

A supplement to McLean County Independent, Underwood News, Leader-News, McLean County Journal, McClusky Gazette, Velva Area Voice, Beulah Beacon, Hazen Star, Center Republican, Mountrail County Record, New Town News and Northern Sentry.

We salute all our local heroes

You make us proud. You'll feel that same pride when you read about just a few of the people in our lives who are the cornerstones of our health, safety and happiness.

You'll read about the farmer that considers faithfulness and stability the quality of a hero.

There's an ambulance crew first responder who practiced service for 30 years. There's another area resident who finds that he can't keep his hand down when it comes to volunteering.

We honor the law enforcement officers and firefighters who put their lives on the line. One of them tells us about the feeling of danger while in the field: "I pray that everyone makes it home at the end of the day and I ask God the same for me." Behind them are the spouses and partners who support the efforts

of their loved ones and you'll read about their lives.

Law enforcement takes on a different face in the story about a second lieutenant at Minot Air Force Base, working 70 feet underground at a missile launch site.

Then there are the heroes who make the heroes. A former track athlete now shares with youth how to run the race and win. A Beulah chiropractor volunteers by showing a hand to area youth.

Our heroes come in many shapes and sizes. They are silent and vocal, they are everywhere while others are behind the scenes.

We hope you enjoy reading of our Local Heroes. Please support the advertisers who made this section possible.

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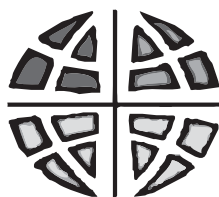


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A HERO ISNT MEASURED BY THE SIZE OF HIS STRENGTH, BUT BY THE STRENGTH OF HIS HEART. - ZEUS FROM HERCULES

The hero, it might be said, is called into being when perception of a hero and the recognition of responsibility toward it are backed up by the will to act.

-Mike Alsford

I think of a hero as someone who understands the degree of responsibility that comes with his freedom.

- Bob Dylan

Hard times don't create heroes. It's during the hard times when the 'hero' within us is revealed.

- Bob Riley

Being a hero doesn't mean doing something worth notice, it means doing something so unnoticeable that no one else will attempt it.

- Cody Carlson

A hero is someone we can admire without apology.

- Kitty Kelley

I think a hero is any person really intent on making this a better place for all people.

-Maya Angelou

Being a hero doesn't mean you're invincible. It just means that you're brave enough to stand up and do what's needed.

-Rick Riordan

Real heroes are those who fall and fail and are flawed, but win out in the end because they've stayed true to their ideals and beliefs and commitments.

-Kevin Costner



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Heroism of the faithful farmer

By SANDY BLANES

Someone once said, "A thousand people wait on the other side of your obedience." Faithfulness and stability were other words that came up as Gene and Dee Spichke talked about their lives dedicated to obeying God's laws. It is hard to number the lives of others who have benefitted from a lifetime of dedication of these local heroes from Balfour, North Dakota.

Born and raised in North Dakota, Gene Spichke, 81, (son of Philip and Anne Spichke) grew up on the family homestead that now has the title of Centennial Farm since the year, 2000. A lifelong farmer, Gene left the farm for only two years to join the army, returned to graduate from NDSU with a degree in agriculture, and resumed his life on the farm.

Dee Plesuk (daughter of Sam and Frances Plesuk), born in Minot, spent her first eight years in rural Butte and then went back to Minot where she graduated. She was away in California working as a dental nurse when letters pleading for her

to come back to 'God's country, or good ole' North Dakota, caused her to return to her love, her future husband, Gene Spichke.

Gene and Dee got married in 1959 at the First Baptist Church in Minot, the first couple to have a wedding in the new church. Gene continued to do what he had done his whole life in the same place that he grew up on, the homestead. Although Dee grew up going to the Mennonite Church, after getting married the couple attended the Kief Liberty Baptist church, where they brought up their children, Todd and Carrie (Doherty), and continue to go to this day. They love when they can bring their grandchildren, Sasha, Alexandra, Abigail and Spencer to visit.

For Gene, faithfulness in his life and stability, started with going to church before he was even born. His parents led the way as pillars in the little Baptist church in Kief. Over the years, Gene, now a deacon, has seen many changes with the little church growing and then diminishing, sometimes down to ten in the congregation. Gene said

that everyone thought the church would close when his mother died, but it has a growing membership and has the distinction of being the first Russian/Ukrainian Baptist Church built on the continent, and is in the National Register of Historic Places.

"Quote of the week: What's a hero?" by D. Fredrickson tells of the values. Dee states that two, faithfulness and stability are values they live by. These along with obedience are not words that lead to an easy road of life, according to Frederickson. "In many cases, it is much easier to go another route, one of defeat, of surrendering ethics or changing the environment to suit the flow," said Frederickson. However, for this couple, plowing forward and accepting challenges became their way of life.

Along with their farming and gardening, Spichkes joined Gideons International, in 1975, as a way to minister spiritually to others and worked with the Northcentral district of North Dakota.

Gene said that when they started, one of his favorite projects was to pass out the small pocket-size New Testaments, with Psalms and Proverbs, to the fifth graders in school. He remembers when local teacher, Ruth Yecoshenko, now many years retired, would immediately have everyone open their brand-new Bibles to the book of Luke and say, "Let's read the Christmas story."

Nowadays, he says it is more difficult to distribute the Bibles that he considers a guide to life. Gideon workers can only come into the classroom by invitation and many, for one dissenter, do not send invitations anymore. "The sidewalks are public, though," he said, "so we hand out as many as we can to all who will take them." He gives out every Bible personally and to date, has gifted thousands of Bibles to others. He feels that he has



Gene and Dee Spichke in their home filled with many plaques and awards for their work on the farm and contributions to the community.

helped, in giving out the Bibles, to do what Jesus asked of those who follow Him.

The Gideons still put Bibles in the hotels and go to the churches and now there are Bibles in all languages. A recent request offered Gene and Dee a chance to provide both a Portuguese and English Bibles for a language learner and their interpreter.

There came the day when Gene had to think about retiring from the rigorous life of farming. He went to an ag show in Minot, and he and Warren Zakopyko stopped by the Farm Rescue booth for information. They have been on that team

ever since.

"It really helped Gene to ease out of farming," Dee said smiling at Gene. "Gene gets to run the big farm machinery again. Although he is slowing down now, he and the others were out all the time, especially during planting and harvesting season."

For ten years, Gene has been helping others through Farm Rescue. This organization helps those who are hurting from illness, injury or family tragedies. He recalls the help they gave to a few farmers in

FAITHFUL FARMER

Continued on page 10

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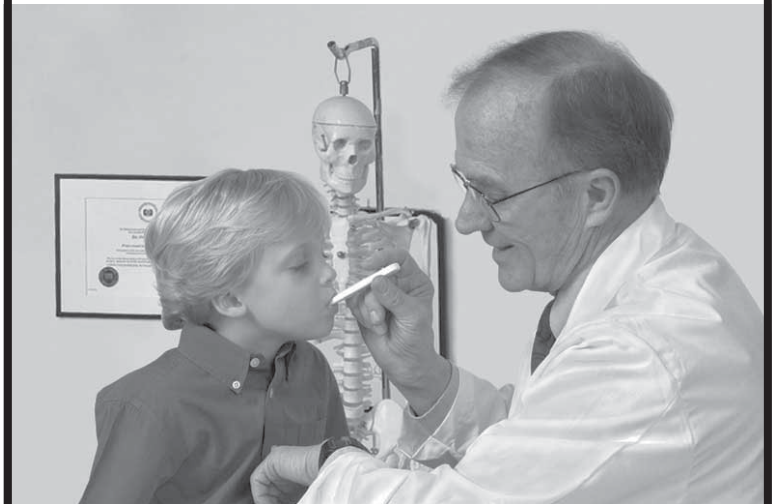


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A Tribute to Our Heroes

Stanton resident serves Mercer County for 30 years

By DANIEL ARENS

For three decades, one Stanton woman has served her community. Sometimes receiving help from others, sometimes the only Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in her area, Linda Erickson's dedication and sacrifice have helped the small North Dakota town time and again.

"I am the only person on the roster right now for Stanton," Linda said. She acts as a first responder for the community, helping to provide initial basic care for patients in the area.

"My goal is hopefully to stabilize the patient until the ambulance gets there," she said. "I'm not the only one ever in Stanton, just right now. But there have only been a couple of other people at times in town."

She explained that it is not possible for her to cover every call that comes in, as that would require her on hand at all times.

"It's unrealistic for us to be there 24/7. There are times I'm just not home. Or maybe I'm sick or recovering from sickness myself. Obviously I can't help someone else if I need to be taking care of myself."

There is zero tolerance for any alcohol as well, so Linda said that a

single glass of wine every once in a while requires six hours before she is allowed to respond again.

"Of course, that one time in three months I decide to have a glass of wine, the pager went off," she laughed.

Linda works with the Mercer County Ambulance Service. Besides responding in Stanton itself, she also responds to rural calls in the area, from near Pick City to near Center, and east along Highway 200 in the direction of Washburn.

Linda was recently recognized by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) for her 30 years of service, a rare achievement among EMTs.

Linda explained that there have been changes in how different levels of EMT service. Although she was an Emergency Medical Technician Intermediate (EMT-I) for 24 years, recent changes to the system establishing the Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT) required more classes for her to take to maintain that training.

"They didn't allow [my EMT-I] to be grandfathered in," Linda said. "I chose to remain an EMT instead of going through the entire class again, so I'm just an EMT again." She noted that her decision

was "not without a great deal of thought."

Throughout her years serving as an EMT, Linda often finds the burden for initial care as her responsibility. Linda pointed out that, with all ambulances in the service located in Hazen and Beulah, it's often up to her to provide the first level of basic care for patients in and around Stanton while the ambulance is en route.

Besides her own service, Linda has been an EMT instructor for nearly 20 years.

"I taught close to half of [the Mercer County Ambulance Service's] squad members," she said. She also taught for various individuals who needed the instruction related to their specific jobs, and for other ambulance services such as those in Killdeer, Riverdale, and Oliver County.

She has also worked with North American Coal Freedom Mine for 24 years. "As soon as I was able, I started with their emergency response team. They still have a rescue team, and I was one of the founding members on that."



Linda Erickson has served Mercer County for three decades, sometimes acting as the only first responder in the city of Stanton.

"I give so much credit to former students," Linda, specifically referencing those who are now volunteers with the service. "There are some staff people that are there, but

a lot are volunteers."

Although Linda still lives in Beulah, she spends much of her time in Bismarck as well.

"I am an outreach instructor for Sanford Health," she said. She also has a daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter in Bismarck, whom she sees often.

However, when she is available, Linda continues to serve the Stanton area, where she was raised and has lived throughout her life.

"I have been a first responder in Stanton from the start of this process," Linda said. "It's a town of around 350 people, you pretty much know all of them."

Besides the problems of her own schedule, Linda said that sometimes first response doesn't work because of time constraints.

