Summer 2024

# Heartbeat

Q U A R T E R L Y N E W S L E T T E R

# Foundation Luncheon celebrates donors' 2023 impact

In April, the Unity Medical Center Foundation invited over 600 donors who contributed over \$350,000 to UMC in calendar year 2023 to celebrate their impact on rural patient care, and in some cases to see it firsthand.

Over 70 guests attended over two days. The UMCF recognized its top donors in 2023, as well as all 83 Giving Clubs members, which are listed on the UMCF website.

UMCF Executive Director highlighted donor impact in 2023, including the implementation of the new Vocera Communications System. The impact was explained in a video of UMC's Infection Control nurse Julie Sundby and ER Manager Lindsey Gellner. To view the video, scan the adjacent QR code.

UMCF donors also helped expand the Cardiac Rehab program and created the new Pulmonary Rehab program. They provided new shoulder surgery equipment for Dr. Darin Leetun, who





Guests listen to UMC CEO Alan O'Neil's remarks at the Friends of the Foundation Luncheon in April.

was coincidentally scheduled to complete his 300th shoulder replacement on the day of the first luncheon.

Donors also provided 50 new IV pumps, continuing education for mammography technicians and renovated clinic restrooms (with capital campaign funds).

UMC CEO Alan O'Neil highlighted several other accomplishments at UMC, including recent awards, the clinic and cafeteria expansions, and patient growth. He also formally announced his phased retirement beginning with the hire of his eventual successor Mark Bertilrud. Bertilrud will join UMC on June 1, 2024, and will work with Alan on succession starting June 1, 2025.

After O'Neil's remarks on Day 1, Wally DeSautel stood and thanked O'Neil for his service to UMC. This was followed by a standing ovation for O'Neil.



Luncheon guests (left to right): Liz and David Hanson, Marilyn and Gene Anderson

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Dear friends,

Here's wishing everyone a great start to the summer months and a special congratulations to all of the recent graduates out there! To the student, if you haven't already decided on a career path, please consider something in health care. We would love to have you join our team at some point in the future. No matter what direction you decide upon, the future looks very bright.



We have some exciting news about service expansion: We recently welcomed Dr. Sczepanski to Unity Medical Center to perform eye surgeries. Dr.

Sczepanski is the owner of the North Dakota Eye Clinic in Grand Forks. He performs eye surgeries at UMC twice a month. His practice is a welcome addition to our service offerings. This will help minimize travel for our patients requiring this service. See Page 5 for more information. We also have another exciting service line that we are adding, but as we are just finalizing the details, it would be

premature for me to announce at this time. Look for some updates within the next 30 to 60 days. Again, it will bring a much-needed service to our community.

UMC was excited to learn that we have made the prestigious Best Places to Work list published by Modern Healthcare for the third consecutive year. With extreme appreciation, we thank our wonderful team of employees for their dedication and commitment to teamwork. Their passion for providing outstanding patient care is evident. Last year we were ranked as the No. 2 critical access hospital in the country. We are hoping to move up if possible! We will find out our ranking at the annual awards banquet on Oct. 10 in Nashville. Each year, there are 75 health care providers and insurers in our category. We will provide an update on our final ranking as soon as we have one.

Our volumes continue to grow in all areas. Our surgery department in particular performed over 30 procedures in one week. The procedures included orthopedic joint replacements, cataract surgeries, cancer screenings and several robot-assisted surgeries. I want to congratulate our

surgery team who has quickly gotten up-to-speed utilizing the DaVanci robot and is providing great support to Dr. Bittles.

We are excited to share we are now part of the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences ROME program (Rural Opportunities in Medical Education). It is an educational rotation for third-year medical students to give the student exposure to practicing and living in a rural community. The student will be moving to Grafton for just under six months. They will be involved in all aspects of care at UMC. We are excited to have been selected to be part of this program, as there are only a few of them in the state.

I hope to see many of you at the annual UMC Foundation golf tournament July 11. When I am on the golf course, for some reason I hear people saying to me, "Hey Alan, don't quit your day job!"

Finally, a big thank you to all of our wonderful Foundation supporters! The support you provide allows UMC to continue to grow and expand our service offerings.

Alan O'Neil Chief Executive Officer Unity Medical Center



### HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

# VETERANS MEMORIAL WALL

Unity Medical Center in Grafton is seeking photos of area veterans for the new 3rd floor installation. B&W or color photos can be dropped off at the UMC Foundation office at 147 W 13th St., Grafton or emailed to Maggie Suda at msuda@unitymedcenter.com. Original photos will be returned.

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#### Please include:

- Name
- Rank
- Branch
- Years of Service
- Hometown

PLEASE SUBMIT PHOTOS BY MONDAY, JULY I

#### **Grateful Patient: Willow Aure**

87 days.

