harvest season.

Mark Bertilrud  
Chief Executive Officer  
Unity Medical Center

# Screening Mammograms Save Lives



## 3D

### MAMMOGRAMS

Available Mon-Fri

**Complete your annual mammogram in October and be entered to win WONDER-ful prizes!**

**SCHEDULE YOUR MAMMOGRAM**

## 701-379-3050



Unity Medical Center is an Equal Opportunity Provider

# UMC commits major gift to Grafton pool project

Nearly two decades ago, the people of Grafton made an investment in the future of Unity Medical Center. UMC is returning that investment by committing \$1.8 million over the next 15 years to help build the new Grafton Community Pool.

In 2008, Grafton voters approved a one-half percent city sales tax that helped the hospital finance a major renovation project during a challenging time for rural health care. That investment allowed UMC to modernize its facilities, expand services and continue providing high-quality healthcare close to home.

"The citizens of Grafton believed in Unity Medical Center when we needed them most," said Paul Mohagen, UMC Board of Trustees president. "Their support helped create the strong organization we are today. We have never forgotten that investment, and this commitment is our opportunity to reinvest in the community that has always invested in us."

While the debt associated with the hospital renovation will be retired in 2038, the impact of the community's support has extended far beyond a building project. It helped position UMC for long-term success, allowing the organization to expand services, invest in advanced technology, recruit exceptional providers and remain an independent healthcare resource for northeastern North Dakota.

"A healthy community is about much more than healthcare," said UMC CEO Mark Bertilrud. "It's about creating a place where families want to live, children have opportunities to thrive and businesses can attract talented employees. When Grafton is stronger, Unity Medical Center is stronger."

The pool also serves as an important entry point into the workforce for rural youth. Through employment as lifeguards and swimming instructors, young people gain valuable hands-on work experience while earning lifesaving and lifeguard certifications. These roles help develop transferable skills in responsibility, leadership,



teamwork, and public safety—building confidence and strengthening long-term workforce readiness.

"People don't just choose a job—they choose a community," said Bill Dahl, Grafton Parks and Recreation director. "When prospective employees visit Grafton, they see our schools, parks, businesses and recreational opportunities. Investments like this help ensure Grafton remains a place where people want to live, work and raise a family."

The hospital's commitment also reflects priorities identified in the Walsh County Community Health Needs Assessment, which emphasizes promoting healthy lifestyles, encouraging physical activity and partnering with community organizations to improve overall community wellness. The new pool will provide opportunities for exercise, swimming lessons, rehabilitation, youth programming and recreation for residents of all ages. It will also enhance public safety, promote physical and mental wellness, and provide essential relief during periods of summer heat. Together, these benefits will help create a healthier, safer and more resilient community for generations to come.

## GOLFERS: Continued from page 1

Games on the course included poker, prize putting and the chipping contest on the driving range. The Grafton Volunteer Fire Department graciously agreed to staff the Splash Tower this year, splitting the proceeds with the UMC Foundation.

Themed apparel was also popular this year, including Team Happy Gilmore (Dr. Darin Leetun) and the UMC surgical nurses wearing t-shirts with UMC physicians on them.

### Additional contest winners

**Honest John (Hole 4):**  
Jake Ledo, Sara Gullickson

**Longest Drive (Hole 6):**  
Zach Mahoney, Sara Gullickson

**Longest Putt (Hole 7):**  
Ryan Dusek (16'5")

**Closest to the Pin (Hole 9):**  
Scott Robideaux, Steph Burns

**Best Poker Hand:**  
Steph Burns (full house)



Dr. Darin Leetun's Happy Gilmore team (left to right): Adam Schueller, Dr. Leetun, Tim Schmiedeberg and Alec Hinrichs

As we all know, you can plan and plan, but North Dakota weather will always supersede those plans.

I was reminded of this recently when we planned our annual Rooftop Patio Party. As the name suggests, this is an outdoor event for our Giving Clubs members and board members (both UMC and UMCF).



This is a chance to thank our Giving Clubs members (who have given a lifetime total of \$10,000 or more to UMC) for all they have done for UMC and healthcare delivery in our region. Our Foundation has a 39-year history, and we have been blessed with many supporters over these years.

However, the morning of this event, Deb and I noticed a chance of rain developing during our evening event. As the day progressed and the rain became less of a concern, that North Dakota humidity set in and made being outside unbearable.

So by afternoon, we moved the event indoors, to our conference rooms on the third floor. We explained to guests as they arrived that the patio was still open and available, but they all seemed to agree that staying indoors was more preferable. They enjoyed wonderful food provided by UMC Dining staff and good conversation. (It rained just as our event was wrapping up.)

As we start a new fiscal year at UMC and the Foundation builds its annual fundraising plan, I can't help but think to myself: I can draft a fundraising plan that meets all of UMC's goals, but it will always be superseded by the donor's best interests. Is it a good time for them to give? Is the campaign or need something they feel strongly about? How do they benefit from their commitment?

