

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

FOUNDATION

MAGAZINE | VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 2 | SPRING 2023



**BRINGING
THE**

UNIVERSITY

**TO THE
PEOPLE**



LEGACY CREATOR
JULIE OPP BURGUM '75, '02

NDSU changed Julie's life. As a transfer student, she found her career path in home economics education and early childhood development. She also made many lifelong friendships and met her husband, Bradley.

When she became an NDSU Foundation Trustee, Julie began to see how philanthropic support from alumni and friends helps move the University forward for the benefit of students across North Dakota. It inspired her to name the NDSU Foundation as a beneficiary of her estate.

"I want to be sure NDSU can move forward in the wonderful things it does — the research and the good education it provides for students from North Dakota and all around the country," Julie said. "It's important to give back to something

that supported you and helped give you a good direction in life."



YOUR LEGACY. YOUR PASSIONS. NDSU'S FUTURE.

By planning your legacy gift, you can help further NDSU's mission of providing education, research, and outreach to people in every county of North Dakota — and beyond. The NDSU Foundation will help you designate your gift to your passion area and ensure your funds are managed wisely so students will experience the impact of your generosity for generations to come.

For more information about establishing your NDSU legacy through planned giving, contact the NDSU Foundation at 701.231.6800.

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
**FOUNDATION
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PUBLISHER

North Dakota State
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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Nicole Thom-Arens '03

WRITERS

Nicole Thom-Arens
Micaela Gerhardt

**DESIGN LAYOUT
AND ILLUSTRATION**

Leah Ecklund

PHOTOGRAPHY

Ann Arbor Miller
Justin Eiler, NDSU

COPY EDITORS

Kari Sayler '04
Emily Erickson '15

DIGITAL EDITOR

Micaela Gerhardt

WEB MANAGER

Shane Herman

2022-2023

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John Glover

The NDSU Foundation Magazine is published twice a year and is mailed to NDSU alumni and friends. Visit NDSUFoundation.com/Magazine to read previous editions and additional stories.

On April 20, the North Dakota State University Foundation will continue its tradition of celebrating excellence among alumni and University partners at Evening of Distinction in Fargo. Each year, as we recognize outstanding alumni and friends, I'm more impressed by the far-reaching work of NDSU graduates — NDSU really does have an impact around the world! I hope you enjoy learning more about each of the 2023 awardees in this issue.

During President Cook's inaugural State of the University Address in late-September 2022, the president identified five priorities: enhancing enrollment, retention, and student success; prioritizing NDSU's R-1 Carnegie classification status as a top research institution; investing in the well-being of the people across the NDSU community; building a stronger culture of diversity, inclusion, and respect; and embracing NDSU's critical role as a land-grant university. This issue of the NDSU Foundation Magazine highlights some of the ways NDSU fulfills its critical land-grant university mission in the 21st century.

The cover story, "Bringing the University to the People," features NDSU Extension, a program that started in 1914. As Nicole Thom-Arens shows us, Extension's mission "to empower North Dakotans to improve their lives and communities through science-based education" continues today throughout the state in new and innovative ways.

In "Delivering Patient-Centered Care in Every Corner of the State," Micaela Gerhardt introduces us to several NDSU graduates working on the front lines of the health care industry across North Dakota and explains



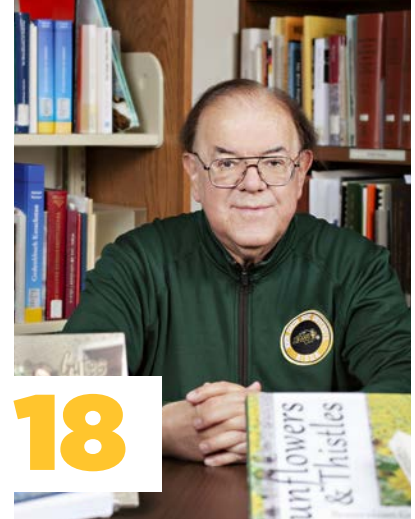
how Aldevron Tower, NDSU's entirely privately funded health care building, which opened in 2020, is changing the way the University educates future health care leaders to meet critical needs.

Both "The Man Who Built a Home for Heritage at NDSU" and "Devising a Show: A Unique Theater Experience Mirroring Life" showcase ways NDSU's staff and faculty work to preserve and share stories from the community, state, and region.

Each of these stories is a reminder of the many diverse ways NDSU is serving the people, which is a core value of its land-grant mission. Our mission at the NDSU Foundation is to build enduring relationships that maximize advocacy and philanthropy to support North Dakota State University. With every issue, we hope you enjoy learning more about the important work of NDSU and its people and will be inspired to share these stories with others, return to campus to reconnect, and discover how your passions may align with University needs through philanthropy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John R. Glover".

John R. Glover
President/CEO | NDSU Foundation



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NDSU Extension serves North Dakotans through 53 county offices. Programming is widespread and nuanced to meet the needs of citizens. Visit three county offices to see Extension’s mission at work.

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Michael Miller has dedicated his NDSU career to preserving the stories, heritage, and culture of the Germans from Russia.

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NDSU assistant professor Marc Devine is collaborating with student-actors to bring stories from local foster parents to audiences in “Home.”



About the Cover

The cover art was illustrated by the NDSU Foundation’s graphic artist, Leah Ecklund. The illustration depicts each NDSU Extension county office across the state of North Dakota.



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AWARD RECIPIENTS

There are countless outstanding NDSU alumni and University friends who deserve to be honored for their accomplishments and contributions. The NDSU Foundation strives to recognize excellence through award opportunities and programs.

The following awardees will be honored at Evening of Distinction, presented by SEI, on April 20, 2023, at Delta Hotels by Marriott in Fargo, North Dakota.



20
23

HENRY L. BOLLEY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Neil Gudmestad '78, '82 is the recipient of the 2023 **Henry L. Bolley Academic Achievement Award**, which honors individuals who have attained noted achievements in the area of education as teachers, researchers, and/or administrators.

On Dec. 30, 1952, a bright light woke Neil Gudmestad '78, '82 around 3 a.m. As his eyes adjusted to the glare, Neil looked up and saw his father standing beside his bed.

"I remember, just like it happened yesterday, my father saying, 'Good morning, Neil. Happy birthday! You're 8 years old today, and it's time to go to work.'"

Neil got out of bed, put on a brand-new pair of coveralls, and went to work on his family's small grain and dairy farm near Litchville, North Dakota. His job that morning — and every morning for the next four years — was to grind rations of grain for

RESEARCHING WITH 'ONE FOOT IN THE FURROW'

NEIL GUDMESTAD | Story by Micaela Gerhardt

his father's Brown Swiss cows, poke hay down, and carry pails of milk from the barn to the milk house, where he poured each pail into the separator.

Neil became the first member of his family to go to college, attending Valley City State University and earning degrees in biology and chemistry. After a brief stint student teaching, Neil applied to graduate school at NDSU. When he first arrived, Neil questioned whether he was cut out for the rigor of graduate school, and he nearly left. Former NDSU professor and administrator James Sugihara intervened and assured Neil that he belonged.

"Dr. Sugihara gave me confidence and also demonstrated that he cared," Neil said. "That played out many times in my career for graduate students. They need to be encouraged and told that they're doing a good job, and just checking up on them from time to time, especially that first year, so they know that you care."

By applying the same work ethic he developed on the farm to his education and career, Neil proceeded to earn his Ph.D. in plant pathology from NDSU and began working as a plant pathologist for the North Dakota State Seed Department. He joined NDSU faculty in 1985 and went on to become a world-renowned potato pathologist, recognized for his expertise in academia as well as in the industry.

Over the course of his career, Neil has cultivated an expansive research portfolio dedicated to the management of more than 22 potato diseases, including fungicide resistance, bacterial diseases, and invasive pathogens such as zebra chip and potato mop top. His pioneering research is guided by his philosophy, "one foot in the furrow."

"Since I grew up on a farm, my research emphasis was always to develop disease management strategies and tactics to control potato diseases, taking basic research and having an application for it in farming," Neil said. "That's the 'foot in the furrow' idea."