"When you get a call at 3 in the morning, and you have to get up, get dressed, get your equipment together, and there's a lot of equipment: You do all of that, and

30 YEARS

Continued on page 6

Press release on recognition for Linda Erickson's 30 years of service

Linda Erickson, Mercer County Ambulance (MCA) volunteer and EMS Outreach Instructor for the Sanford Health EMS Education Department, was recently recognized by the Board of Directors of the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) for achieving 30 consecutive years as a Nationally Registered EMT. This distinction is an honor held by few EMTs.

To maintain her status as a Nationally Registered EMT, Erickson completed, on a biennial basis, the most comprehensive recertification program for Emergency Medical Technicians in America. She not only completed courses to refresh her fundamental knowledge and

skills but has also attended additional continuing education courses to advance her knowledge on new lifesaving skills.

By maintaining her Nationally Registered status and completing regular continuing education courses, Erickson is among the few elite EMTs with the most training in pre-hospital emergency medical care in the nation.

Erickson was an EMT-Intermediate for 23 years, and collectively has been an EMT for seven years. She has also been an EMT Instructor for almost 20 years. She has been a First Responder for the community of Stanton as a member of the MCA Service throughout her career in EMS. Her resume

includes time as an American Heart Association CPR instructor, MCA Board Member, Emergency Response Team member for The Coteau Properties Company Freedom Mine, and a founding member of the Coteau Rope Rescue Team. She joined Sanford Health in April of this year.

The National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians serves as the national EMS certification organization by providing a valid, uniform process to assess the knowledge and skills required for competent practice by EMS professionals throughout their careers and by maintaining a registry of certification status.

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30 YEARS

Continued from page 5

then you drive out several miles to a location on Highway 200. Plus you sometimes have to deal with weather concerns. And by the time you arrive on scene, the patient is already 10 miles away in the ambulance. Sometimes you have to use a little bit of common sense.”

Linda said that learning to understand both her responsibilities and her limitations has been a requirement for doing her work successfully.

“The volunteers are hugely committed when they sign on. They establish that they will respond for certain chunks of time. I respond when I am able to. Sometimes I can’t. You have to reconcile that in your mind.”

Linda said that she goes to great efforts to protect the confidentiality of her patients.

“I respect my patients’ privacy. Everything stays professional,” she said.

Linda’s parents, Ron and Carol Kessler, had dedicated their lives to serving Stanton as well. Carol served at the Mercer County Courthouse as both deputy and country treasurer throughout her life, while Ron served with law enforcement, including in the capacity of county sheriff.

Linda said that the experience of growing up in that household meant that she grew up with the life of emergency response as the norm. Flashing lights in the driveway, pagers going off at night, understanding the lingo of efficient communication among responders: all of these things have always been part of Linda’s life.

Linda is married to Chip Erickson. Chip has also spent his life involved in emergency response, initially as a first responder and now as an emergency medical responder (EMR). Some of Chip’s instruction actually came from Linda herself.

“The intended instructor wasn’t able to teach that class. After she found out, she contacted me and asked if I would take it on. I’ve taught both my husband and my daughter.”

Chip and Linda have one daughter, Haleigh, who lives in Bismarck and is married to Mike Wahl. Mike works at Sanford Health, while Haleigh works as a registered nurse for St. Alexius Hospital. Mike and Haleigh have their own daughter, Lily, and Linda often finds herself in Bismarck caring for her granddaughter while the Wahls are working.

Linda said that she is proud to have her entire family working in health and emergency response fields of work.

“Your family’s going to need to be understanding,” she said. “Sometimes things come up, and I’m not able to attend a get-together, or I missed one of my daughter’s events. Not all families are so supportive.”

Linda laughed about the conversations her family would have, including with her daughter and her friends when she was younger:

“The reason I told them to wear your helmet when you bike to the Knife River Indian Villages is because I don’t want to scoop your brains up with a shovel.”

Linda added that the eyes of Haleigh’s friends would get really big when she made those kinds of remarks, but they were normal in a family that grew up knowing the ins and outs of emergency response.

Linda’s continued dedication to the community of Stanton was highlighted by the recognition of her 30 years of service. But it shows even more strongly in the care that she has shown for the people of her community, people she has lived with and known personally throughout her life.

Volunteer hero in all things

By ALLAN TINKER

In 1960, Jeff Martwick volunteered to be the second son born to David and Alvina Martwick. He ended up the middle child, between older brother Neil and younger sister Sheila (Stein).

He has had his right hand up for service to anyone and everyone, from health care to firefighting to hauling a disabled vehicle. Martwick keeps saying he should cut back, but even after a heart attack at one of his volunteer efforts (McClusky Midsummer Fest), he has not found the time to figure out what to quit.

For those who get mail in rural boxes, he has served as a substitute mail driver for more than 25 years. He has driven both local routes and the main shuttle of mail from Jamestown to McClusky and back.

Since his graduation from McClusky High School in 1978, he studied architectural engineering and zoology at UND and NDSU, about a year in each college.

He then worked for Polar Homes and McClusky Lumber, both owned by Lawrence Thiel, from 1982 to 1985.

He has also worked with his father for the D and J Mobil Bulk Service for 13 years until the business sold. He has continued to work for the new owner, McClusky Co-op Elevator for the past one and one-half years.

Martwick owned, operated, managed, cooked, tended bar and served customers at the HiWay Café and Lounge for 13 years and 9 months. He sold the business in June or 2004.

He has served for 20 years on the McClusky City Fire Department, and with its reorganization as the McClusky District Fire Department in 2014, he continues as its fire chief. He served four years as secretary-treasurer when it was the city unit. They now answer both city and rural calls.

In July of 2014, Martwick passed Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification and is on the McClusky Ambulance Service, one of those first to arrive on scene for many incidents.

He was also part of the strategic planning, county-wide, FEMA

VOLUNTEER


Continued on page 10




Jeff Martwick, hand up, ready for the next good thing to do for the people he loves to watch.



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Blue lives matter

Partners of county law enforcement share their thoughts

By STU MERRY

They don't hold degrees in law enforcement.

They don't patrol the streets and highways of McLean County.

They don't pull 12-hour night shifts, but they have just as much invested as any deputy on the force. They are the partners of McLean County Sheriff's Department officers.

Six partners shared their thoughts about being married to a deputy, their apprehension as their significant other suits up and heads off to work, and how they react when they hear an officer has been shot.

A newlywed, being married to Curt for a little over a year, Kate Olson said she's always had a strong respect for law enforcement. Dating, then marrying a law enforcement officer, she said she had no trepidation.

The daughter of Chief Deputy Sheriff Richard Johnson, Erica Meadows grew up around law enforcement. She said she never thought she'd marry a cop.

"But it works," she said. "I like it. I'm used to it, but it's a little different now than it was growing up."

Stacey Salhus said she was nervous at first, being married to a law enforcement officer as Craig worked at the North Dakota State Penitentiary.

"There, they (the inmates) have nothing to lose and he was on the SORT (Special Operations Response) team," she said. Now, I'm a little more relaxed than I was then."

Lori Pederson is married to Dave. She takes being married to a sheriff in stride.

"It's always how it's been," she said. "Even dating, I was fine with it."

Rick Richard's wife, LeAnn, was not apprehensive at all. She was a senior in high school when they started dating.

"I was committed to him," she said.

For Joel Cote Kanning and Justin it was second nature.

"I grew up with it as my mother was a dispatcher and worked in corrections," he said. "My father is a sheriff. It wasn't anything I wasn't used to already."

With the rash of police shootings in recent months across the country, collectively, the group said they feel no different now and are united in support of their significant other.

"I trust my husband knows what he's doing, and who he works with," Olson said. "It's not up to me, it's in God's hands and that's how I look at it. I say a prayer every day as he heads out the door. I actually love the life because of the close friendships that we've formed."

Meadows said it's just the way it is.

"I try not to worry, but sometimes it's hard," she said.

For Salhus it's from the department family that she draws her support.

"I think it's nice to be able to know all the families and that they will be there if something happens," she said.

But Pederson admits there's been times when she was scared.

"I read safety is an illusion, it's a God thing," she said.

And if the unspeakable hap-



STU MERRY/INDEPENDENT

McLean County Sheriff's Department partners are, from left, Kate Olson, LeAnn Richard, Erica Meadows, Joel Cote Kanning, Lori Pederson and Stacey Salhus.

McLean County Sheriff's Department members	partners	yrs. married	yrs. in law enforcement
Curt Olson	Kathy Olson	1	31
Cody Meadows	Erica Meadows	6	10
Craig Salhus	Stacey Salhus	15	14
Dave Pederson	Lori Pederson	26	35
Rick Richard	LeAnn Richard	33	35
Justin Kanning	Joel Cote Kanning	6 mo.	7

pened?

"There isn't any way you can prepare. It'll take care of itself. If it does happen, there's nothing I couldn't have done," she said.

Salhus admits she sometimes gets apprehensive when Craig doesn't come home on time.

Pederson said, "You trust who they work with."

Richard said she also gets apprehensive.

"But you can't let yourself be succumbed by it," she said. "You trust what they are doing. It's faith."

Cote Kanning said he feels more a sense of pride being the partner of a law enforcement officer.

"In theory, everyone can do it," he said.

With law enforcement shootings officers make headlines. The six say their routines have become more measured.

"We hug each other a little tighter before he leaves for work," Olson said. "I always say 'I love you.' Other than that, no. We end arguments quickly. We don't let things

fester. It's not so much a conscious, it's subconscious. Make the most of today and show them how much you care."

Pederson agrees: "That's just good life advice."

For the Meadows family, the routine is much the same.

BLUE LIVES

Continued on page 9

Firefighter's name hall inductees

By STU MERRY

The North Dakota Firefighters Hall of Fame recently grew by three.

Joining the current members are Ray Lambert, Mike Matteson and Gary Troftgruben. The inductees have dedicated many years to firefighting. The three will be honored for their contributions, leadership and accomplishments to North Dakota.

Induction into the Hall of Fame is conferred upon outstanding individuals whose contributions to and leadership of the fire service within the State of North Dakota have been a milestone in the development of those services; whose actions have served not just their community, but have contributed significantly to

the fire service on a regional, statewide, or national basis; and, whose leadership and accomplishments in these areas are widely recognized and respected in the North Dakota fire service.

*Mike Matteson, Garrison - Active firefighter since 1990, Past Assistant Chief, Chaplain, Fire Prevention Chair-Garrison Fire Department, NDFA Life Member, President of N.D. Firefighter's Museum (Since its inception).



Mike Matteson

*Gary Troftgruben, Harvey - Active Firefighter since 1975, Past Chief, Deputy Chief, 1st and 2nd Assistant Chief, Safety Officer - Harvey Fire Department, NDFA President and Life Member.



Gary Troftgruben

*Ray Lambert, Bismarck - North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office since 1989 (retired January 2016), Deputy State Fire Marshal (1989-2000), State Fire Marshal (2000-2016).