Sometimes UMC's needs don't align with donor interests. We're always here to serve in the best interest of the donor. Maybe there are new donors willing to step up in a time of need. Maybe sometime down the road will be a better time

for donors to give. This is always a good reminder for fundraisers, especially as we start planning for our Harvest Auction on Nov. 6 (see ad below).

I was recently speaking to a donor about a generous gift he and his wife had made, and I thought he had a great explanation for how he chose UMC. He knew he wanted to give back to this region, but if he split up his gift between all the small towns that he cared about, his impact would be smaller. But he realized that a lot of people in the region need healthcare and probably visit Unity Medical Center. So he supported the Grafton Family Clinic expansion. The clinic saw over 13,000 patient encounters in 2025, and patients from pretty much every small town in Walsh County, and even Grand Forks and Fargo. I think that says a lot about how special UMC and our donors are to our community.

Jessica Sobolik  
Executive Director  
Unity Medical Center Foundation

UNITY MEDICAL CENTER  
foundation

28TH ANNUAL

# HARVEST AUCTION

NOVEMBER 6, 2026

MINTO COMMUNITY CENTER  
114 Harvey Ave, Minto, ND

Online silent auction: Oct. 30-Nov. 6

In-person live auction  
includes dinner and refreshments.  
Dress code: Business to semi formal.

Scan QR code for more information.



## Staff Spotlight: Tory Sondeland

Unity Medical Center welcomed Tory Sondeland as the new director of facilities in June. Tory had heard wonderful things about Unity from friends who completed clinicals here, and when the position opened, she decided to apply. After her first interview, she knew it was the place she needed to be. “The conversation was comfortable, and it simply felt right,” she said. A few weeks after her second interview, Tory was offered the job.



Tory appreciates Unity’s friendly atmosphere and the support she has received from UMC leaders and staff. “Everyone is encouraging and has helped me get acquainted with the many aspects of my job,” she said.

Her passion for healthcare began at an early age while spending considerable time in hospitals with her father during his illness. Encouraged by doctors and nurses, she learned how to care for him at home, gaining hands-on skills such as wound care and glucose monitoring. Tory worked as a CNA in high school, pursued nursing school after graduating and eventually transitioned into healthcare administration. Tory earned a degree in business and healthcare administration in 2021, blending her clinical expertise with leadership skills. Before joining Unity, she was the administrator at the Osnabrock Community Living Center for five years.

Originally from Wadena, Minn., Tory moved to Edinburg in 2018. She is married to Cory Sondeland, and they have two children, along with horses, a dog, two cats and a crop farm near Milton. Tory enjoys spending time at the lake, fishing, rodeo, watching her kids’ sporting events and her newest hobby—sourdough baking.

Tory’s favorite part of her job is connecting with every department at Unity. She values the variety her role offers, and strives to ensure all departments are included and heard regarding daily operations and future plans. Currently, she is tackling storage organization and decluttering to improve efficiency. “I’m learning new things every day and I’m happy to be here,” she said.



## Burns bench dedicated outside Grafton Family Clinic

A new bench outside the Grafton Family Clinic was dedicated recently in memory of Gene and Suzanne Burns, who raised their six children just south of the clinic on Kittson Avenue.

Gene, a Chief Warrant Officer-4 for the Army National Guard, and Suzanne, a legal assistant before becoming the Walsh County abstractor, are the parents of daughters Barb Dusek, Nancy Misialek and Shari Flanders, and sons Chris, Brian and Brad Burns. Barb, the eldest, recalled running around with other neighborhood kids, playing kickball and baseball in an empty lot at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> St. and Griggs Ave. They went home for lunch and supper “when the church bells rang,” and they went home for the night when the streetlights came on.

Gene passed away in 2019, while Suzanne passed away in 2022. “My family and I thought a bench on Kittson, where we all grew up, would be the perfect way to honor our parents, who were both born and raised in Grafton and lived there all their lives,” Barb said. “We think this would make them happy!”

Suzanne delivered all six kids at Unity Medical Center, and both Gene and Suzanne received their medical care there. Some of their grandkids learned to ride their bikes in the UMC parking lot. “I’m very proud of UMC and how far they have come as an organization,” said Barb, who serves as a board member for the UMC Foundation. “They have so many excellent providers, and it feels like home there because it is home. Everybody knows you. There is a personal touch that is hard to duplicate.”

## Andrew Wysocki joins UMCF board

The Unity Medical Center Foundation is pleased to welcome Andrew Wysocki to its board of directors. Andrew joined the board in July and brings with him a deep connection to the Grafton community, having grown up in Grafton. He works as an ag relationship manager at Old National Bank and is active with several community organizations and boards.