In 2015, Neil led fundraising efforts to establish the Neil C. Gudmestad Endowed Chair of Potato Pathology, which became the first fully endowed faculty position at NDSU. He was named the inaugural holder until his retirement in 2020, when the title passed to his successor, Julie Pasche. In conjunction with advocating for the endowed chair, Neil also secured nearly \$17 million in grant funding to advance his research program at NDSU during his academic career.

Neil's research is cited and celebrated around the globe. His many honors and achievements include, but are not limited to, being named a University Distinguished Professor at NDSU; a fellow of the American Phytopathological Society, an international scientific organization devoted to the study of plant diseases; and, notably, a "50 for 50" Honoree by Potato Grower, which recognized "50 of the potato industry's most innovative and influential individuals, companies, and organizations over the past half-century."

"I think those awards are testaments to the impact my research program had. I want to emphasize one thing — I don't have much going for me other than my work ethic," Neil said. "The thing I was always able to do, I think, was to identify those people who are self-starters and who are really intelligent and hard-working — they're the ones who made me look good." 🐾



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ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Peter Iwen '76 is the recipient of the 2023 **Alumni Achievement Award**, which recognizes alumni who have attained outstanding professional accomplishments.

Peter Iwen '76 grew up in Arthur, North Dakota. His dad, Bert, managed Arthur Drug, and his mom, Joanne, was a registered nurse at the Good Samaritan Home. His parents' occupations, and the way he saw them meet the needs of the community, led Peter to pursue a career in the sciences. Since graduating from NDSU with a degree in bacteriology, Peter has been on the front line of research and diagnostic testing for some of the world's most dangerous pathogens of the past 20 years.

Peter launched his career at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) in Omaha, Nebraska. His first job was as a researcher studying human fungal pathogens. From there, his supervisor encouraged him to pursue a Master of Science degree, and

20 YEARS OF FRONT-LINE RESEARCH

PETER IWEN | Story by Nicole Thom-Arens

years later, a new chair of the department of pathology and microbiology encouraged Peter to pursue a Ph.D. In 2001, Peter presented his thesis defense just days after 9/11.

"About a month after 9/11, there were concerns of anthrax spore contamination at the post offices in Washington, D.C., which resulted in a national biothreat release alert," Peter recalled. "My boss asked me to coordinate the high-volume testing of potentially contaminated specimens from Nebraska sources that occurred as a result of this scare."

Currently, there are about 80,000 people in the U.S. certified by the U.S. Department of Justice to work with anthrax spores and other biological agents and toxins that pose a severe threat to public health and safety. Peter's DOJ certification number is 265 — evidence of his entry into this research at the ground level and the number of years he's specialized in this area of work.

Following graduation with his Ph.D., Peter became the assistant director for the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL) and the first campus biosafety officer, where his responsibility was to develop biosafety and biosecurity programs on campus to support research. He also oversaw the high-level containment laboratories located on campus.

In 2014, during the Ebola pandemic in Africa, Peter's laboratory staff became the first and only state public health laboratory in the U.S. to handle specimens that contained viable Ebola virus to manage infected patients.

"Three infected patients were expatriated to our patient care bio-containment unit at Nebraska Medicine, the campus academic hospital, in which my laboratory personnel were asked to provide laboratory support to care for these patients

due to their training in high-level containment," Peter said. "Following our experiences to support these patients, laboratorians from both national and international locations wanted to know how we safely handled these infected specimens. To share our experiences, we wrote papers to describe procedures, provided training, and collaborated with the CDC to help design protocols. We became recognized as experts to handle emerging special pathogens in a clinical setting, and our work with the CDC continues today."

In late-February 2020, Peter's laboratory became involved in COVID-19 diagnostics to support testing of high-risk exposed passengers from the Diamond Princess cruise ship. They were sent to Omaha for quarantine in the National Quarantine Unit.

"Prior to patients arriving in Omaha, we worked with the CDC in Atlanta to verify the test that would identify the causative coronavirus in people," Peter said. "In the process, we helped the CDC isolate a problem with this earlier test so it could be successfully released to all 65 public health labs in the U.S."

Peter's research on COVID-19 testing continued, and early in March 2020, his team at the NPHL developed a highly accurate method for group testing of pooled specimens to conserve reagents, the chemical substances needed to perform COVID-19 tests. Group testing subsequently became a standardized method approved by the FDA used by multiple laboratories to meet the needs for high-number testing of specimens for COVID-19.

Today, Peter is the senior biosafety officer for the UNMC, a professor of microbiology in the College of Medicine, and director of the NPHL. 🐼



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HORIZON AWARD

Andrea Travnicek '01, '04, '08 is the recipient of the 2023 **Horizon Award**, which recognizes alumni who have graduated within the past 15 years and have attained great success in their profession or have been engaged in outstanding community service.

Growing up, Andrea Travnicek '01, '04, '08 and her family moved about every three years due to her dad's role as a B-52 pilot with the U.S. Air Force. Born in Minot, North Dakota, Andrea lived in California, Texas, and Papillion, Nebraska, where she graduated from high school. When it came time to select a college, Andrea was drawn to NDSU, and while her career has taken her across the country, she keeps returning to North Dakota.

"NDSU is the feeling of home, and it's the passion individuals have that continues to drive me," Andrea said. "Because I was able to be involved in so many different opportunities, whether that was as a graduate student assistant or as a student at the undergrad level, there were always professors and researchers willing to listen and explain. It drove my passion for education,

A CAREER ROOTED IN A LOVE FOR NATURE

ANDREA TRAVNICEK | Story by Nicole Thom-Arens

connecting with people, and natural resources."

Despite frequent moves throughout her childhood, there were places close to NDSU that anchored Andrea: Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, where her mom grew up; Thief River Falls, Minnesota, where her dad grew up; and a lake property on Union Lake south of Highway 2, near Erskine, Minnesota. These are also the places where Andrea's love for natural resources was born.

"I chose my major because it goes back to those places I'd go growing up," Andrea said. "I really enjoyed being at the lake in Minnesota and my grandmother's place just north of Detroit Lakes — it has everything from pastureland to forest land to lakes. I just really enjoyed being out in the natural resources and thought, why not try to make a career of this?"

Andrea earned a bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. from NDSU. When she came to NDSU as an undergraduate, she had the opportunity to play competitive soccer — her No. 1 love at the time. An early-career injury shifted her perspective; she learned how to lend her talents to other areas by being the heart of the team and the cheerleader for her teammates when she was sidelined at various times throughout her four years. Her injury also meant she could pour more energy into academic opportunities to broaden her experiences and grow her knowledge of the natural resources industry, which helped her build connections and led to career opportunities.

Andrea's resume is long and filled with notable titles and significant responsibilities at the state and national level. She has worked for three North Dakota governors and for two different secretaries of the U.S. Department of the Interior

in Washington, D.C., at top-level positions overseeing natural resource agencies that included the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. Andrea has led two cabinet-level agencies, including North Dakota Parks and Recreation, and currently serves as the first director of the North Dakota Department of Water Resources. Andrea reflects on the spectrum of her career with awe at how aspects of it have already come full circle.

"I've been fortunate to put together the building blocks of knowledge and experiences I gained at NDSU, and I've made connections and used them all the way up through my career so far," Andrea said. "I worked on GIS [geographic information system] issues during my undergraduate and then I ended up chairing the federal geographic data committee at the top level in Washington, D.C., because I was overseeing the United States Geological Survey. I conducted research on land management and invasive species control at Theodore Roosevelt National Park for my master's research, and then I had the opportunity to oversee the management of all the national parks across the country. Finally, my Ph.D. research in social network analysis and stakeholder analysis is applied in real time in decisions I make every day as I work with stakeholders with differing perspectives. NDSU definitely set the stage for the unique career I have been able to have so far. The possibilities have been endless and there is more to do." 🐾



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DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

David '68 and Aileen '69 Clough are recipients of the 2023 **Distinguished Service Award**, which recognizes individuals who have provided outstanding volunteer service for the benefit of the University or played vital roles as volunteer fundraisers on behalf of the NDSU Foundation.

It was 1967, and David Clough '68 was a junior studying agricultural mechanization at NDSU. He hopped in his brother-in-law's 1965 Chevy Impala Super Sport — a snazzy car with a maroon exterior and black leather bucket seats — and went to pick up some girls from Kappa Delta for a fraternity-sorority scavenger hunt. Aileen (Askegard) Clough '69, a sophomore studying home economics, happened to ride in the passenger seat. She immediately caught David's eye, and they married shortly after graduation.