When a patient stays at Unity Medical Center for this long, there is understandably a bit of a celebration when that person is able to go home. Although UMC staff have gotten to know 22-year-old Grand Forks resident Willow Aure well over the past few months and were sad to see her go, they were happy to celebrate her milestone of being able to leave the hospital because her health was improving.

Willow's medical journey started in October when she had her gall bladder removed, which later caused an infection. She was admitted to Altru Health System with sepsis, which led to a complete loss of body control. She doesn't remember much about the first two months of her stay. Altru diagnosed her with Gullain-Barré Syndrome, a rare disease in which one's body attacks its own nerves. She also had pneumonia, blood clots in her lungs and hypertension. After battling through all of that and beginning rehabilitation, she left Altru and came to UMC in late January as a swingbed patient as her condition wouldn't allow her to go home right away.

Instead she did physical therapy for two hours per day with Becky McMillan and occupational therapy with Kelsey Sherry and Amy Groves. When not in rehab, Willow kept busy by making bracelets, which many staff members still wore as they came into the Alan & Susan Collette Activity Room on her last day to wish her well. She also played a lot of Yatzee with Cindy Janousek and other nurses. Willow's hands still feel tingly and tight, but these activities have helped her regain movement, especially on the day they played Yatzee on the rooftop patio and saw a spider. Then there was quite a bit of movement, they all joked.

"Willow has great determination," Janousek noted on Willow's last day at UMC.

"I just appreciate everything they have done for me," Willow said.

Willow is now staying at her mom's house near Oslo, Minn., while she continues her outpatient rehabilitation at UMC.

"Through it all, I never saw her frustrated," said UMC Patient Support Coordinator Karen Maendel.

A benefit was held for her at the VFW in East Grand Forks, Minn., on April 20, which several UMC staff members attended and UMC supported.



Willow Aure, front center, celebrated her last day on the patient floor with several UMC staff

### **Luncheon:**

Continued from page 1 -

After the program, guests were invited to visit the cafeteria to see the expansion project or view the artwork that is being hung throughout UMC's halls. Some guests opted to learn more about UMC's swing-bed program as well.



Wally DeSautel thanks Alan O'Neil for his service to UMC.



Bremer's Trina Papenfuss and Sally Ostenrude dish up Beth's Home Cookin'.

### Top 20 Donors of 2023

- Altru Health System
- Bremer Bank
- Dr. Michael & Patti Bittles
- Bob & Laura Blomquist
- Choice Bank
- Russell & Kellie Carignan
- Terry & Julie Demester
- Wally DeSautel
- First United Bank
- Lynn Ebert\*
- Richard & Susie Geiger

- Dan & Monica Gorder
- Roger & Morna Gorder
- Ryan & Megan Hanson
- Monty & Kari Novak
- Alan & Mary Jane O'Neil
- Brad & Nadine Schanilec
- Shirley Suda
- Bill & Jody Tibert
- Dean & Bonnie Yantes

### **Executive Director UPDATE**

During tax season earlier this year, I had a chance to ask a few Unity Medical Center Foundation donors if they were familiar with the North Dakota Tax Credit for charitable giving.



Most said no, so I thought it would be a good idea to explain it further in my column. It's a great benefit for anyone who itemizes their charitable contributions on their tax forms.

Since the state Legislature signed it into law in 2011, individuals in North Dakota are eligible for a 40 percent state tax credit if they make a charitable gift of \$5,000-\$25,000 to a qualified endowment. Couples filing jointly would qualify for gifts of \$5,000-\$50,000. For example, if I gave \$5,000 to a UMCF qualified endowment, I would receive a \$2,000 tax credit from the state of North Dakota. The credit can be carried over for three additional tax years.

Businesses, estates, trusts and financial institutions may also benefit from the state tax credit. In their case, there is no minimum gift amount to qualify for the 40 percent credit, but the maximum credit is \$10,000.

UMCF benefits from one qualified endowment: the Lynn D Ebert Memorial Fund for Unity Medical Center Grafton, held by the North Dakota Community Foundation. Any gifts given to this fund would qualify for the state tax credit.

Keep in mind that donors are also eligible for a federal tax deduction for charitable giving, which varies by tax bracket. This would apply to the \$5,000 gift example mentioned above as well. So if you are in a 32 percent tax bracket, you may also receive a \$960 federal tax deduction on that \$5,000 gift, in addition to the \$2,000 state tax credit. So you give \$5,000 and get \$2,960 back. The \$5,000 gift only "costs" \$2,040.

You can read more about this tax credit at www.ndcf.net/give/taxcredit. html. Please consult your tax advisor

if you have questions about this.

On a separate note, I want to welcome our community's snowbirds back to North Dakota! Deb and I have been trying to meet with as many of you as we can to provide an update on the clinic and cafeteria expansion, as well as the pediatric therapy wall mural (see Page 7). The growth at UMC is truly amazing to see, and it gives us a lot to do in the Foundation office as we spread the word.