Andrew and his wife Samantha have three sons and recently welcomed a new baby girl. Andrew enjoys spending time with his family and being outdoors, especially at the lake and during hunting season. We are grateful for his willingness to serve and look forward to the perspective and dedication he will bring to UMCF.



## Unity Medical Center recruits future family physician

At a time when rural communities across the nation are facing increasing challenges in recruiting and retaining physicians, Dr. Kenny Ryan has committed to joining Unity Medical Center, following the completion of his Family Medicine Residency at Altru Health System in 2027.

Originally from Illinois, Dr. Ryan moved to Grand Forks to attend the University of North Dakota, where he completed his undergraduate studies before earning his medical degree from the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences. He is currently completing the Altru Family Medicine Residency Program and plans to relocate to Grafton upon joining UMC.

Dr. Ryan and his wife Taylor recently experienced the community firsthand while participating in the UMC Foundation's 36th Annual Golf Tournament. The event provided an opportunity to connect with local residents, Foundation supporters and future colleagues, building relationships within the community they will soon call home.

"Recruiting physicians to rural communities has become increasingly competitive nationwide, making commitments like Dr. Ryan's especially meaningful," said UMC CEO Mark Bertirud. "Family medicine physicians are the cornerstone of rural health care, providing comprehensive care for patients of all ages while building lasting relationships with families. Dr. Ryan's decision to practice in Grafton reflects both his passion for rural medicine and our organization's commitment to investing in the long-term health of our region. We are thrilled to welcome him and know he will make a lasting impact on the lives of our patients and community."

Outside of medicine, Dr. Ryan enjoys golfing, playing volleyball, watching sports and spending time with Taylor and their dog Albert.

"Taylor and I are excited to make Grafton our home



Dr. Ryan with his wife Taylor with UMC CEO Mark Bertirud.

and become part of this community," said Dr. Ryan. "Everyone we met at the Foundation Golf Tournament made us feel incredibly welcome. I'm looking forward to building relationships with my patients, caring for families across the region, and becoming involved in the community both inside and outside the clinic."

According to national workforce projections, rural communities continue to experience significant physician shortages, with family medicine among the most critical specialties needed to meet the growing health care demands of aging populations. By recruiting physicians early in their careers and fostering strong connections to the community, Unity Medical Center is taking a proactive approach to strengthening access to local health care for years to come.

Dr. Ryan will join Drs. Marquardt, Midgarden, Shaw and Viscito as he establishes his practice next year.

## Park River Family Clinic anticipates fall opening

While most of the exterior of the new Park River Family Clinic building is complete, work around the building continues. Sidewalks have been poured, and the parking lot was slated to be poured in October.

Inside, taping and texturing, as well as painting, is complete. Flooring was scheduled to be installed in early September, while modular walls were slated for mid-September. Although construction time lines are always subject to change, Unity Medical Center staff are anticipating an opening by the end of November. A grand opening celebration will be announced in the near future.



This photo shows the exam room hallway, where modular walls and doors will be installed to close off each room.



This photo shows where guests will enter the building and turn right toward the registration desk.

## Muffins with Mark seeks public conversation



The Unity Medical Center Foundation began hosting a recurring event called Muffins with Mark in March, where about a dozen people attended to hear UMC CEO Mark Bertilrud talk about things like the Rural Health Transformation Program and the Park River Family Clinic project. Over coffee and muffins, guests are able to ask Mark questions. Guests have included state Rep. Karen Anderson and Red River Regional Council Executive Director Dawn Mandt. Future events will be held quarterly and announced on the Foundation's Facebook page and via email. Questions can also be submitted electronically using the adjacent QR code.



## New patient wheelchair transport van

Unity Medical Center recently purchased a new patient wheelchair transport van. It doesn't replace the wheelchair van purchased by donors during Harvest Auction 2022. While both vans are used to get swing bed patients to required medical appointments, the new van loads wheelchair patients from the rear of the vehicle instead of the side. It also accommodates two wheelchairs comfortably for a growing number of patients who need this service.



## Ringsak World War II flag added to UMC Veterans Wall



This American flag, flown during World War II, was donated to Unity Medical Center by Marnell Ringsak and Luann Ringsak-Oldenburg on behalf of their grandfather Martin Ringsak. The flag was framed and will be hung on UMC's Veterans Wall on the third floor of the hospital.

## Memorials and Thank You To Donors (May. 28-Sept. 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.

### Gene Anderson

Thomas McCarty

### Linda Babinski

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### Dennis Barker

Bill & Colleen Lykken

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### Don Schumacher

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Keith & Joanne Saville

### Hazel Summers

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### George Tibert

LeaAnn Dolan

Ryan & Jessica Sobolik

Paul Suda Farms

### Doris Trontvet

Don & Paddy Hutson

Brian & Kim Thompson

### Joyce

### Woinarowicz

Tom & Mary LaHaise

## 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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