With NDSU degrees under their belts, David and Aileen established a farm and equipment business in Fessenden, North Dakota, where Aileen also taught home

FELLOWSHIP AND PHILANTHROPY

DAVID AND AILEEN CLOUGH | Story by Micaela Gerhardt

economics to seventh through 12th graders. As their family grew, they took their kids to Bison football and basketball games when time allowed for it. NDSU was always on their minds, but David says it wasn't until he was elected to the North Dakota Wheat Commission in 2006 that he and Aileen were truly reconnected to NDSU.

Over the years, David and Aileen's involvement and philanthropy have helped advance agriculture, education, and fellowship at NDSU. They serve as passionate ambassadors of the University in their daily lives and enjoy the friendships they have made by reconnecting with their alma mater.

In 2015, Aileen became a member of NDSU's College of Human Sciences and Education Board of Visitors, and in 2018 she became an NDSU Foundation Trustee, first serving on the alumni awards committee and, more recently, on the outreach committee.

Together, David and Aileen have contributed major gifts to numerous capital projects on campus, including the Nodak Insurance Company Football Performance Complex, Peltier Complex, Jack Dalrymple Agricultural Research Complex, and renovations, technology, and equipment for the College of Human Sciences and Education's food production laboratory and dining room.

After retiring from farming, they also established a charitable remainder unitrust (CRUT) using proceeds from their farm equipment sale, which will endow six undergraduate scholarships for the benefit of students in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources and the College

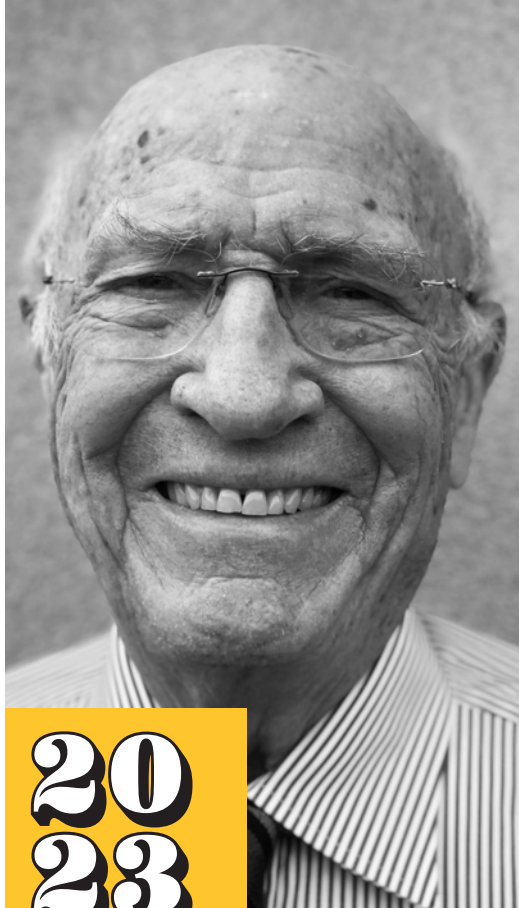
of Human Sciences and Education.

"When I was going to school, my dad was a farmer, so he was rich on paper," Aileen, who worked multiple jobs in college, said. "You can't sell your land and still be able to make ends meet, but when I applied for financial aid, they looked at the land and said, 'You should be able to afford this on your own.' Now that we're older, we can finally afford to set up this endowment to help students who really need support."

For many years, David and Aileen have hosted dinners and NDSU football watch parties at their farmstead, inviting guests from NDSU and the Northern Crops Institute (NCI), friends, and neighbors — as well as visitors from around the world — to join in fellowship and enjoy their Bison-themed den, which includes yellow and green string lights, a Lego recreation of the Fargodome, and a whimsical collection of NDSU memorabilia that continues to grow. For one of the championship games, they hosted more than 75 people.

David and Aileen love being ambassadors of NDSU because of the education and opportunities they received as students and the relationships and Bison pride that continue to flourish well beyond graduation.

"We want to promote NDSU so more students come here, because you do get a good education and a good college experience," David said. "It was enjoyable this fall when we got to meet the students who received our scholarships. Next year, we'll have six scholarships that we're giving out, and we want to keep doing that." 🌾



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23

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Spencer Duin '66, '18 is a recipient of the 2023 **Distinguished Service Award**, which recognizes an individual who has provided outstanding volunteer service for the benefit of the University or someone who has played a vital role as a volunteer fundraiser on behalf of the NDSU Foundation.

For Spencer Duin '66, '18 philanthropy and volunteer work are rooted in principles he learned from his parents, in the farming community where he grew up, and his world views.

“We talk about freedom, and we talk about less government, but there are still needs in the community, so if you really believe those things and are blessed with more than you need — which we have been — it just seems like the right thing to do,” Spencer said. “I have to give a lot of credit to my wife, Carol, because she has a very kind, sensitive heart and often identified a need first.”

A PASSION FOR GIVING BACK FUELED BY FARM VALUES

SPENCER DUIN | Story by Nicole Thom-Arens

Spencer’s philanthropic support started modestly. For years, when his children were young, Spencer would take his NDSU Foundation donation log chart to the dining room table and add the annual giving sticker to the current year. He believed showing his kids that he was donating to NDSU, his alma mater, was a good way to demonstrate giving back.

As he neared retirement, he met the dean of NDSU’s College of Engineering and joined the College’s advisory board shortly after. In 2002, two years after retiring from a 40-year career in the electrical industry, Spencer became an NDSU Foundation Trustee.

“My wife and I are always trying to share with charities, but if we share substantially, we also try to be more involved in those. That certainly applied to NDSU and the College of Engineering,” Spencer said. “At the Foundation, I felt I had value to share regarding the endowment. It isn’t that I am a financial advisor nor an accountant, but if you’ve been successful in business, you understand what numbers mean. I’ve always thought I had value in helping people understand what numbers mean.”

As a Trustee, Spencer has served on the investment committee for more than 20 years. He chaired the committee from 2013-2022. As chair, Spencer spearheaded a project that captured the history of the NDSU Foundation’s endowment, which grew from about \$40 million in 2002 to more than \$423.2 million as of Dec. 31, 2022.

During *In Our Hands: The Campaign for North Dakota State University*, Spencer and Carol were one of the firsts to establish a named faculty position endowment.

“I never thought in my whole

life that I would get to the point where I could endow a professor,” Spencer said. “I felt at that time it was something we could do, and I really felt that it was needed in engineering because it is competitive to find good professors in the College of Engineering. I felt if I could at least provide an avenue for one professor, others might have stepped forward and they did.”

Benefactors established 22 named positions at NDSU during the *In Our Hands* campaign. These named positions help recruit and retain faculty members across campus.

When asked what NDSU means to him, Spencer told the following story: a few Christmases ago, his son Jason framed Spencer’s NDSU diploma, which is about 8.5-by-11 inches. While home for the holidays, Spencer’s son Derek and his daughter, Darcy, pointed out that their diplomas were much larger in size and asked if that said anything about Spencer’s university. Spencer replied that he had many people with large diplomas work for him over the years.

“My son who gave it to me said, ‘Well, I don’t know about the size of diplomas, but I know what that diploma has meant to our family,’” Spencer recalled with a laugh. “I struggled to find the right engineering program when I was at North Dakota State. It took me a couple of years, but then I got an industrial engineering degree, which really got me into what I always wanted to do in my life, which is run things. I did that even when I was growing up on the farm — maybe it was part of my DNA. That engineering degree opened the doors.”

Spencer received an honorary doctorate from NDSU in 2018. 🐾



FURTHERING AG LEADERS

CHS AND THE CHS FOUNDATION | Story by Micaela Gerhardt

CHS Foundation

2023

PARTNER IN EXCELLENCE AWARD

CHS and the CHS Foundation are the recipients of the 2023 **Partner in Excellence Award**, which recognizes a corporation, foundation, or organization that has given significant support as well as demonstrated inspirational philanthropic giving in the University.

As the giving arm of the nation’s leading farmer-owned cooperative, the CHS Foundation is committed to developing ag leaders for life through partnerships that advance cooperative education and agricultural leadership. For more than 60 years, CHS and the CHS Foundation have made numerous strategic investments in the University through support to student scholarships, faculty, programs, events, and facilities.