Ray Lambert

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The hero is no braver than the ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

BLUE LIVES

Continued from page 8

"He's not allowed to leave without a hug and a kiss, and the kids, even if we were fighting ... he's still not just leaving, he'd leave happy," she said.

Salhus said, "We always make sure we say goodbye. The kids are older and are asking questions, so we talk about that."

For Richard, arguments seem less important now.

"No, we don't stay mad long," she said. "It doesn't last. We say 'I love you' and I always tell him 'be careful.' Years ago, before cell phones, it was much harder - you'd hope for the best."

The partners say they are proud of what their spouse's careers are, even in what is perceived as a law enforcement supportive state in North Dakota.

"I kinda like it as sometimes ... of seeing someone he's busted," said Meadows. "It makes me proud he's doing something right."

"I'm proud of it, too," Salhus said. "But it puts a crimp in where we eat sometimes because of who is working there."

"I'm not uncomfortable at all," said Pederson. "But more so, maybe for others. He's quiet about what happens. I'm not going to hear it from him."

The department's been on the receiving end, lately, of kind gestures. Those "warm fuzzies" speak volumes to the department families.

"It touches my heart," said Olson. "It's good to know there's good ... and I'd like to say 'thank you' to those who have gone out of their way."

Pederson said her husband, who's been in law enforcement for 35 years, keeps every thank you note he's received.

"They have meant a lot to him," she said. "It does make a difference to him, and for all."

"It's nice to know other people

care," Meadows said. "It's nice to see other people understand, because there's a lot. I like to hear the good stuff. But I hear negative stuff. From where I work, I hear a lot."

Then, there are misconceptions from what is real and what is said and heard second hand.

"It's so far from what the reality was but what people are so willing to believe about somebody, it's just interesting," Cote Kanning said.

The Salhuses occasionally have lunch together where Stacey works, the Garrison School System.

"Some kids have a negative aspect so it's nice for him to come into the school for lunch," she said.

To create a sense of family, an auxiliary formed last winter. It's gone a long way to create that atmosphere among the department families.

"It's worked well for me as a way to form friendships and support for each other, not only me, but giving

to the department, events ... it helps us feel good," said Olson.

Pederson said it's a new mindset at the law enforcement center.

"I really like that with the new administration, we have support for the leadership and I think you have more to give if your cup is full," she said.

"It's good to have that auxiliary support," Cote Kanning said.

Richard said the group includes people of different ages.

"It's a good group and I've enjoyed it," she said.

Olson invites spouses or significant others in the department to join.

"We'd welcome them," she said. "Come to enjoy, and bring the kids. We are very much family oriented."

The message the spouses would like to get out is that blue lives matter.

"They have feelings," too," Richard said. "They don't always enjoy what they have to do."

Pederson said law enforcement isn't for the faint of heart.

"There's things they have to do,"

she said. "There are things they do that no one else would want to."

Richard added; "Knocking on someone's door, telling them their loved one won't be there again."

Pederson continued the thought: "They bring that home with them. It affects them."

Olson said she struggles when she sees a member of the law enforcement community get killed.

"I remember there's always hope, and if we can continue to convey that, good will always outweigh the bad," she said.

The message will be front and center in late September when a special presentation, "Humanizing the Badge" is presented.

"It's a way to give back to the public and law enforcement, not only here but across the state," Olson said. "It's an opportunity to get together and share and to grow together in closeness, and were excited about that. It's a huge undertaking, but we've worked hard to get to where we are."

Pederson reminds: "See the person rather than the badge."



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VOLUNTEER

Continued from page 6

project this year.

Martwick has also been a member, president (four years), and secretary-treasurer (three years) for the McClusky Merchants Association, where he is the current president. He has led them through, assuming many roles as cook, emcee, parade organizer, driver, delivery, waiter, and Santa for many of the Association's events.

For pay, he has been a bus driver part time for the McClusky School District and will be this year's driver to the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis October 16 through October 23.

For pay, he also has been a Sheridan County Assessor for McClusky, Martin and Goodrich. He has done this work for three years.

As a volunteer board member, he serves on the Northland Community Health Center board since October of 2011. He is the current treasurer and is also on the executive committee for finance, board recruitment and retention.

For service in his church, St. John's Lutheran, where he has belonged since 1965, he is vice-president of the church council and a past trustee (four years) and treasurer (two years).

He serves as an originating board member on both the McClusky Lo-

cal, and Sheridan County Resource Center not-for-profits, where he helps in promoting the community and holding fundraisers for Christmas Cheer baskets and other food projects.

He decorates, cooks, serves, cleans up, greets, entertains and organizes anything where he can watch people. He states that watching people and being where people are his favorite things. "I like to try new things," he smiled.

He notes that getting things ready is "sort of stressful" but "Once we get going it is just enjoyment." He adds that his doctor advises him on food, diet and exercise, but has not said anything about stress.

In his volunteer work, he has arranged more training in the past five years for the firefighters, adding to both community and the firefighters' safety.

He has served as a Cub Scout leader when Mary Neff was a Troop Mother years ago, and also belonged to the now-defunct local Lions Club. There he served as president for two years and secretary-treasurer for four years.

He belonged to the McClusky Jaycees when they were still a going thing, and enjoyed the demolition derbies they organized for the community and for fundraising.

Along with his work and volunteer services, Jeff and his father David have been long known as the people to go to for help in hauling disabled vehicles. They also are the source for information or parts for vehicles, towing, or just a ride home from a stalled vehicle.

With his school bus driving, he also takes and passes a ND DOT physical every year.

A former smoker, he now gets sick from tobacco smoke. He said it makes him lose his appetite, which he thought was probably good as he is supposed to limit salt, cheese, bacon, ham and pasta in his diets.

A person who likes to entertain and is ready to go to any event that fits into his schedule, he finds it hard to resist those "great dishes" he finds in his travels.

As more than one person who has come into the community for various organizational functions has asked, the question sure to surface when they see Jeff is, "Didn't we just see you at the (other place) meeting also? Do you belong to everything?"

The answer is yes.

However, his hand will be up for the next time someone needs a helping hand, a volunteer hero for everyone at any time.

FAITHFUL FARMER

Continued from page 2

the area where he lives. "I remember Ralph Duchsherer, of Balfour, whose daughter was injured, Arlen Volmer of Drake, convalescing from illness, and Rod Thomas of Kief, who suffered an accident." There were many others rescue operations that took the team around North Dakota and into South Dakota and Minnesota. Gene also remembers the media meetings where many times he talked to reporters

and stood before TV cameras to give the good news of who Farm Rescue was helping that week.

As Gene says, "God put me on this earth not just to help myself, but to help others." He also said there is nothing like the friendships formed through this volunteer work.

"Again the words of D. Frederickson surface, "No hero ever ran away from his duty, took the easy way out, or gave up his responsi-

bilities for personal gain." Neither has this couple, who continue to believe what they have held onto since their youth. They continue to care for their family, and have no regrets as to the life they have chosen to serve others in need. In this world of upsets, disasters, and uncertainty, it is good to know there are still faithful and stable people like Gene and Dee Spichke to look up to, our own local heroes.

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LOCAL HEROES

SECOND SECTION

Protecting our country beneath our very feet

By COURTNEY DUKE GRAVES

Military culture is nothing new to McHenry County. Tan humvees with guns are seen on Highway 52 every day. Words like “base,” “B-52,” and “nukes” are commonplace. People are working in the area 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide for our national defense, but many of their efforts are underground - literally.

Second lieutenant Erica Skog, 24, is a missileer in the 740th squadron at Minot Air Force Base. Her duties include driving out to a rural site and sitting there “on alert” in a launch control center (LCC) - a steel room suspended by shock isolators about 70 feet underground - for 24 hours with only one other person. There, they take sleep shifts, make phone calls to leadership and other LCCs, perform inspections and remain constantly prepared to launch a nuclear missile at any time.

“To be honest, I first chose to join the Air Force out of necessity. I needed to make sure I had a job after college,” said Skog. “Both my parents are veterans. My mom was in the Air Force and my dad was in the Marine Corps, so when it came time to find something where I knew I would have a job after college, I decided on the Air Force, and it turned out to be exactly what I needed.”

She isn’t the only millennial to come to this decision. In fact, the vast majority of those who hold the keys to a nuclear launch are first and second lieutenants in their twenties. Skog herself has only



Second Lieutenant Erica Skog.

been working as a missileer for less than a year.

“We’re just regular people. We’re a bunch of kids straight out of college, just like everyone else. We just have a very interesting job,” said Skog.

Perhaps the most interesting part is that the average missileer will practice launching a nuclear ICBM for years, yet will never actually do it. When asked if she thinks she will ever be ordered to perform a launch, Skog said, “I don’t know. I guess we’ll have to see.”

What happens if she is personally called upon to launch a nuclear missile?

For such an event to occur, the commander-in-chief would have to issue the order from a secure communications military facility - such as the White House “war room” or aboard Air Force One - and supply the first half of a launch code. This code is carried in a secure briefcase called “the football” by a military officer who accompanies the president everywhere.

Upon receiving the code, Skog and her crew partner would verify the launch code by comparing it to an authentication code. This authentication code, along with a key, remains locked in a box with two padlocks. To prevent a single person from launching alone, each crew member only has the combination for one of the locks. Once they deem that the launch code is genuinely from the president, one missileer picks up the key with one hand and prepares to flip a switch with his or her other hand. The other missileer prepares to flip two switches (one for each hand). In order for the launch to work, the key and all three switches must be turned and flipped simultaneously, and another two-person crew in a

different LCC must do the exact same thing. In the extremely unlikely event that an unauthorized launch is underway, any other LCC can inhibit it. Once the launch procedure is completed, there is no stopping it.

“At the time, I hope that I would just be able to do my job to the best of my ability. It would be difficult, because obviously that would be a huge amount of damage that we would be inflicting in any scenario. But I am absolutely prepared and willing to do my job to the best of my ability if it means that my friends, my family and the surrounding community gets to go on living the life that I would hope they want to live,” said Skog. “That’s what I would think about, because it’s not about me. It’s about everyone else at home.”

The job involves several unique requirements. Because they work with classified material, all missileers must have a top secret security clearance. Their pre-screening process weeds out anybody with claustrophobia or a moral objection to personally launching a nuclear missile. They have regular training scenarios to ensure they’re ready for any situation that comes their way. Regular physical fitness and drug use tests ensure that their bodies are at a level of high performance. Anything that could potentially decrease their vigilance on the job - even things as seemingly inconsequential as over-the-counter melatonin the night before they work - are forbidden.

Like any other occupation, there are pros and cons to being a missileer.

PROTECTING
Continued on page 14

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PROTECTING

Continued from page 13

“The people are absolutely the best part of my job. There’s a lot of our job that’s very mundane, and it does get annoying to be down in the capsule with only one other person for 24 hours, but the people are fantastic. Whether it’s other missileers on the other end of the phone line, or the maintenance people as well. They really know their job. Everyone has a story, and it’s a lot of fun getting to know everyone,” said Skog.