Lastly, Deb and I traveled to Bismarck at the end of May to attend the North Dakota Association of Nonprofit Organizations annual leadership conference. I attended this conference two years ago and found it very helpful for fundraising, finance and strategic planning. While there, Deb and I also reached out to about a dozen donors who live in that area and tried to meet with as many of them as we could. We appreciate everyone who took the time to welcome us to their community!

Jessica Sobolik Executive Director Unity Medical Center Foundation



34th Annual
Unity Medical Center Foundation

# GOLF TOURNAMENT

For a new table for UMC's daVinci surgical robot

Thursday, July 11, 2024 Fair Oaks Golf Course Grafton, ND



**Sponsor** 



Register

### Provider Spotlight: Dr. Mark Sczepanski

Dr. Mark Sczepanski, ophthalmologist from the North Dakota Eye Clinic, offers cataract surgeries on the third and fourth Wednesday of each month at Unity Medical Center. He is board-certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology and has performed thousands of cataract and LASIK procedures over the past two decades.



UMC's surgery staff had been planning for Dr. Sczepanski's arrival for several months and spent time training with his staff at the North Dakota Surgery Center.

"We are beyond excited for Dr. Sczepanski to offer his services at UMC," said UMC Surgery Manager Kristen Pastorek. "He will be a great asset to our growing surgery center. Patients from the surrounding area will be able to receive their care close to home."

Dr. Sczepanski is a native of Stephen, Minn., and earned degrees from the UND School of Medicine &



Health Sciences and NDSU's College of Pharmacy. He was awarded best teacher while at the University of Minnesota Department of Ophthalmology for his residency. He is a member of Alpha Omega Alpha, the nation's only medical honor society. Dr. Sczepanski is also a clinical instructor with the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences.

### Nurse Morgan Ellingson wins Daisy Award

During National Nurses Week on May 6-12, 2024, Unity Medical Center staff presented the DAISY Award to UMC Registered Nurse Morgan Ellingson at a celebratory breakfast serving the DAISY staple, cinnamon rolls. She also received a pin and a hand-carved sculpture titled A Healer's Touch.

The DAISY (Diseases Attacking the Immune System) Award honors and celebrates internationally the skillful. compassionate care that nurses provide every day. It was established by the family of J. Patrick Barnes after he died from complications of an auto-immune disease in 1999. During his hospitalization, they deeply appreciated the care and compassion shown to Patrick and his family. When he died, they felt compelled to say thank you to nurses in a public way and

encourage others to say thank you by sharing their stories of how a nurse made a difference they will never forget.

The person who nominated Morgan wrote: "She was my nurse in ER. When I came in with painful back spasms, she was just a sweetheart. Very pleasant and caring. [She gave] excellent care and kept me informed as to what was to be done next. She is also very professional, knowledgeable and caring. It doesn't get any better than that!"

Cinnamon rolls were a favorite of Patrick's during his illness, when his sense of taste didn't care for much else. The Barnes family asks that whenever and wherever nurses smell that cinnamon aroma, they stop for a moment and think about how special they are.



# UMC staff milestones recognized at Employee Banquet

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

Two staff members celebrated 15 years of service at UMC: Helen Johnston of Health Information Services and Nurse Mandy Hanson.

Two staff members celebrated 10 years of service: Grafton and Park River Family Clinic Manager Kari Novak and Controller Nicole Hefta.

Seven staff members celebrated 10 years of service: RN Lisangela Garza, Cook Lisa Gudajtes, Carrie Satterlund of Health Information Services, Pharmacy Tech Samantha Poitra and Pharmacist Jeff Zak, ER Nurse Amy Grindahl and ER Provider Jodie Sherve.



Left to right: Lisangela Garza, Lisa Gudajtes, Carrie Satterlund and Samantha Poitra



Helen Johnston



Left to right: Kari Novak and Nicole Hefta



OT Kelsey Sherry tests students' grip strength.

# Scrubs Camp provides freshmen with new health care experiences

Unity Medical Center hosted its 4th Annual Scrubs Camp on March 20 and 27. More than 100 ninth-grade students from Drayton, Fordville-Lankin, Grafton, Midway and Minto spent their school day at the hospital attending 11 different 20-minute classes on various health care careers. Three new classes were added this year: dental hygiene presented by Janice Kern from Kern Family Dentistry, occupational therapy presented by UMC Occupational Therapists Amy Groves and Kelsey Sherry, and speech therapy presented by UMC Speech Language Pathologist Hannah Laxdal.

This year's students also got to try out the new da Vinci Surgical System (surgery robot). The surgery team had a skeleton "patient" set up on the operating table with little plastic pieces in the chest cavity. The students used the computer console to maneuver the robotic arms and attempt to pick up the little pieces reminiscent of the childhood "Operation" game.