“It’s really just a privilege for us to be in a position where we can help support these important initiatives and know that university work is a rising tide that lifts all boats,” Megan Wolle, president of the CHS Foundation, said.

Because CHS sees a need for advancements across agricultural education, the CHS Foundation has made

generous gifts to multiple areas of agriculture on campus. Most notably, in 2016, the CHS Foundation funded a \$2.5 million grant to establish the endowed CHS Chair in Risk Management and Trading at NDSU, a position held by University Distinguished Professor William Wilson. By investing in faculty excellence, the CHS Foundation has helped prepare countless NDSU students who are pursuing careers in the commodity marketing business, providing long-term benefits to the agriculture industry in North Dakota, the region, and beyond.

Students in commodity marketing-related fields also benefit from the CHS Foundation’s support of NDSU’s Commodity Trading Room in Richard H. Barry Hall, a laboratory space dedicated to teaching students about risks related to financial analysis and commodity marketing.

Together, CHS and NDSU are also advancing cooperatives for long-term success through the CHS Leading for Results Program, which was created in partnership with NDSU in 2019. The program brings company managers and executives to campus for annual leadership training conducted by NDSU faculty and staff. The CHS Foundation has also invested in NDSU’s Quentin N. Burdick Center for Cooperatives, which strives to provide education, research, and outreach that will strengthen cooperative operations and expand employment and economic opportunities in North Dakota and the region.

“We know how important it is to have those areas of excellence around cooperatives to help train our cooperative board of directors so that they have the skills needed, and we know that the future of the

cooperative systems really broadly depends on strong leadership at the local level,” Megan said.

To help educate the next generation of ag leaders, the CHS Foundation has established the CHS Foundation Scholarship and has contributed to the College of Agriculture Excellence Fund. They have also provided grant support to NDSU’s precision ag degree program, which was established in 2018 to help meet the needs of transformative technology in agriculture. In addition, CHS has been an ongoing supporter of NDSU’s Harvest Bowl.

“We know not enough students are choosing agriculture as a career path, and we need a robust pipeline of individuals across the spectrum — in training and precision ag, in finance and some of those more core functions for our organization — so that speaks to why we’ve made investments across campus,” Megan said. “It’s not just in one area of agriculture that we need a robust pipeline — it’s really broad, like the industry of ag is.”

In addition to the scholarships and ag curriculum support at NDSU, the CHS Foundation supports more than 220 scholarships at 25 different two- and four-year colleges and universities across the U.S. Through its philanthropic efforts across the country, the CHS Foundation has helped educate nearly 15,000 students about the cooperative model and nearly 22,000 students about agricultural careers since 2001.

“We at CHS are so, so grateful for recognition of our partnership and all of the amazing work that NDSU has done with this support,” Megan said. “It’s our privilege to provide support that really helps enable the work that NDSU is able to do.” 🐾

DELIVERING PATIENT-CENTERED CARE IN EVERY CORNER OF THE STATE

NDSU is educating innovative health care professionals to meet the needs of North Dakota patients in an industry under pressure.

Story by Micaela Gerhardt

Right: Aldevron Tower, NDSU's entirely privately funded home for health professions.

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Rural hospitals across the U.S., like the Heart of America Medical Center (HAMC) in Rugby, North Dakota, are beacons to people in the surrounding areas. The HAMC, for example, serves more than 10,000 patients from communities like Towner, Leeds, and the Turtle Mountain Reservation, offering a full-time surgeon and robust therapy department among other essential health care services that are otherwise 30 or more miles away.

Since the pandemic, many hospitals — rural or otherwise — have been stretched to their limits, burdened by staff shortages, patient overload, and burnout. Thanks to a rural development loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the HAMC is upgrading to a brand-new facility that will create greater access to quality health care in the region

— but the Rugby community is not untouched by the challenges facing the health care industry across the country.

“It’s imperative to highlight the absolute need for health professionals in North Dakota,” HAMC CEO Erik Christenson ’97, ’99 said. “If we are going to continue to have people living in our rural areas, we’re going to have to have health care. You remove health care, and rural North Dakota will disappear — that’s a part of America we can’t lose. We need young adults who are willing to step in and be the health care leaders in these rural areas for the next generations.”

In Rugby, the greatest shortage may be in swing-beds, or skilled nursing care, for recovering patients in long-term or transitional care, Erik says, but the community’s nursing homes are also short-staffed; dietary and housekeeping workers are in short supply; and there

are not always enough beds available to stabilize and treat patients who are experiencing mental health issues.

“We’re seeing that with an aging population, baby boomers are starting to utilize health care more,” Erik said. “There aren’t enough services available, and the really limiting factor is staff.”

NDSU is meeting this need head-on. Because of philanthropic support from NDSU alumni and friends, the University has the top-tier technology and infrastructure needed to prepare the next generation of health care leaders. Benefactors united to establish the entirely privately funded Aldevron Tower, a \$28 million teaching and research facility. This state-of-the-art home for health professions opened its doors in the spring of 2020, just as the pandemic began to highlight an urgent need for health care professionals and scientific innovation.

Aldevron Tower (pictured left) is designed to make the NDSU educational experience as similar to real-world, professional environments as possible. Students in pharmacy, nursing, public health, medical laboratory science, radiologic sciences, and respiratory care study and perform in high-tech laboratories, simulation suites, fully equipped patient rooms, and a concept pharmacy that all include the exact equipment students will use when working with real patients. The 21st-century hands-on learning spaces in Aldevron Tower are elevating education and the future of patient care across the state.

“It’s just this domino effect,” Elizabeth Skoy ’05, ’07, associate professor of pharmacy and director of the Center for Collaboration and Advancement in Pharmacy (CAP), said of how Aldevron Tower impacts the citizens of North Dakota. “You recruit students to our land-grant institution, and you teach them in a space that allows them to have the best educational experience. Then, you’re able to teach them to their potential. You instill that thirst or expectation for innovation and practicing at the top of their license to benefit the patients of North Dakota.”

Creating a hub for all the health profession disciplines in Aldevron Tower also lends to more interprofessional practice; faculty share expertise between



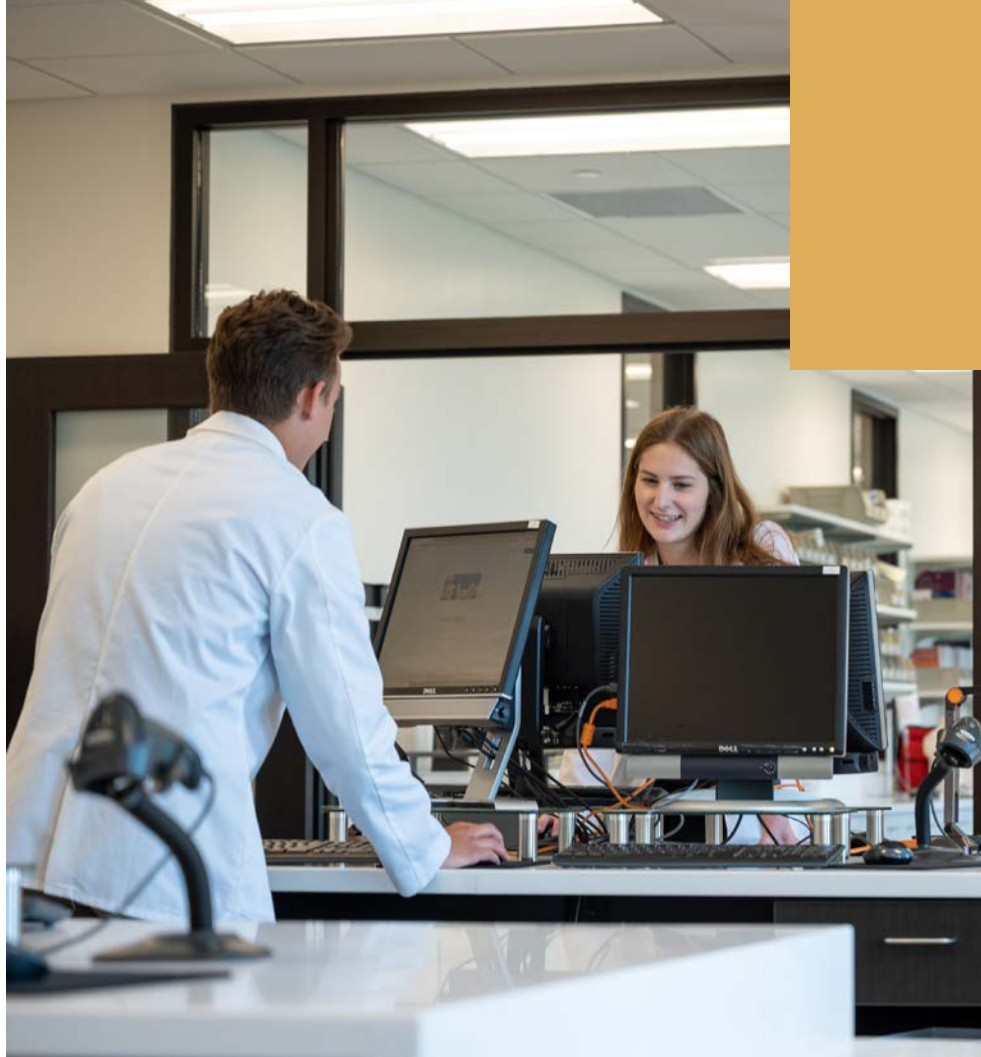
disciplines and students learn to care for patients as part of a larger health care team. This type of collaboration is essential for their future careers and for patient interactions.