Because there is a lot of down time, boredom is a challenge for many missileers. Skog is taking advantage of the down time to further her education. She completed her undergraduate studies at University of Northwestern at St. Paul, MN

“

It’s a very important job, and a lot of people are brought to these local areas because of what we do, our impact on the communities is just providing that safety and security needed to sustain our way of life here.

- Erica Skog

”

with a major in history and minors in Biblical theology and English literature.

“I don’t know exactly where my career trajectory will take me, but I’m getting my Master’s in marriage and family counseling, so hopefully I could stay in the missile field, but maybe use that psychology background to help the career field and the crew force improve even more,” she said.

According to Skog, the biggest challenge to the job, however, is simply being away from her husband - a logistics officer working in vehicle maintenance for the Air Force - and their two dogs for extended periods of time.

“We don’t deploy overseas, we deploy in place. Depending on how



MINOT AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Secretary of Defense Ashton B Carter on his visit to Minot Air Force Base. Erica Skog is second from the left.

many alerts you pull per month, if you’re maxed out, it equates to being deployed basically eight months out of the year. That’s the most difficult part, being so close to home, yet not at home,” she said. “Other than that, this job isn’t that bad, and they do a good job of giving you that time back as well. After we get back from alert, they can’t touch us on the next day, so that gives us a nice break.”

In just the past two years, the Air Force has initiated the Force

Improvement Program (FIP) to increase morale in the career field. Airmen now receive special “missile pay” in addition to their regular salary just for being in the career field. Testing standards - which used to apply so much pressure on even a one-percent difference in passing scores that multiple missileers were inclined to cheat - now are pass/fail and treat scores between a 100 and 90 percent equally.

The changes seem to be working. “When the Secretary of Defense visited here, he said this is the most important mission that we have as the Air Force. I absolutely think that the Air Force and the government

in general pump a lot of money into these missile programs. Now, we’re all human, and everyone says this should be cut, and this should be more, but I’m glad I’m not the one making those decisions. I think they do a lot of good for us.”

FIP is actually what convinced Skog to enter into the missile program in the first place.

“I originally wanted to go into Intelligence, but as part of the Force Improvement Plan, they came up with a retroactive scholarship for non-engineering majors halfway through my junior year that would go back and cover the first part of that year, and the rest of my college

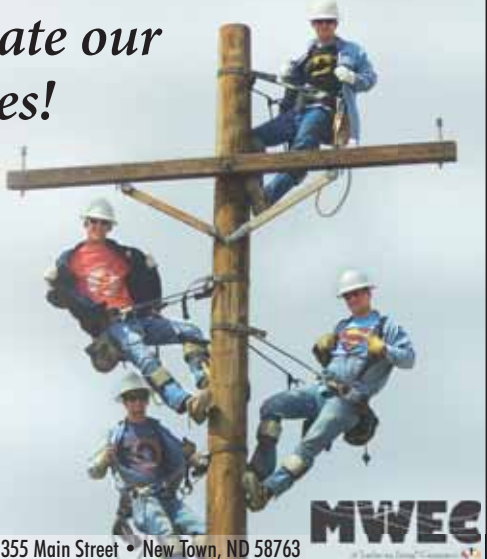
if I promised to go into missiles.” It may not be for everyone, but Skog thoroughly enjoys the task.

“I would like to stay in as long as I possibly can. I think people in our generation have a tendency to be impatient. They want to be able to effect change right here, right now. You can do that by being good at your job and being loyal to the people around you,” she said.

“It’s a very important job, and a lot of people are brought to these local areas because of what we do,” said Skog. “Our impact on the communities is just providing that safety and security needed to sustain our way of life here.”

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DJ Erickson assessing an injury at one of the Beulah Miners' home football games.

A community survives on volunteers

DJ Erickson, Beulah

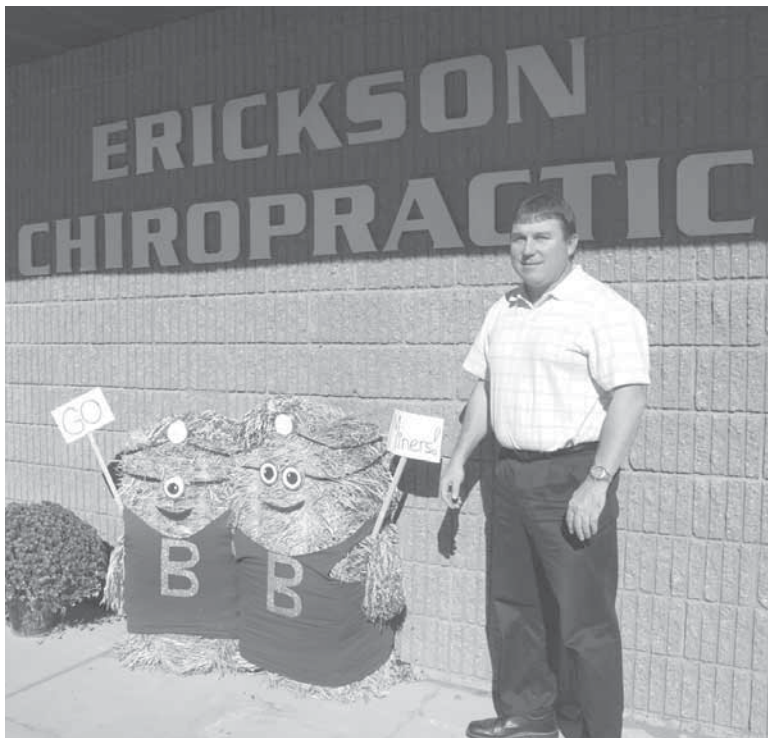
By Kate Johnson

Calls flooded in to the local paper to nominate chiropractor DJ Erickson as a unseen hometown hero. Born and raised in Beulah, DJ was taught the fundamentals of how to be a quality member of the community. And that is exactly what the many voices on the other end of the phone were saying, speaking to DJ's core qualities.

As a child DJ said he was in 4-H and FFA, which taught him about lending a helping hand. However, his family always volunteered at the Mercer County Fair, which DJ said his dad took very seriously.

"A fair time would be the time my dad would shut down in the fields, whether he was combining or not, and get up to the fair," recalled DJ.

Although DJ isn't on the Mercer County Fair Board, he still continues to help out where ever they need. Over the course of the last 20 years DJ has served on countless boards and committees. After he completed his schooling to become a chiropractor, he moved back to Beulah and shared an office with an already established practice.



DJ outside his chiropractic business in Beulah.

can do a quick evaluation," said DJ, who carried on to say they are able to decide whether that student athlete needs medical attention or to simply go home and ice.

it's a Friday night game, I may not be there [at the office]."

He said he blocks out his game times well in advance, so his patients are fully aware.

DJ is a dedicated member of the community, and his business name, amongst many others in Beulah, is always included in "Donations by" sections. He is constantly donating financially to many local groups who walk through his door.

Many of the people who nominated DJ explained how giving he is and how he is always present at every event. DJ explained that, as a committed community member, he wants to see this community thrive not only survive. He said it comes down to the choices you make.

"You see, that's one of the things in the town, you try to get everyone to help, and sometimes when they say they're busy or can't do it, that's when it comes down to choices. If they still want activities in town to continue, it takes volunteers. It takes people to step up and help," DJ explained.

Serving on boards and committees, owning a business, and also helping the local football team -- how does he have time for anything else? DJ discussed that people make time for the things that are

You just put it in your schedule and it's just part of what your schedule is. So when people say they don't have time, you either make time or you don't. It's a choice that people make for that.

- DJ Erickson

In 1995, when DJ first moved back, it took only one month before he was asked if he wanted to be on the Nursing Home Board, a board on which he served for 12 years.

DJ and his wife, Roberta, have four sons together; all have been and still are a part of Beulah's High School football team. However, his sons being involved isn't why DJ started to help the football team.

It all started in 1996, when DJ opened his own chiropractic office. The then high school football coach came in to DJ's office to be adjusted. It was the coach who approached DJ to work the sidelines of the football games.

"I didn't do treatment so much, more evaluations," DJ explained.

This prompted DJ to attain more training to work the sidelines. In the early 2000s DJ completed a certification course for certified chiropractor sports physicians.

Twenty years later, DJ continues to work the sidelines, both at home and away games.

"The nice thing there is you

"I think the sooner we start care the faster your condition heals, and trying to get them to the right place that they need to go," DJ said.

This isn't just a home team advantage; DJ offers his services to the opposing team as well. He approaches the away team beforehand, letting them know he is willing to give his services if an injury were to occur on their team.

Although DJ isn't the official trainer for Beulah's wrestling team, he says he also brings his bag to those matches just in case.

DJ has been closing down his office early for home football games since he started helping, and currently has been doing so for the away games also. Depending on where the game is, DJ closes his office as early as noon. However, his patients don't seem to mind.

"Patients are understanding, they know what it's for," explained DJ, "A lot of them probably understand

COMMUNITY

Continued on page 23

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Community Club makes it ‘Better in Center’

By ANNETTE TAIT

The definition of “unsung heroes” – people making “a substantive yet unrecognized contribution” -- is almost a perfect fit for the Center Community Club. The only change would be to add an “s” to the word contribution – this group has been serving its community in countless ways for more than 100 years.

Why is so little heard about this group’s good works? Its generosity is widespread, but inconspicuous – members serve not for recognition, but to better their community.

Every person who was asked about being involved in the Community Club was quick to point to someone else who did or does “so much more.” As the spotlight was repeatedly ducked and repointed at someone else, the trend became very clear: each person who humbly took no credit was inevitably mentioned by at least several others as a Community Club member who works hard to make Center and Oliver County a better place to live.

The Community Club began in 1914 as the Commercial Club, a group primarily of businessmen who sought to promote the good of the town by contributing time, effort, and money to support worthwhile projects. The city’s “It’s Better in Center” slogan is the product of a 1923 Community Club contest, one of many projects focused on strengthening the community and improving quality of life. Early projects included Market Day, an auction of functional items no longer needed by their donors; a community Christmas tree on Main Street, and a dam on Square Butte Creek to provide for better boating and fishing.

“After a flood there were concerns that the dam had contributed to the problem, so it was removed,” said Cece Albers, who, with her husband, Don, was a long-time member.

In more recent years, the Community Club has provided funding to support dozens – and possibly hundreds -- of projects including the entrance signs to Center, Christkindlemarkt and the Nativity scene at the courthouse, the annual Easter egg hunt, the Bluegrass Festival at Cross Ranch State Park, and CANDISC bicycle ride stopovers. For a number of years, the club held a “Senior Prom” event for people over 21, an appreciation picnic for emergency volunteers, and Fourth of July fireworks shows.

“We try to better the community, and take care of things,” Community Club President Kristen Henke said. “Like the benches around town -- the community club has gotten the FFA to paint them, and community club pays for the supplies.”