The occupational therapists had students test out their hand strength with a dynamometer and attempt to put various articles of clothing on using dressing aids while pretending they couldn't bend their leg or use one of their arms. The speech therapy session had students adding a thickener to juice to see how it changed their swallowing, and the dental hygienist had students sit behind a mouth/teeth model to see what it's like to clean teeth.

Another favorite activity was finding out their blood type in the lab using a simple finger prick.

## HARVEST AUCTION

ONLINE SILENT AUCTION +
LIVE IN-PERSON EVENT

SAVE THE DATE:
NOVEMBER 8, 2024
MINTO COMMUNITY CENTER

114 HARVEY AVE, MINTO, ND MORE INFORMATION TO COME!

### UMC Rehab staff expand pediatric therapy services

When Unity Medical Center's physical therapy staff moved into the new hospital addition in 2021, they initially planned to have a room dedicated to pediatric therapy there. But they quickly realized that the new space was too small for kids.

"Kids need more space," said Physical Therapy Assistant MacKenzie Paulson. "So we thought about our old space, which was being used for storage, and we dreamed of a fun pediatric gym there."

UMC Grant Writer Karen Bigwood helped obtain grant funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Independent Pilots Association (IPA). The IPA grant in particular helped UMC purchase bigger equipment so that staff could start providing pediatric therapy in the old physical therapy space right away.



At that time, UMC was still contracting with Altru Health System for an occupational therapist and speech therapist. As patient volumes continued to grow, UMC hired its contract staff from Altru, including OTs Amy Groves and Kelsey Sherry, and speech language pathologist Hannah Laxdal.

"Since they have been hired, OT has seen more than 40 patients, and speech has seen more than 20 patients," Paulson said. "They get new referrals all the time. And the pediatric program isn't just six weeks. It could be years. There is not a lot of turnover."

The Grafton chapter of Kiwanis International has also committed funding that will go toward renovating the old physical therapy space by turning three small treatment rooms into the gym that staff envisioned. UMC is currently waiting to hear if Kiwanis International will provide equipment up to \$8,000 for the gym as well. "We're excited to get that rolling," Paulson said.

In May, the local Kiwanis club sponsored a Pediatric Screening Night for kids ages 0-5 years old in Grafton. UMC OTs screened eight children and made seven referrals for additional therapy. UMC's speech therapist screened 12 kids and made referrals for 11. The event will continue to be held annually with Kiwanis support.



The IPA has also provided funding for continuing education that will send Laxdal to sensory training for kids with food aversions, and for UMC OTs to attend three different sensory-based trainings, as well as equipment that goes with those trainings.

Work has already begun to make the space more kid-friendly with the commission of a mural in the long hallway that connects the new hospital addition to the second-floor of the old hospital building, leading to the old PT space. Melodie Alt has begun painting, and the UMC Foundation provided the funding for it. As children "graduate" from therapy, they will add a wooden star to the mural with their names on them.

"The kids have already seen the mural," Paulson said. "They are pointing out the spaceships and the stars as they walk through. They are excited about it already."

# Clinic, cafeteria expansion progresses

The Grafton Family Clinic expansion project is moving along smoothly. As of May 20, the roof insulation and membrane had been applied, the majority of the concrete pours had been completed, and most of the interior spaces are framed out. The in-ground plumbing is done, and the interior plumbing will be installed in stages. This expansion will add 6,000 square feet, including seven additional treatment rooms for the UMC providers and a second floor dedicated to the outreach providers.

The concrete work on the cafeteria expansion has been completed and the roof insulation and membrane has been applied. In early June, the outside wall of the current space was set to be opened up to the new addition, and a barrier will be in place while work is being done in the new space. In mid-June, while the new ceiling tiles and flooring are being installed, limited dining services will be available.



This space, where the clinic expansion attaches to the back of the existing Grafton Family Clinic, includes the elevator shaft and a nurses station to the right.



Kydyn Pastorek



Sarah Burns

### **UMCF** awards scholarships

The Unity Medical Center Foundation board awarded two scholarships for the 2024-'25 academic year.

The scholarships were given to Sarah Burns, who is pursuing a master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of North Dakota, and Kydyn Pastorek, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, also from UND. Both currently work at UMC.

Donors who designate gifts toward providers and staff helped to provide these scholarships.



## **ECRWSS** POSTAL CUSTOMER

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Memorials and Thank You To Donors (Feb. 16, 2024-May 24, 2024)
The Unity Medical Center Foundation would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the donors who have donated to UMCF over the past years.

It is because of donors like you that UMCF can continue to focus on their mission of supporting Unity Medical Center and improving patient experiences. Every effort is made to include all names accurately. Please notify UMCF if you discover any errors or omissions.

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### Foundation Mission

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

### Philanthropic Priorities

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



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