“The typical patient receives care from a variety of different clinicians. A focus on team-based care, combined with patient-centered care, allows our graduates to think beyond the normal ‘silos’ of their discipline. This allows them to identify new opportunities and best practices to improve patient care,” Daniel Friesner, senior associate dean of the College of Health Professions, said.

Another crucial aspect of the future of health care in North Dakota is retaining health professionals within the state. The College of Health Professions is actively involved in recruiting the next generation of clinicians in North Dakota. Faculty in the pharmacy and nursing programs visit high schools across the state to promote health professions and NDSU’s academic programs. On campus, students interact with employers in North Dakota through career fairs and clinical partnerships.

In NDSU’s traditional pre-licensure Bachelor of Science in nursing program, more than 95% of clinical site experiences are offered in-state, Daniel says. In the pharmacy program, more than 60% of clinical experiences are in North Dakota, and many students complete a five-week rotation in a rural area, which helps foster a close connection with patients in these communities. Additionally, NDSU’s Master of Public Health (MPH) program is strongly connected with the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH), and many of NDSU’s MPH students gain valuable work and practical experiences through that alliance.

“Everything we do from our teaching to serving our profession, we try to embed NDSU’s land-grant mission in. What can make our state better? How can we better the lives of our patients and alumni who are practicing in the state?” Elizabeth said. “That’s where the University is really critical: having a program that prepares our workforce to stay here [in-state] and preparing our students to be innovative so that all of our patients in North Dakota have access to the health care they need and deserve.” 🐾



NDSU health professions students work and learn in Aldevron Tower’s concept pharmacy (above) and nursing skills lab (below). Photos by Justin Eiler, NDSU.



MEET FRONT-LINE WORKERS WHO ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN NORTH DAKOTA COMMUNITIES

A spirit of innovation is a hallmark of NDSU's health professions programming, a standard for progress and professional growth that is shared by current health professions alumni who are practicing in every corner of the state. When graduates leave NDSU's walls, they know they're not done learning.



On the western side of the state, in Dickinson, North Dakota, **Steve Irsfeld '88** is the owner and pharmacist-in-charge at Irsfeld Pharmacy. Guided by a growth mindset he exercised as an NDSU pharmacy student, Steve began learning about dietary supplements and incorporating them into his pharmaceutical practice. His goal is to provide patients and community members with multiple tools to improve their health and well-being, so he also writes weekly columns for The Dickinson Press and hosts a podcast called "The Optimal You," where he discusses different health-related topics and shares insights into achieving better health.

"Pharmacists look at ourselves as problem-solvers," Steve said. "People don't necessarily come to us because they feel good; they come to us because they're sick and they need help, and if we can try and figure out what's going on with them and get them to a better place, that's our goal."



Fifty miles south of NDSU, in Wahpeton, North Dakota, **Elisha Anderson '10** is a nurse practitioner for Essentia Health and the medical director for Hankinson, North Dakota, and Wahpeton clinics. She relies on the critical thinking skills she developed as an NDSU student to work her way through the complex problems facing patients and the industry as she provides care.

"NDSU gave me the building blocks to be able to take information and critically think my way through challenging situations, from understanding what's happening in the human body so that I can then take my medical knowledge and apply that to the pathophysiology of the patient to give them the best quality care, or using that knowledge as I lead others through the ever-changing health care world," Elisha said. "Still today, when I take students in clinical rotations, it's evident that NDSU has upheld a high standard."



In Bismarck, North Dakota, **Olivia Holly '21** is an emergency department registered nurse at the Sanford Emergency and Trauma Center. NDSU's nursing program is offered at two sites, one on the main campus in Fargo and the other at Sanford Health in Bismarck. Olivia, who completed her degree through the Bismarck site, says she approaches nursing with a beginner's mindset, continually asking questions and seeking to advance her knowledge and skills so that she is equipped to care for people during their most critical time.

Olivia specifically credits NDSU professors Sara Berger and Jill Johnson for always pushing her to go the extra mile. During ICU clinicals with Jill, for example, Olivia said students had to give in-depth explanations for all of their choices related to patient care, and they needed to be prepared for further questioning.

"If you wrote a med down on your list that you were going to give a patient, you better know what it is, why you're giving it, and any adverse reactions that could potentially happen. Even if you had this long explanation for what you were doing and why, there was always more that could be added on top of it," Olivia said. "I think I always had a really good understanding of the foundations, but I loved when the professors at clinicals would push me one step further so that I could be better."

BRINGING THE UNIVERSITY TO THE PEOPLE

NDSU Extension serves North Dakotans through 53 county offices. Programming is widespread and nuanced to meet the needs of citizens. Visit three county offices to see Extension's mission at work.

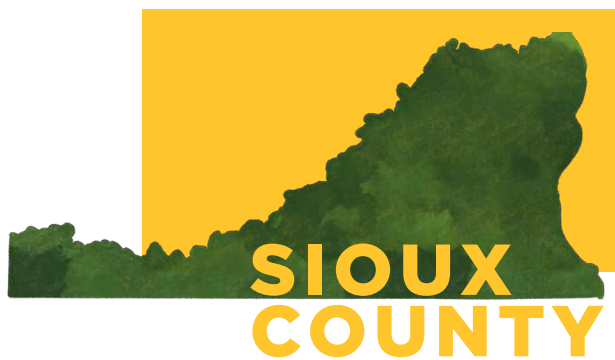
Story by Nicole Thom-Arens
Illustrations by Leah Ecklund

On a mid-January morning in 2023, I drove south from Mandan, North Dakota, to Solen, North Dakota, a community located in north-central Sioux County — about 15 miles west of Cannon Ball, North Dakota. The flat prairies of the eastern part of the state gave way to rolling, snow-covered hills. The day's fog hadn't yet set in, and while I met several cars that were heading north, none were ahead of or behind me. For 42 miles, I happened only upon the occasional cattle ranch.

"It's beautiful and peaceful here, but there's no extra activities for our children to do," Tomi Phillips, Solen School District superintendent, said.

While 42 miles doesn't sound like a far distance, without transportation — one of the county's greatest challenges — there might as well be a chasm separating Standing Rock Reservation and Bismarck-Mandan, which has the closest movie theater, bowling alley, or full supermarket. That's the isolation Tomi describes for the students in her community.





Standing Rock also faces challenges related to poverty, high unemployment, low graduation rates, housing shortages, and lack of fertile soil. When the Oahe Dam was constructed north of Pierre, South Dakota, in 1960, flooding from the dam forced Standing Rock families to evacuate their homes along the Missouri River valley. The flooding washed away fertile soil, making it impossible to grow food, which led to health consequences for the people living there.

Tomi grew up in and graduated high school from Standing Rock — she’s an enrolled tribal member. She’s a former Bush Fellow, earned her master’s degree and her Doctor of Education, and returned to Standing Rock because it’s home. She knows well the challenges facing her community and what programming will work to bring positive changes.