The Community Club has helped the golf course rebuild the walking bridge across the creek, contributed to the school library – which also serves as the county library, helped Fit for Life purchase equipment, and has contributed to the West River Bus program, the DJ system for the school, the after prom party, the new high school robotics program, the agriculture education program, and the shelters at Nelson Lake. The Golden Age Club, the Historical Society, the county fairgrounds, and even the City of Center regularly benefit from the group’s support. In fact, there are very few organizations or projects in Center and the surrounding county that have not been aided by the Community Club at some point in time.

“Schools, scholarships, FFA, 4-H, Boy Scouts, wherever there was a need,” Former Community Club President Penny Pulver said.



Themes for the annual Old Settlers Days, sponsored by the Center Community Club, a sense of community, such as the “Our Roots Run Deep” theme from 2015.



Streets sports during the Community Club-sponsored Old Settlers Days are fun for everyone, participants and spectators alike.

“We never really made money [to keep on reserve], it always went for the benefit of the community.”

While the group is busy throughout the year supporting any number of projects, its main focus is Old Settlers Days. The annual three-day event celebrates many facets of life in Oliver County, honoring those whose families helped build the original community and keep it healthy, while also providing activi-

ties, recreation, and entertainment for current and former residents and extended families. Each year, Old Settlers Days draws people from near and far to watch the parade, take part in the street games or games on the courtyard, catch up at the class reunion, and honor and remember those who are no longer with us.

“Old Settlers is the biggest beneficiary,” Community Club Mem-

ber Dave Berger said. “The club put in the sound system on Main Street – all new speakers were put in last May, and there’s a cordless microphone for parades and the street sports.”

Over the years, the Community Club has contributed thousands of dollars toward making life “Better in Center.”

“In the early days, having a couple thousand [to distribute] was

exciting. This last quarter there was \$10,000 to give out,” Berger said, noting amounts vary depending on how much money is available and how many requests the club receives.

New members are always welcome, as are ideas for making Center and Oliver County a better place to live. For more information, contact Berger at 701-220-8862.

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Community churches offer 'Welcome Home' and more

By ANNETTE TAIT

A stable, and preferably growing, population is what helps to keep small towns and rural areas healthy. The City of Center and surrounding Oliver County have struggled with population loss since early in the last century, with the brief exception of the 1970s. Community churches have recently embarked on a project that may help stem the outflow by showing new residents how welcome they are to the community.

Like the movie "Field of Dreams" but with a twist, Center's new community welcome committee was born of a simple idea. Instead of "If we build it, they will come," the committee saw an opportunity for greeting newcomers as a part of building the community.

The idea came at the urging of Center United Methodist Church Pastor Cory Thrall, who tasked his congregation to consider what the town, and surrounding community, needs.

"We were given an assignment," Committee Member Dawn Heid said. "We were to talk with the mayor, the school, the principals, and members of the community, and find out what we need. To pick one thing, and do it well."

One conversation led to another, and soon the Center UMC, St. Paul Lutheran, and St. Martin Catholic churches were working together. The project began in Center then extended into the county, with St. Peter Lutheran Church also joining in the effort.

"Give credit to the Holy Spirit," St. Paul Lutheran Pastor Dennis Ristvedt said, as heads nodded around the table.

"Pastor passed it on, and we got the message," Committee Member Dave Berger added.

While former Mayor Sandy Olin sent welcome notes to newcomers during her term in office, many years have passed since people moving into the area have received a welcome basket.

"Kye Gullickson did it at one time, but no one after that," Heid said, indicating the long-term lapse.

All that has changed, with the

efficiency of a well-oiled machine. Committee members have contacted local businesses and organizations, collected information and items for the baskets, and compiled lists of recent newcomers to the city and county.

"People think that small towns have little to offer," Ristvedt said, recounting a statement Heid had made at an earlier meeting. "The more we looked at it, the more we realized the abundance of things this town has to offer."

The group seems to have thought of everything, with categories including what to do, where to eat, community organizations and clubs, emergency services contacts, annual events, businesses, service

providers, and local government offices. The perception of famine turned into a feast, with a list that is already a half-dozen pages long and still being added to.

The baskets, which will carry the message "Welcome Home – From Your Community Churches," will include brochures, pamphlets, and business cards from many of the local entities, along with voter information, and phone numbers for city and county government offices, as well as items donated by various community businesses.

"It's important that people know the churches are there for them," Heid said. "It's about the community, and welcoming them."

The welcome basket project

Welcome Home!

From the churches of Oliver County, North Dakota

Center-area community churches are preparing baskets to "welcome home" new residents.

isn't the first time local churches have worked collaboratively to strengthen their community. The community church service held in the courthouse courtyard during Old Settlers Days was initiated as a means to encourage community for visitors and residents alike. The service had such a positive recep-

tion that a Community Thanksgiving Service was recently added, with the location rotating annually among the churches.

To learn more about the "Welcome Home" basket project, to provide items, or to add a name to the welcome list, contact Heid at 701-391-6121.



Matt Erhardt played guitar at the Old Settlers Days community church service, a cooperative effort of area churches for visitors and residents alike.

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PHOTO BY JERRY W. KRAM

Arnie Grady directs runners to the finish line at an elementary track meet at the Earth Lodge Village west of New Town. Grady has been working with elementary students on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation to whet their interest in cross country. Many of those students have gone on to be state high school cross country champions.

Molding future champions

Coaching youngest athletes is Grady's passion

By JERRY W. KRAM

As a young man Arnie Grady discovered that he had a hidden talent. Over the years he has shared that talent with a generation of young athletes and help create one of the most durable dynasties in North Dakota Class B High School Sports.

He grew up in Parshall and attended school there until he finished the eighth grade and then transferred to St. Marys

and he told me to show up for the track team. So I showed up."

He ran in the mixed relay, an event that is no longer done, where he ran the 800 meter leg.

"They put me in the relay races where I was the anchor, we won in South Dakota," Grady said. "For practice we used to run three miles around New England. I would do that in the early morning, take a shower and go to breakfast.

up to him and he had no kick left for the final sprint.

"So my first try I wound up in fifth place," Grady said. "So now I knew how to run that race. From then on I improved from fifth to third and then going to regional championships. I took second in regionals and qualified for state. There were only six of us on the team, but we took third in state."

Grady later graduated from Fort Totten High School (now known as Four Winds) and went to Texas to look for work in the oilfields there. He wound up being a laborer because he didn't have a college degree.

"I wound up digging ditches and cleaning up construction sites," he said. "After about half a year I didn't want any more of that so I wound up going to (the State School of Science) in Wahpeton."

He got a liberal arts associates degree from Wahpeton and then attended North Dakota State University.

"Going to the white man's school, I had to learn to adapt to two worlds," Grady said. "I came

“If you stick together you can be something great. And sure enough, a few years later they were state champions.”

— *Elementary Cross Country Coach Arnie Grady*

High School in New England. The school had a track team, Grady said, but no real track coaches.

"They were all wrestling and basketball coaches, so I learned how to run by myself," he said. "I was on the JV of the basketball team and one of the coaches saw me running laps in the gym. He called me over and said, 'Arnie, you should go out for track.' So I ran about 20 times around the gym

That was my own teacher."

His first big meet was in Watford City where he ran the two mile race. Because he didn't have a lot of coaching, he ran as hard as he could from the beginning of the race. He developed a large lead on the other runners, but they eventually caught

CHAMPIONS

Continued on page 19



PHOTO BY JERRY W. KRAM

Arnie Grady works on basketball skills with elementary youth at the Edwin Loe Elementary School gymnasium.

CHAMPIONS

Continued from page 18

back to the Reservation in 1989. I had all my degrees and had done a year's internship at Ben Franklin School in Fargo."

He coached girls basketball and taught classes at Mandaree in 1991. Grady admits he wasn't the best coach back then, but he started a lifelong friendship and coaching relationship with Damon Brady in Mandaree. They both wound up moving on to Circle of Life school in Wahpeton before coming back to Fort Berthold.

"Damon is always following me," Grady said. "I went back to Wahpeton in 1996 and guess who was there, Damon! He is my cousin but also my little brother in the Indian way."

Brady was the athletic director at Wahpeton and offered Grady his first cross country coaching opportunity. He enjoyed the experience so much he has continued coaching cross country ever since.

When he came back, he started working with elementary athletes as a volunteer cross country coach in Parshall.

"Where ever I have gone I have been blessed with great children and great talent," Grady said. "They are always well behaved. That's because when I first meet them I lay down the law. If they want to raise heck, they can leave."

In the early 2000s, Grady went to work for the New Town School District. He asked if he could start an elementary cross country and track program. Grady said Superintendent Marc Bluestone supported the idea, but told him that the district had no money in the budget for the program. For the last dozen years, Grady has been fundraising and contributing money out of his own pocket to keep the program going.

"When I came back from Wahpeton, there was no program for elementary cross country," Grady said. "There was no budget, but I like working with the youth. So for 12 years I raised money by selling t-shirts. It's not about the pay. All these kids are my relatives."

Grady remembers going to the team's first big cross country meet in Tioga and watching his team take

the first six places.

"I told them as sixth graders they had to stick together," Grady said. "If you stick together you can be something great. And sure enough, a few years later they were state champions."

The program has created a potent feeder program for New Town's dominant boys Cross Country team, which has won 10 of the last 12 state championships and looks to be on the verge of another. In that stretch, New Town runners have won seven individual championships as well.

"Ryan Wheeling started with our program when he was only six years old," Grady said. "He kept on running and was state champion last year. I tell them though, it doesn't matter who wins. We have to think as a team and have pride for our team. That's why I try to teach them to be good sports and not have bad behavior."

One change Grady sees on the horizon is a resurgence in interest in girls cross country. More than 50 girls participated at the elementary

level and Grady thinks they could be as successful as the boys have been at the high school level.

"I said watch, about half of those girls will continue with the program," Grady said. "So we will have a group of 25 strong. I am sort of the recruiter from our feeder program. I've been saying to these girls for the last two years that they too have the potential to be state champions. I bet they will be champions about two years down the line."

Grady said he couldn't do his work without the help of many volunteers, including Molly Wheeling and Roberta Darby. The volunteers

have been out in force with Grady's most recent initiative. The Earth Lodge Village west of New Town has become the center of a whole season of elementary cross country meets for the entire region. Grady said the meets have attracted as many as 175 boy and girl runners from White Shield, Parshall, Mandaree and Killdeer. The meets have included events for children from Pre-K to sixth grade. One recent event even included a "diaper dash" for participants younger than three.

Who knows, maybe in 2026, one of those very youngest runners will be New Town's newest champion.

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An army in Harmony

By SUZANNE WERRE

A good army needs a great leader – a commander-in-chief.

Although she doesn't actually hold such a grand title, Underwood's Harmony Higbie is definitely the one spearheading the Community Cupboard army in its efforts to bring a food pantry to Underwood. The food pantry, which was set to open this week, will serve residents from all around the county.