“We want people to come work with us, work with our children, and see the beauty and their strengths. We don’t need somebody to come in here and save us,” Tomi said. “If people are truly looking to our future, students — our children — are our future, so they need to be supported. Programs like Sue’s benefit students — especially those who come from a lower socioeconomic status.”

When she speaks of NDSU Extension agent Sue Isbell, Tomi calls Sue an ally.

“Sue is able to offer a lot of different opportunities to get students exposed to life outside of their local community,” Tomi said. “She knows the families, she knows the students, she knows the demographics. She fits right in.”

As the 4-H and youth development agent for Sioux County, Sue provides mentoring and educational programs for local youth. She has been working

with educational programs through NDSU Extension since 2003 and became the full-time agent in Sioux County in 2005. In the past, she received a grant to construct raised gardens across the county to address lack of access to fresh food.

Today, Sue primarily works with students at Solen High School. During my visit, Sue struck up conversation with every student she passed in the hall. She talked about the rival basketball team’s loss the night before. Noticing one girl was having a tough day, Sue invited her to come visit later in the day. As we passed through the gymnasium, Sue yelled, “Nice shot!” after a boy nailed a three-pointer. Sue’s knowledge of local needs, as well as the students themselves, allows her to focus on bringing sustainable programming to the students.



“Extension programs are based on current issues and needs identified by stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels.”

Lynette Flage

Sue was instrumental in starting Sioux Image, a local print shop, with a national 4-H mentoring grant. Since the shop opened in 2010, students have been learning commercial machine needle embroidery, laser and vinyl cutting, six-color screen printing, jewelry making, and ceramics. Students sometimes create their own artwork for clothing, mugs, and decorative pieces. They open the Sioux Shop during home basketball games and sell their creations. Artwork from Butch Thunder Hawk adorns the Sioux Shop’s walls. He’s given permission to Sioux Image to print his

designs without asking for royalties in return. All the money made through the Sioux Shop’s sales goes back into the Sioux Image business to help youth learn about the various responsibilities involved in business management.

Additional NDSU Extension programming in Sioux County includes robotics, coding, and drone flying, and this spring, they’ll hatch chicks. Sue focuses heavily on science and uses evidence-based curriculum provided by NDSU Extension youth development researchers. NDSU Extension looks a little different in every North Dakota county because it is tailored to the needs of the community.

“When people ask me who I work for, I’m employed by NDSU Extension, but I work for the people of Standing Rock; you work for the people you serve,” Sue said. “Extension isn’t in a silo; it is part of the community and it’s a partnership. My programs are successful because of everyone else. We all work together. That’s something that’s extremely unique down here. It’s engrained in the community.”

That partnership and trust among community members is what makes NDSU Extension programming work across North Dakota. NDSU Extension has agents stationed in each of North Dakota’s 53 counties and all of the state’s U.S. Indian Reservations.

“Staff in county Extension offices and Research Extension Centers across the state complete the link between campus and North Dakota citizens,” Lynette Flage ’04, ’10, associate director of NDSU Extension, said. “Extension programs are based on current issues and needs identified by stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels.”

Since 1914, NDSU Extension has been bringing the University to the people. Today, programming targets three major program areas: agriculture and natural resources, family and community wellness, and 4-H youth development.

“The research that happens on the NDSU campus by faculty researchers and at the seven Research Extension Centers positioned across the state is transferred

to the farmer, rancher, parent, community member, or young person so they can use that information effectively for themselves,” Lynette said. “NDSU Extension specialists develop resources and programs so the information can be creatively delivered to communities through our agents who are living and working in each county. Our staff are trusted and respected, and our clientele know that unbiased, research-based information is coming from the University to them. We like to think of it as having NDSU in more than 53 locations besides the Fargo campus.”

a border with Montana. It is a strong agricultural community with rich natural resources — about 15 different commodities are grown in the county. Williams County is also home to the Williston Research Extension Center, which is part of the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, and is where scientists evaluate crop varieties, pesticide performance, cropping and livestock systems, soil health, and natural resource conservation practices. Kelly often partners with the Williston Research Extension Center for programming and frequently holds her programs at the center.

For the past two summers, particularly in 2021, Kelly spent many hours in the field working with local ranchers.

“We’ve done a lot of training and information sharing on responses to the drought — things like water quality testing for livestock,” Kelly said. “There were many poor water sources in 2021, which was an epic year for drought in the western part of the state. We experienced quite a few cattle deaths from that. I was in the field four to five days a week just pulling water samples for folks.”

By testing the water, it was estimated that more than 40,000 head of livestock statewide were saved because of the NDSU Extension education related to the high levels of sulfate and what that toxicity meant for cattle. Because of this information, ranchers were encouraged to find new, safe water sources.

North Dakotans are probably most familiar with Extension programming related to agriculture and 4-H, but NDSU Extension also offers programming related to family and community wellness. These agents offer programs on topics like food, nutrition and health, healthy aging, leadership and civic engagement, personal and family finance, and parent and family education.

Most counties have both an agriculture and natural resources and family and community wellness agent.

Williams County has agents in both areas, and the county has funded a third position, a parent educator, who teaches parent classes, leads training for childcare providers, and works to support parents and families throughout life’s transitions.

“

“Our focus has shifted from our needs to understanding more about the needs of our youth and volunteers.”

Kelly Leo

Extension’s work is possible across the state because of multiple funding sources. The organization receives federal, state, county, and grant funds.

NDSU Extension’s partnership with counties is critical to its success. Each county pays half the salary of each agent in addition to operating costs including travel and office space. NDSU Extension pays the remaining salary and covers 100% of the employee’s benefit package. Extension offices in larger counties across the state usually employ numerous agents who deliver more focused programming.

“We appreciate the individuals and organizations that contribute to Extension programs as it allows us to continue our innovative and impactful work for North Dakota,” Lynette said.

Private support through philanthropy enhances Extension programming. Benefactors have supported scholarships and fellowships, research, equipment, 4-H youth development, and staff professional development programs for Extension. Since 2016, benefactors have invested more than \$3.2 million in NDSU Extension.



WILLIAMS COUNTY

Kelly Leo, NDSU Extension agriculture and natural resources agent in Williams County, has been serving her community for nearly three years. She has revolutionized the 4-H volunteer network in the county.

“Our focus has shifted from our needs to understanding more about the needs of our youth and volunteers. That’s been a big change,” Kelly said. “Letting them know that it’s OK to develop ideas and lead has been the biggest change.”

Kelly implemented 4-H volunteer trainings and launched new 4-H programs based on community need — like the dog program where kids work with their pets on obedience and get them prepared for dog shows. Volunteer participation increased from 15 to 20 during Kelly’s first year to about 80 volunteers in 2022.

Williams County, located in northwestern North Dakota, shares



CASS COUNTY

Cass County, North Dakota’s largest and most urban county, has eight agents, one that focuses on each of the following areas: agriculture and natural resources; 4-H youth development; family nutrition; parent education; horticulture; expanded food and nutrition education; family and community wellness; and leadership and civic engagement. The NDSU Extension office in Cass County serves about 25% of North Dakota’s entire population.

“With such a diverse population, reaching the population is an interesting challenge,” Don Kinzler ’79, Extension’s horticulture agent in Cass County, said. “That’s why we use many media outlets to market our programs, including print, TV, radio, and social media.”

Don writes a weekly column for the Fargo Forum and he and Rita Ussatis ’84, ’92, the family and community wellness agent in Cass County, alternate monthly appearances on North Dakota Today, a morning show broadcast on KVLV.

In such a large, urban community, Extension programming looks different than it does across much of the state, but its value is just as great.

“There’s so much information online that isn’t accurate that it’s almost dangerous,” Don said.

Rita recounted a time she had to tell someone to discard 80 quarts of pickles because they had followed YouTube video instructions and the pickles were molding. She is sympathetic to the food waste and the money and time invested but reiterates the importance of accurate information for where people live.

“We provide local, research-based

information for our area that we know is current and based on the latest information from the USDA,”

Rita said. “Food preservation in Florida is different than it is in North Dakota, and it is different in Williston than it is in Fargo because processing times are determined by elevation.”

Serving such a large population means agents in Cass County are often at the forefront of providing programs based on local needs.

The agents often collaborate with each other and local partners to bring programs to diverse audiences, including low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and new Americans.