Harmony, most commonly known as the head librarian at the Underwood Public Library, was very involved with the mobile food pantry that stopped in Underwood occasionally. When she found out that Underwood was no longer going to be a stop for the mobile food bank, she went to work trying to find a way for area residents to still receive some help with groceries or other necessities when funds are a little short.

"She is awesome," commented Underwood Haseleu, one of Harmony's soldiers, who has also put in a lot of volunteer time at the Community Cupboard located on Lincoln Ave. in Underwood.

"She is so upbeat," continued Haseleu. "She is efficient as the president, and she has always has such a good attitude."

Her soldiers feed off of her good attitude, too, and it makes "working" on getting the food bank up and running feel not so much like work.

From the initial idea of finding a place to hold a food pantry, to lining up workers to demolish and refurbish the former Coast-to-Coast building in Underwood, to stocking the shelves and training the workers – Harmony has been in the front lines.

"She did so much work on that pantry, it's unbelievable," commented Ramona Capps, another of Harmony's soldiers.

If anybody says anything like, oh, that's not such a big deal – anyone could have done it.

"No – It wouldn't have happened," said Anna Haugen, who has worked side-by-side with Harmony



Harmony Higbie, right, has been the leading force in getting the Community Cupboard food pantry open in Underwood. Anna Haugen, left, has also been working alongside Harmony and the rest of her "army" on the food distribution center.

on the project. "Harmony is the one who worked with Great Plains Food Bank to turn a once-a-quarter mobile food bank distribution into a regular distribution food pantry."

"She did all of the organization behind the scenes and the paperwork to see what needed to be done," added Haugen.

Perhaps somebody else could have done it, but would they have?

Harmony didn't wait for someone else to step up – she just did it.

She, along with her army, including her parents Peggy and Mark Wood and husband Jeff, just stepped up and started making it happen. The list of volunteers goes on, but those were a few of her top generals.

"She's a very hard worker, and she has had a lot of support," said Haseleu. "She's got her family involved – her dad has done a ton with that remodel. He definitely took on the brunt of that."

"She's awesome, but she's also got so many great people with her," said Haseleu.

Harmony was getting pretty excited about the Community Cupboard's opening day, which was set for this past Saturday.

The food pantry will be distributing food the first Thursday of each month from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and the third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. until noon.

"Everybody can come," said Higbie.

There is no intrusive paperwork that needs to be filled out – no economic requirements that need to be met.

The items available at the Community Cupboard will range from nonperishable and frozen foods to toiletries and child care items.

"If you've got half a bag of disposable diapers, and they've moved up a size or got trained faster than expected – bring 'em on," she said with a laugh. Other toiletries including unopened shampoo and conditioners, antiperspirant, toothpaste, etc., are also items the Community Cupboard will take as donations.

Most of the food that will be distributed will be coming from the USDA through the Great Plains Food Bank. Other items will be collected through food drives and fun

HARMONY

Continued on page 23

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-ELIZABETH ANDREW

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Mask off: Bun lady is Butte's resident angel

By SANDY BLANES

"Bun lady," resident angel, unofficial welcome wagon, and best hospice nurse ever" are just a few of the names that the residents of Butte and the surrounding area have for their local hero.

If anyone moves into Butte, he or she might find a dozen fresh homemade buns on the doorstep one day. It might be just to say that one is welcome in this town, are special, or, "Sorry for your loss," or hope someone in the family feels better soon. It might simply be that it has been awhile since you have been seen.

For many, those delicious buns may be the only kindness that they experience that week. After living in the area for a while, it becomes common knowledge as to who made those buns and who took the time to come in and check on the elderly, sick, lonely and newcomers. It is Butte's resident angel, their own local hero, Jerrilyn Johnson.

Out in the country is a beautiful house with a very large storage unit, big enough for an airplane and a wind socket that helps everyone one to know which way and how hard the wind is blowing. It is the place where Jerrilyn makes her buns, and keeps her calendar for all the visits that she makes to keep the townspeople and many others in good health.

"Can you look at this?" a neighbor asks Jerrilyn and points to their leg where they have a wound. "Do I need to see a doctor?"

As the parish nurse for St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Butte, Johnson is qualified to answer that question and many more. She has been a career nurse since graduating from Bismarck Hospital School of Nurs-

ing in 1969. She worked at the Bismarck Hospital until she married Wallace (Wally) Johnson in 1980.

After moving to Butte, she worked as a public health nurse for home health in the area and then for Trinity Home Health and Hospice until 2010. During that time, Wally and Jerrilyn had two boys, Tyler and Cole, and Jerrilyn took special classes in Minot to become a volunteer parish nurse.

Jerrilyn, daughter of Clarence and Blanche Okerson, grew up on the homestead farm north of Coleharbor and started her education in a country school in Malcolm Township, McLean County. She has two sisters, Genelle Vollmert, Georgetown, Texas, and Karen Voth, Benedict, who all graduated from Turtle Lake Public Schools, Jerrilyn, in 1966. The friendships formed in school continue to this day, and friends say that Jerrilyn has always been and still is a "server."

Pastor Tim Mantei of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, is happy to have Johnson as the parish nurse. "If I were to say what gift Johnson has, it would be the gift of mercy," he said. "She goes way beyond the call of duty." Johnson became parish nurse in 1988, long before Mantei came to Butte a few years ago.

"It's time to take your pills and check your blood pressure," Johnson says as she comes for a visit to one of the elderly in the area, on their own and more than 30 miles away from the nearest clinic.

Everyone for miles around has a story about when Johnson showed up with her kind, gentle voice and manner. Did she have time for everyone? Yes, she made time. Another friend said Johnson's busy daytime schedule is why she bakes



Jerrilyn Johnson, Butte's resident angel and local hero and husband Wallace

dozens of buns at three o'clock in the morning. Johnson says she likes that time. Do angels need to sleep? In addition, recently she was on call at home; this time, her husband needed her nursing care.

As hospice nurse, Johnson was able to help many families in their time of need. One admirer said, "She took care of my mom in her last months. For me, she was the best hospice nurse ever. She took time to help my dad to understand what was going on and supported the caregivers."

For other elderly patients, Jerrilyn helped to prolong their time at home before they had to go to nursing homes and be away from their friends and family.

"I have the highest regard for my sister," said sister Karen, "Jerrilyn is always so good to everyone. I'm really proud of her."

Johnson seems to have followed in the footsteps of her parents, both known for their hospitality. Both parents are gone now but her mother had the following written and read at her funeral. "She was

known for her servant's heart, always welcoming strangers in her home and known for her visits to shut-ins and ill neighbors."

Johnson does not get away too often, but miles away on a personal trip recently, she called a friend. "Could you take some aspirin over to the neighbor? I'm afraid they might be out," she asked.

Always regarding others before herself, a true servant as was her mother, Jerrilyn Johnson is truly a local hero.

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'Here to serve'

Ambulance relies on community to step up, give back

By ALYSSA MEIER

When it comes to a volunteer ambulance service, the entire operation relies on community members who are dedicated to serving their neighbors.

The Washburn Volunteer Ambulance Service is alive and thriving, with willing and ready volunteers stepping up to help around the clock. The same couldn't be said several years ago, when a lack of staff put the service in danger of getting the ax.

"They were talking about shutting us down about 7 or 8 years ago," squad leader Mark Lem said. Lem said that the volunteer schedule had gaps in it, which lead to concerns from the state.

Lelm said this was brought to the public's attention and people quickly responded to the call for help.

"If we don't have a local service, you might have to wait 45 minutes for someone from Bismarck," Lem said, noting that the service now maintains a complete schedule of over 30 on-call volunteers for Washburn.

Lelm said the people working for the service are all driven to help take care of those in need, whether it is in their own city or one nearby.

"We do have an agreement with neighboring cities, where if they need help and their ambulance isn't responding, we will go," Lelm said, noting that the same arrangement is present for Washburn, with Underwood and Wilton ready to respond.

Lelm said the local service proves to be helpful, since the volunteers often know those who they are treating and transporting. This familiarity with locals is often an advantage, since some of the volunteers then have knowledge of the patient's medical history, making them more effective caregivers.

Lelm said having volunteers serve their own area also means there is a personal connection and motivation to always do the best they can.

"Dewayne Moran just passed away," Lelm said of the former Washburn City Commissioner, who died Oct. 19. "We went in and did our job. It's tough, but you know at least you tried."

Lelm said after ambulance runs that don't end well, he checks in with his staff to make sure everyone is processing things well and fit to keep working. He said the squad does group debriefings, along with one-on-one talks that allow volunteers to share concerns. Lelm said he treats the



Ambulance - The newest rig added to the Washburn Volunteer Ambulance Service is parked in front of the building, underneath the United States Flag. Squad leader Mark Lem emphasized how important patriotism and the community are to the service.

volunteers as family, stressing that he strives for complete trust within the ambulance service.

"For some people, this is their family," Lelm said, adding that the squad has become close over regular meetings that also serve as time to bond over dinner.

Lelm emphasized the importance of the connection within the ambulance service, along with the relationships to the local fire department and sheriff's office.

"Law enforcement is always right there next to us," Lelm said. "They're someone we totally

respect and depend on."

The ambulance service is currently in the process of saving for a new ambulance, giving volunteers one more tool to aid the community they serve.

HARMONY

Continued from page 21

draisers. Local businesses, groups and organizations are already working on putting together some special food distributions during the holidays, says Harmony.

When looking at the building this past spring, when Harmony suggested the food bank's proposed opening date would be this fall, Haseleu was pretty skeptical – but Harmony and her army are making it happen.

The building was virtually gutted and re-built – doors rebuilt, restroom redone, ceiling painted, old insulation ripped out, shelves taken down, repaired and put back

up in new spots.

When it was first brought up, recalls Haseleu, she thought their goal was pretty far-reaching.

"When she said we would be open this fall, even as we were planning it, I was thinking, 'this is a real long shot'," said Haseleu. "But it's open, and we're ready."

Even without a delivery from Great Plains Food Bank, the shelves are filled enough to be open for distribution.

The food bank is intended to be a bridge for folks who may be a little short on funds – not a long-term solution, noted Harmony. People

need help once in awhile, and people who could use a little help shouldn't hesitate to stop in at the Community Cupboard. She expects residents from the surrounding areas of Coleharbor, Riverdale, Turtle Lake, Washburn, Garrison and McClusky, as well as Underwood, to be coming to the Community Cupboard.

Anyone wishing to make a monetary donation or donation of items to stock the shelves is invited to stop by the Underwood City Hall to leave a donation or items for the food pantry.

COMMUNITY

Continued from page 15

important and, to him, that's the community.

"You just put it in your schedule and it's just part of what your schedule is. So when people say they don't have time, you either make time or you don't. It's a choice that people make for that," said DJ.

This mindset is something DJ and his wife instill in their children. He mentioned that every year they bring their kids into town to help with the city clean up.

"We just had to get them involved in the community," said DJ.

DJ lives by leadership throughout his local community, being active enough to help the community prosper, along with hopes that others will do the same.

"A lot of times people come in and want to take from the community, but you have to be giving back to the community and that's the big

thing," said DJ. "It's not what they can make out of the community, it's what they should be giving back and enhancing the community."

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A HERO IS SOMEONE WHO HAS GIVEN HIS OR HER LIFE TO SOMETHING BIGGER THAN ONESELF.

- JOSEPH CAMPBELL

‘I always wanted to be the good guy’

Johns brings justice to New Town

By EDNA SAILOR

James Johns does not think of himself as a hero. He said so.

“By no means do I think of myself a hero. I am far from that. When I think of heroes I look to our soldiers, our team service members, my officers and all law enforcement boots on the ground when I think of heroes,” Johns said.

Having said that, Johns, New Town Police Chief shows up at work each day knowing that real danger out there may take his life. Most of us wonder how he and others do that every day for us. Johns was able to talk about that in a general way.

“Every law enforcement officer faces danger every day, but we simply do not think about it. Most, if not all officers understand the nobility of it. While it is an under appreciated profession it is not about the paycheck. It’s about helping the community, we have to make a living at it but mostly I pray that ev-

neys and paths in life. Training only provides the foundation for police officers. Further experience and skill building on that foundation of skills is a must to carry officers when they need to deal with thieves or seniors.”

Johns did not arrive at this stage of his law enforcement career overnight. He had some mentors along the way.

“The idea of going into law enforcement actually started in high school. I took career placement tests where my choices became law enforcement, military service or public service based on skill sets of the testing. Even then I was drawn to the idea of helping. I had great parents who supported me when I joined the Army where I was introduced to a world of hazardous materials. Even as a kid when we played cops and robbers, I was the only one who wanted to be the good guy,” Johns said.



PHOTO BY JERRY W. KRAM

Johns shares his experiences at a roundtable of tribal, city, state and federal agencies on the extent of human trafficking problems on the Fort Berthold Reservation.

“

Everyone makes it home at the end of the day and I ask God the same for me,” he said

To get to that point, Johns and

others begin with the basics of training. That is where it all starts for them. And frankly, hero building seems to start here. Training builds the officer quality of being flexible and adapting to change. Johns knows that about himself and all of his officers.

“First it is training, training and more training. You need to be grounded in common sense. The reality in the field is that situations are so diverse and fluid you need to be an all around individual who is able to deal with all sorts of situations. That could be everything from an angry person who was stopped in a vehicle to a wandering child. I feel my team at NTPD embodies this type of diversity. Teamwork and an understanding of the job and its demands are what are necessary,” Johns said.

With the varied demands of being a police officer on the street to the more calm situations, many might wonder what that is like for Johns and officers like him. Johns knows the drill very well.

“Tackling all the situations we face is where that ability to adapt and be flexible really comes in. It’s like an analogy of a ticket ride at Disney Land. First you wait in line. Then, maybe, you move to the front of the line. You get to the ride, take it and the first thing you know you have been on your ride and it’s over. In our field you realize you have remained positive and patient with others. Then you take some time to connect for a moment with like-minded people. On that ride you experienced the extreme highs and lows and ups and downs. All the while you had to use those nerves of steel, deal with the nervousness. And after all the excitement, you go get back in line again for another ride.”

Johns looks for specific characteristics when choosing an officer. With his 21 years in law enforcement, including duty at NASA security, he knows what it takes to perform successfully on the street.

“To be able to adapt you must be able to communicate with everyone going through many different jour-

Even as a kid when we played cops and robbers, I was the only one who wanted to be the good guy.

– New Town Police Chief James Johns

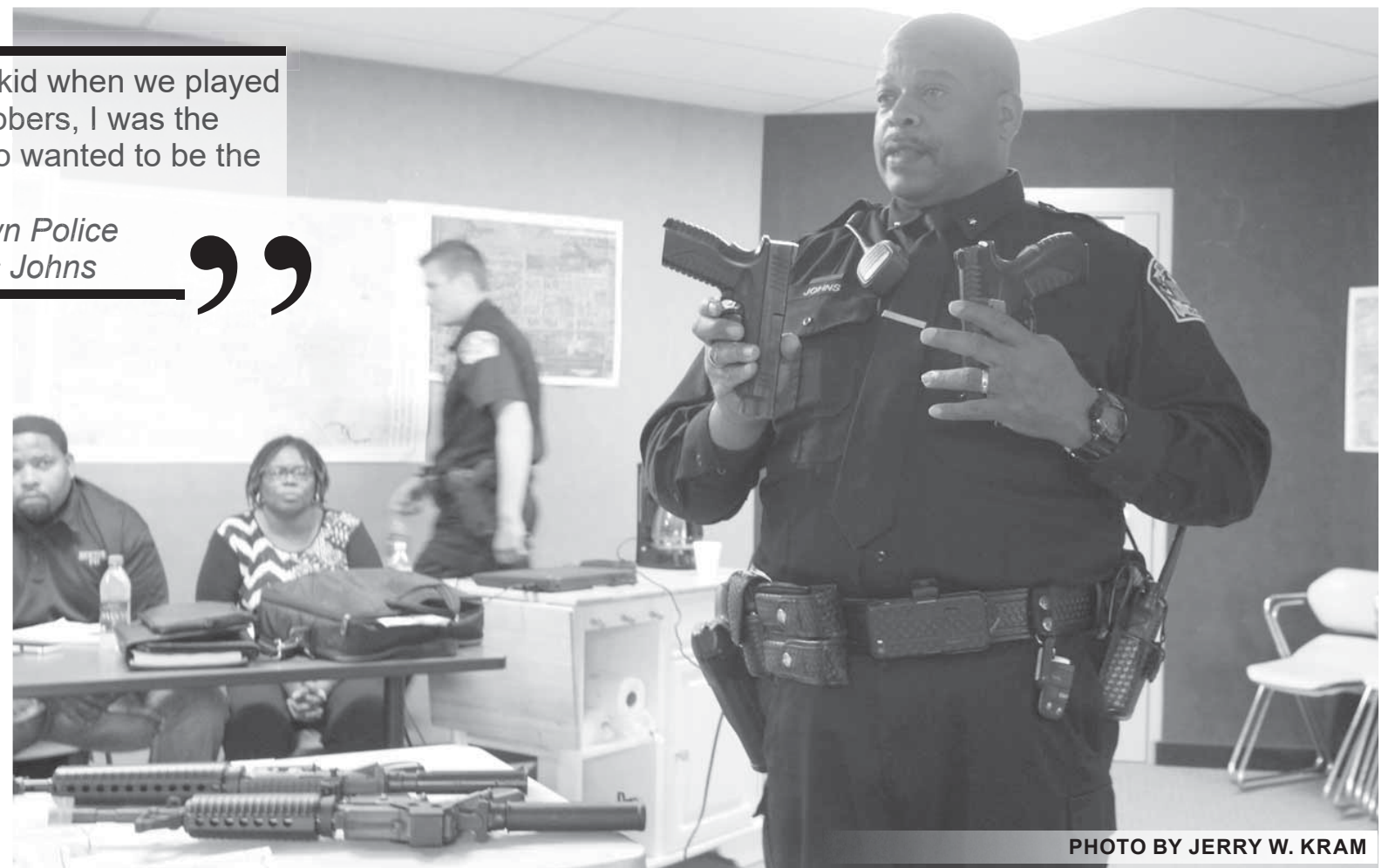


PHOTO BY JERRY W. KRAM

New Town Police Chief James Johns displays some of the real and replica weapons that have been seized by his department on the streets of New Town.



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Circle of caring supports special needs students

By JERRY W. KRAM

It was a normal special day for Keaton Rush at the Northern Lights Wellness Center as he celebrated his eighth birthday with classmates from Edwin Loe Elementary School.

It is a tribute to Keaton's grandmother, Glenda Rush, that Keaton was able to enjoy the day. Keaton suffers from a traumatic brain injury that left him with vision impairment and a learning disability. Glenda has cared for Keaton since his mother died when he was one year old, and is also his teaching paraprofession at the elementary school.

New Town School Superintendent Marc Bluestone said the school district has a significant amount of resources dedicated to helping Keaton and other special needs students in New Town. He estimates that 25 to 30 staff and nearly \$1 million of the school's budget are dedicated to helping special needs students attend and often graduate from school.

Rush said that her job as Keaton's aide is to implement his Individual Education Plan (IEP) in the classroom. She helps with his therapy with Souris Valley Social Services, which has a contract with the district to provide certain services to special needs students.

"They help me with things that can improve his vision coordination and learning tools that he needs that are different from regular classroom kids," Glenda Rush said. "They help him with his alphabet, numbers, shapes and different kinds of schedules on a little handboard he uses. This is implemented with the rest of the school kids. I believe that all special needs students need to be remembered."

Lynn Lindblad is a special needs teacher at Edwin Loe. She said that Glenda has been a positive force in keeping Keaton involved with students in the classroom.

"Grandma has been very important in his educational process," Lindblad said. "She wants him to participate if we have group readings or books on tape. Many times, if we have an arts activity like Valentines Day or Christmas, we have enough room so everybody can come and participate."

"Because he is vision impaired and in a wheelchair he can't do a lot of things," Glenda Rush added. "But when they do have something he can participate in they are sure to include him. All of the special needs kids spend time in the regular classrooms."

The increase in New Town's population has brought more needs to the community. Lindblad said that there were five or six new students with intellectual disabilities who came to the school district this year.

"There are a wide range of ability levels with my students," Lindblad said. "The majority of my students love to come to school. Some don't want to go home. On Mondays they are ready to go at 8 a.m."

Lindblad, who is Navajo, said that in many native cultures, special needs children are believed to suffer for the actions of their parents. But now most people realize that environmental factors play a large



Keaton Rush celebrated his eighth birthday with his classmates and the adults who help him as a special education student at Edwin Loe Elementary, Pastor Robert Smith, who presented him with a quilt made by the women of Bethel Lutheran Church, special education teacher Lynn Lindblad, his grandmother and teaching aid Glenda Rush, and (back) Elementary Principal Rick Lindblad and New Town School Superintendent Marc Bluestone.

role in creating these disabilities. "My grandmother taught me that you do not make fun of these students," she said. "She said that these students are special beings. They can go into the spirit world and come back. It's not so much what I can teach them, but what they can teach me."

Glenda Rush is thankful for all the support she receives from the school district. She said that Elementary Principal Rick Lindblad is very supportive of special needs students and works hard to make sure they are treated well.

"They have done so much in the classroom for these kids," Glenda said. "They all have their goals met. From my experience, this has been the best year for special ed in the school by a lot. I can't even explain how much positive it has been."

Glenda Rush wants people to remember that special needs children are still children.