“Another thing that makes us



“Extension has remained relevant because we change with the times. The programs we do today continue to evolve based on needs.”

Lynette Flage

unique is that we all program with each other. Multiple agents go out and teach whether in the classroom for a living ag program or at the fair,” Rita said. “We’re all working together trying to expand everyone’s programming and making sure we’re all helping everybody.”

Since the pandemic, many classes have been offered virtually via Zoom, which has increased reach and number of participants. Don also leads gardening programs virtually and has seen participation double. Other programs are more intensive. The Diabetes Prevention Program, for example, is a year-long

program and involves 24 lessons.

“I tried many different programs over the years, and they were not sustainable,” Tami Stillwell, a Cass County Diabetes Prevention Program participant, said. “What I learned in this program was to deal with real foods, portioning, watching your fat grams, and exercising more — the keys to having a healthy lifestyle.”

Tami’s doctor recommended the program to her when she was pre-diabetic and taking medication. She’s lost weight and is now off that medication.

“I’m learning how to cope with things differently and in a healthier way,” Tami said. “This program has been very successful for me in a real way.”

NDSU Extension, across all 53 counties, brings evidence-based information

to the people and puts the decision making into the hands of the farmer, rancher, or community member without a sale or exchange of goods, and people trust and appreciate that.

Farmer and rancher stress, mental health, food security, workforce development, and research and education around precision technologies are examples of community concerns that were less prevalent 20 to 30 years ago and are now opportunities for Extension programming.

“We continue to look at the big issues affecting the state, our country, and the world on a regular basis,” Lynette said. “We then complete research on those issues and deliver the education to help resolve the challenges that we face. Extension has remained relevant because we change with the times. The programs we do today continue to evolve based on needs.” 🐾

To support NDSU Extension programming, visit NDSUFoundation.com/donate/extension or scan the QR code.



THE MAN WHO BUILT A HOME FOR HERITAGE AT NDSU

Michael Miller has dedicated his NDSU career to preserving the stories, heritage, and culture of the Germans from Russia.

Story by Micaela Gerhardt | Photos by Ann Arbor Miller

Michael Miller grew up in Strasburg, North Dakota, with parents who were both first-generation Germans from Russia born on American soil. He and his five older siblings spoke a Black Sea dialect of German as often as they spoke English; ate German-Russian foods, like kase knoephla and vegetable borscht; and continuing in the religious traditions of their ancestors, regularly attended mass at Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church.

Michael, who helped establish NDSU's Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC) in 1978 and directed the program until his retirement in December 2022, knows the facts of his German-Russian upbringing and heritage. His mother's parents, the Baumgartners, were Black Sea Germans from Russia who immigrated to Strasburg in 1889. His father's parents, the Millers (Müller), were Bessarabian Germans from Russia who immigrated just five years later, in 1894. Both sides of his family left their respective homelands due to unrest in southern Russia and changes in the government, which included required military service for men. But unfortunately, he doesn't know many stories about his ancestors' daily lives or experiences because they weren't shared.

"In the case of my parents, it's a good example of, how much did they ask of their ancestors, of their parents? What do they remember? They never asked that much, so they never passed that down," Michael said. "I think it shows the importance of doing oral interviews and documenting your living ancestors — your elders, your parents,

your grandparents. It leaves a legacy for the family for today and for future generations."

Around 30% to 40% of North Dakotans, like Michael, have German-Russian ancestry — a significant portion of the state's population. When Michael was growing up, German-Russian dialects thrived in communities across the state, but now, mere decades later, the language has begun to disappear. Today, young people in North Dakota are not likely to grow up speaking German at home or learning it in their K-12 schools. The distance grows between those Germans from Russia who first settled in North Dakota and their modern-day descendants. Without documentation of the language, heritage, and culture, what will future generations remember about their ancestors?

This is a question Michael, and some of his peers at NDSU, began asking decades ago. For Michael, the seeds that sprouted into his passion for preserving German-Russian history were planted at a very young age. Many of his grade-school teachers were School Sisters of Notre Dame, and when they came to Strasburg to teach, they noticed the strong presence of German-Russian dialects, foods, and traditions in the community. One teacher, Sister Josepha, who was a German native, would say from time to time that someone should really study the German-Russian people. This gave Michael the inkling — which would resurface in later years with more urgency — that his German-Russian heritage was important, something worth sharing.

In the fall of 1967, Michael began his career as a librarian at NDSU. He worked at the circulation desk, then in reference, where he crossed paths with NDSU professors and archivists, some of whom shared his German-Russian ancestry. Over time, in conversations, a single thread emerged: the idea of establishing a collection that would preserve and document the Germans from Russia ethnic group. What better place for a collection dedicated to the study and enrichment of regional people than a land-grant university, they asked.

Together, with Reverend William "Bill" Sherman, a sociology professor at NDSU who photographed German-Russian architecture, and Armand Bauer, a German-Russian soil scientist at NDSU, Michael approached then-president L.D. Loftsgard about establishing the GRHC. Loftsgard "gave it the green light," and the collection was formally established in 1978. Michael was named as its director, a title he held proudly for 44 years.

Among the first items in the collection were newspapers such as the Dakota Freie Presse, a popular German-language newspaper printed in Dakota Territory that focused on



German-Russian settlers in the U.S. and abroad, and the Nord-Dakota Herald, a newspaper for the Catholic community of Germans from Russia, printed in Dickinson, North Dakota.

As the collection grew, it evolved to offer more services and stories. In 1996, Michael began writing a monthly column, “In Touch with Prairie Living,” that highlights stories and memories of the Germans from Russia, which he still distributes to more than 5,000 readers via email Listserv and to North Dakota and South Dakota weekly newspapers. From 1996 to 2019, he led the “Journey to the Homeland Tours” for people with German-Russian ancestry or interest in the ethnic group to visit ancestral villages near Odessa, Ukraine.

Today, the GRHC is home to numerous valuable archival research collections, scholarly books, cookbooks, oral histories, letters, photographs, traveling exhibits, and other historical materials. It also features 10 award-winning documentaries produced in partnership

with Prairie Public that chronicle the heritage and culture of the Germans from Russia. The GRHC often welcomes scholars who want to conduct research on the Germans from Russia as well as families of German-Russian descent who want to explore their genealogy.

“As each decade goes by, we lose the people who have that history,” Julie Opp Burgum ’75, ’02, an alumna with German-Russian heritage who has invested in the GRHC, said. “What Michael has done is capture the history of those people and document it through videos, books, and interviews. As a child growing up in the Napoleon/Streeter area in the ’50s and ’60s, I see the value of the work done by the GRHC to preserve our history.”

In 2019, Michael decided to give back and invest in the collection he has spent most of his life building from the ground up. Using his IRA, he established an endowment through the NDSU Foundation to benefit the GRHC.

“The Germans from Russia Heritage Collection is considered, today, one of the most comprehensive collections on this subject anywhere in the world,” Michael said. “I want to be sure that it’s perpetual so that future

generations of students who come to NDSU, their parents, researchers, and families who come to visit for genealogy and other research have a permanent home for it, so that it continues to grow and develop a greater audience regionally, nationally, and internationally — I think that’s important.”

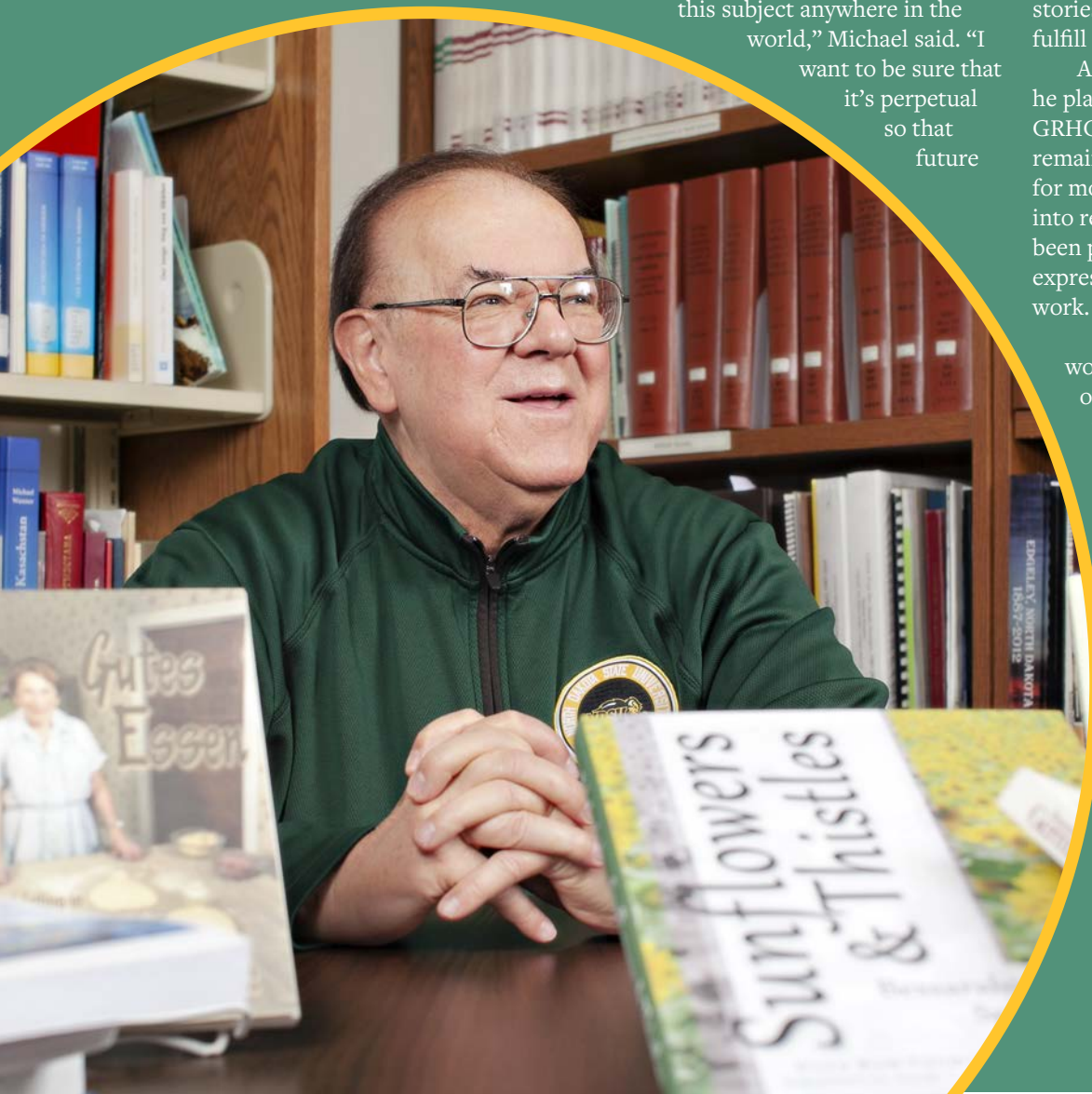
Michael looks with pride and optimism toward the future of the GRHC. Jeremy Kopp ’11, GRHC interim director, says that the GRHC currently has many projects, events, and ideas in the works that will continue to benefit the University and community.

“It’s very important for people to know that the work of the GRHC will continue perpetually. Michael’s endowment ensures that — he is confident in the future of the GRHC. I share that confidence and look forward to what is next,” Jeremy, who has been at the GRHC for more than a decade, said. “I hope to honor Michael by continuing his legacy of building relationships with individuals, organizations, and communities as I work to share the stories of the Germans from Russia and fulfill the mission of the GRHC.”

Although Michael has retired, he plans to remain involved with the GRHC. He said it has been easy to remain passionate about the collection for more than four decades — and even into retirement — because he has always been part of a community who has expressed interest and excitement in the work.

Earlier in his career, he never would have predicted how much of his life he would dedicate to the collection, or how much the collection itself would progress. As he reflects on the GRHC and its growth, he also remembers his family and the mentors who shaped the course of his life’s work.

“My two aunts who were both educators would look and say, ‘You’ve helped preserve our heritage,’ and my parents, too, but especially my aunts because they were very interested in their history,” Michael said, “and I think some of my Catholic school nuns would say, ‘You’ve helped to do what we had hoped.’” 🐾





People love stories. According to NDSU assistant professor of theatre arts Marc Devine, humans are hardwired for them.

“Stories are important because that’s how humans learn; we’re natural storytellers,” Marc said. “Stories help us gain understanding and empathy for one another because when someone tells a story, we try to understand; we place ourselves in that situation.”

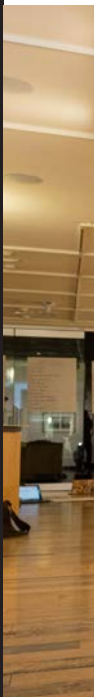
Marc grew up in Denton, Texas, just north of Dallas. After attending college in New Mexico, working as an actor in Los Angeles, and completing graduate school in Colorado, Marc started his teaching career at Ball State University in 2014 and came to North Dakota State University in 2018. During his time in Los Angeles in 2005, Marc started working in devised theater, which is an ensemble-driven form of creating theater where the director and cast collaborate to make the show together. The result is often personal and intimate.

“Devising can be empowering — especially for students who don’t see themselves represented because, historically, the majority of plays have been written by straight, white men. Or, for those who don’t see plays representing issues

Devising a Show: A Unique Theater Experience Mirroring Life

NDSU assistant professor Marc Devine is collaborating with student-actors to bring stories from local foster parents to audiences in “Home.”

Story by Nicole Thom-Arens
Photos by Justin Eiler, NDSU



that they would like to have a voice in, devised work gives them an avenue to create something that speaks to their experience. For some NDSU students, that's been very powerful," Marc said.

One of NDSU Theatre Arts' spring productions is a devised play, directed by Marc, called "Home." The ethnographic play will depict stories of foster parents in the Fargo-Moorhead community. Five student-actors will embody local foster parents who are opening their homes to children in need. Marc spent months conducting interviews, and he and the students will work together to discover common themes and develop characters who will deliver these stories to audiences in a creative, but cohesive, way.

"I've interviewed about eight people who are foster parents in this area. This piece is really hearing their stories. It's not linear. It's their conversations that they've had with me. We're giving a voice to these really wonderful, heartfelt, sometimes sad, sometimes very uplifting tales of what they go through," Marc said. "We're going to perform it in the Memorial Union Gallery, so that makes it different than a traditional theater show because we're using the site-specific nature of the gallery space."

Audiences can expect the actors to utilize the gallery space as a way to move through the production. The gallery also offers an opportunity for additional

storytelling before, during, and after the show's run.

"I want to also make it available for those who can't go see the show. If you go to the gallery, you'll see some of the photos I've taken while in foster homes and what we've designed during the production to recreate lived-in spaces, and there will be a recording of the actors telling these stories available through a QR code," Marc said.

Student-actors and BFA musical theatre majors Katie Hanson '23 and Ethan Hanson '24 (no relation) are looking forward to this special opportunity.

"The level of creativity and connection that can happen with devising a show is really unique," Katie said. "It's different from what you get with other shows where you have your dramatic structure, the text, and all the characters are laid out for you. This is taking theater and viewing it from a completely different lens."

"I have a great cast and director I get to work with. I love the ability to be able to create this show with them," Ethan said. "Because these are stories from real people who have opened their homes to strangers makes this that much more touching. I really want to do this well."

The learning opportunities for students that come with working on a devised show mirror life and will last long after the lights go out on this

production if students are open to going through the process.

"It can be very stressful because you're creating, and you have to partner with the unknown and trust that you're going to build the thing, and then the piece starts to unfold as you build it," Marc said about the devising process. "I never approach a project and say this is exactly how this is going to end. It shifts as we're creating it. There's improvisation that happens, there's trying things out that don't work and being OK with that, being OK with failing; it's a really useful skill. Sometimes, to paraphrase the novelist Samuel Beckett, it's teaching them to fail, fail more, and fail better. Keep going and keep trying things." 🐼

"Home" runs March 30-31 and April 1 and 5-6, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. in the Memorial Union Gallery. Seating is limited.

Check the NDSU Theatre Arts homepage for ticket availability.



Marc Devine, NDSU assistant professor of theatre arts, and student-actors collaborate to discover common themes as they build the play's structure and storyline.

McGovern Alumni Center
North Dakota State University
PO Box 5144
Fargo, ND 58105