"All of them deserve the best education and to be accepted in society," she said. "They need not to be stared at or picked on. Even adults stare at them. They deserve as much education as their disability will allow them."

Lynn Lindblad said the next big need she sees for families with special needs children is respite care for families, a safe place where the child can be cared for so the caregiver has a few hours to take care of

his or her own needs. Lindblad said there isn't any organized plan for respite care at this time. She would like to organize something for the

parents of special needs students and said that people who are interested in helping should contact her. "I would love to get ideas from

people," Lindblad said. "Even if it started with just one hour on a Saturday, we can start building from that. We won't know until we try."



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Just face it head on and don't give up

“Something is wrong; I can't walk!”

By ALLAN TINKER

*This article was written some years back and mentions another local hero, the late Lynnae Lick, who valiantly fought ALS with a smile for years. Both women offer examples of courage in the face of chronic health issues. They serve as heroic examples of the human spirit for everyone around them.

In her battle against Gillian Barre, Caroline Koehler has strong words for those others who are challenged mightily by health problems. “Don't give up! Face it head on! Hang in there! Think of someone who is worse off! Pray and have everyone you know pray for you! But, most of all, don't give up!”

With the exact cause of her initial infection that triggered the Guillain Barre (ghee-yan bah-ray) syndrome, the initial campylobacter infection she was treated with in June of 2010 stands prominently as a link.

Most commonly, infection with campylobacter, a type of bacteria often found in undercooked food, especially poultry, is a cause of the syndrome, with mycoplasma pneumonia, surgery, Epstein-Barr virus, influenza virus, Hodgkin's disease, mononucleosis, and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS are also suspects. It strikes young adults and old adults.

On April of 2010, Koehler had her left knee replaced and did well. She had a lot of pain and had many exercises to do in her recovery and therapy.

On the first of June, she helped her daughter Gina Jans butcher chickens and ended up being treated for campylobacter infection with heavy doses of antibiotics at Community Memorial Hospital.

She felt good and her legs worked well; then came weakness. “I thought I needed some exercise then a few hours later I could hardly get up the steps.”

“I went outside with one hand on her husband Mervin's shoulder. I went to take a step and I thought ‘I am not going to make it.’ It was as though the brain messages stopped. “Something is wrong; I can't walk!”

“Mervin got me onto a big rug and pulled me. I told him I can't get up. But, my hands were good and I pulled into the chair.”

The next day she had an appointment with Dr. Carlson at the clinic and she managed with the walker a bit, but then couldn't walk. Three of the women at the clinic came to help Mervin and brace her knee that had surgery. They got her the block to the clinic.

There Dr. Carlson told her, “If it was my mom, I would have her see a neurologist today!”

She traveled to St. Alexius Hospital in Bismarck where she went through a long admission process. Her vision was blurry, her hands paralyzed and her mind was “bad,” she said.

Since she had a bad back, the hospital neurology staff thought her back was the cause and the exams waited until Monday. A doctor came in and told her that her back surgery would be on Wed.

Monday afternoon tests were done on her muscles and then a spinal tap confirmed what Dr. Wongjaard suspected: Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS).

Koehler was given three doses of IVIG, an immune globulin. When her back pain was brought under control, she went to the rehabilita-

tion unit where she worked hard at the exercises. She had therapy two times a day and the occupational therapy every day for her upper limbs so that she could comb her hair and feed herself.

“I was in the hospital from June 26 to July 21. I wanted to sleep because of the illness. I went to sleep praying and woke up praying.

Koehler adds, “Another therapist took me out for social life and we had lunch out of the hospital. The coffee was so good.”

Then it was on to home. A ramp had been put in by her son-in-law Robert Jans, costing only a portion of what the pre-made ramps would cost. “Turning for steps hurt my back, so I used the ramp,” she stated.

With her exercises, she amazed her doctor. “You walk so good,” he told her. “Most people your age don't walk, most people give up as it is so hard to conquer this. You are the proof of the pudding.”

Koehler found ways to diminish the amount of time it took her to complete her exercises each day. She combined arm exercises with her leg exercises, alternating sides as she swung one arm, squeezed a ball with the other hand, and lifted weights on her toes.

“I did them two times a day then, now I do them just once a day. I was told, ‘When you are tired, stop!’ I stop and rest but probably not like I should.”

Koehler admits that she was angry at God at first. “When I thought of all I did, then I was like this. Then I knew that God doesn't cause these things, he just lets them happen.

“Lynnae Lick is my inspiration with her will to live. She is always happy.”

Koehler adds that she decided she was going to meet this challenge head on and figure it out. “I am not going to be in a wheelchair,” she asserted. “My nurse told me to keep doing it and prove them wrong!”

“At first I took all my steps mentally. Then I would test myself and walked around the table so I could catch myself. Then I walked across the kitchen, then without the cane. I had to rebuild my balance.

“A couple of weeks later, I watched Mervin struggling to cook and wheeled over to help with dishes. I dried them and then a few weeks later I thought I needed heat on my hands so I told him I would wash. I leaned on the sink and I broke a few,” she grinned.

“Then, gradually, I started cooking though Mervin had been asking me for recipes he likes and had done them himself, too. Making bread helps my hands with the kneading I do.

“My hands always sting and my legs are always cold.

“I don't like to take pills and I was afraid of addiction. My nurse told me I wouldn't ever be addicted because I didn't ask for pain medication. I still have half of the medication left that I got three years ago. If my whole body hurts, I will take one pill. I am never without pain; I will always have pain. I can handle that in exchange for what I am able to do.”

“Guillain Barre is dangerous, as it shuts down everything. The myelin sheath is destroyed and most people lose body function control and can't swallow and they drool. I had to swallow carefully and I can't elevate my voice.

“I was on the heart monitor

only one week and never on the respirator. They started the IMIG treatments slowly as they can create problems. Without treatment, GBS causes death as everything just shuts down.

“My facial muscles are okay but I have blurred vision and I had shallow breathing but I didn't pass out.”

“When I first tried to walk, even with the walker, Mervin hung onto my waist belt as my knees would buckle without warning.

“I was going to show them wrong and Pastor Betty Stedman gave me a book, ‘Bed #10.’ That helped a lot. The true story is about a woman who has the same syndrome and spent eleven months in the hospital and recovers but is handicapped.

“The nerves take a month to regenerate one inch of the myelin sheath,” said Koehler. The exercise helps build the strength. When I was first home, I could barely hold a pencil or a spoon, but I sent out all my Christmas cards.

“I have to be careful; I fell in the flowers last year in my garden. This year I didn't fall but when I helped with the chores at Gina's I fell in a hole. It is worth it as I like to be with the animals,” Koehler smiles.

She remains committed to what exercise can do for recovery from this and other ailments. She notes that the infection she had is not uncommon for farmers to get, especially if they have poultry.

There is no cure for the Guillain Barre Syndrome that developed later in her system, as it knocks out the immune system.



Caroline Koehler sits at her busy kitchen's table, where she keeps up on correspondence, calls from family and friends, and where she started her exercise to recover from Guillain Barre Syndrome. She carefully circled the table in unsteady steps until she had the strength and balance to walk across the kitchen without her cane.

“I was lucky; I didn't have to have life support devices on me, just a K-pad for my legs for preventing blood clots. I felt like a mummy and couldn't turn in bed. I would swing over and then I would detach my heart monitor. The pain in my back was so bad; I was happy when it got under control.

“I hope my story helps somebody to not give up. If you are sick and

feel weakness or nausea, get to a doctor, the sooner the better. “Don't give up! Face it head on!” As a retired LPN, Caroline has much knowledge behind what it takes to get well and stay well.

Caroline takes her own advice; much as she takes her doctor's instruction to exercise regularly and rest when she is tired. “Hang in there,” she smiles.



Members of the Parshall Ambulance Service: Back row: Carolyn Folden, Bonnie Billadeau, Penny Estvold, Rick Burckhard, Glenn Landsiedel, Jim Halden, Front row: Madeleine Zacher, Mary Nielsen, Brooke Locken, Jamie Clemensen, Ruth Zacher

Parshall EMS is always ready

By EDNA SAILOR

Called to Care. That is how Emergency Medical Services providers are described in professional journals.

The dedicated volunteers of the Parshall Ambulance are among those called to care. It is no small commitment when they voluntarily show up for duty when emergency situations arise. This is the week that as a nation, state and community we pause to pay tribute to them.

Jamie Clemensen, squad leader and her fifteen member squad stay on top of all of the details to be ready to roll when that 911 call comes in Parshall.

Those details include ensuring a well equipped, serviceable ambulance is patient ready to meet any emergency. In Parshall that means trading in the old ambulance for a new one. The new Parshall ambulance is a 2016 Horton F 550 and is emergency ready every day for patients and qualified personnel to care for them.

Training is ongoing. There is always more to learn to update skills. Clemensen and Parshall Ambulance EMS personnel take their responsibilities seriously and commit time and effort to taking the appropriate steps to see that the required standards are met. Most people assume ambulance person-

nel know what they are doing when called to serve. Parshall Ambulance volunteers ensure that expectation is met.

“We have not slowed down any as oil activity moved from our area. Brooke Locken attended an EMT course in Plaza this fall and Penny Estvold and I attended an Advanced EMT course in New Town,” Clemensen said.

Additionally, the squad still has full time EMTs contracted through Ambulance Resources LLC. “We are covered 24 hours, 365 days a year with an EMT. We are al-

EMS

Continued on page 27

EMS

Continued from page 26

ways trying to keep expanding our knowledge to provide the best care possible to the residents in our community," Clemensen said.

Behind the scenes, as squad leader, Clemensen ensures the monthly newsletter goes out, supplies and inventory are ordered and replaced and billing activities are arranged.

With 17 years of experience herself, Clemensen heads a squad with a minimum of 25 years experience each. For this EMS squad and most for that matter, the job they take on is not about recognition or glory. From simple transport to life threatening illness or injury, they show up

and never asked to be patted on the back for doing so.

Clemensen explained how she sees her role.

"It is important to me to serve my community because I enjoy helping others to the best of my ability. Some patients you know and some patients you will never see again but they have all helped me become the person I am today," she said. It is likely the rest of the squad feels the same.

President Gerald Ford understood the hearts of our EMS volunteers in 1974 when he worked with the American College of

Emergency Physicians (ACEP) to establish National Emergency Medical Services week. Initially the recognition project was set in November. Later it was changed to the third week in May in order to avoid conflict with Fire Prevention week and its activities. Since that time our nation and communities have witnessed a cadre of volunteers meet this critical emergency service need. Each brought something special in the way of heart, skills and willingness to serve. They still do and they are still Called to Care.

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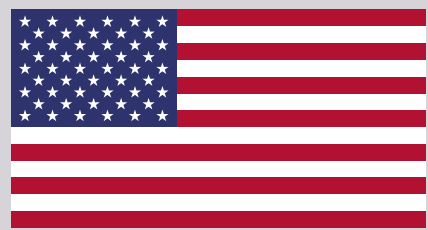
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