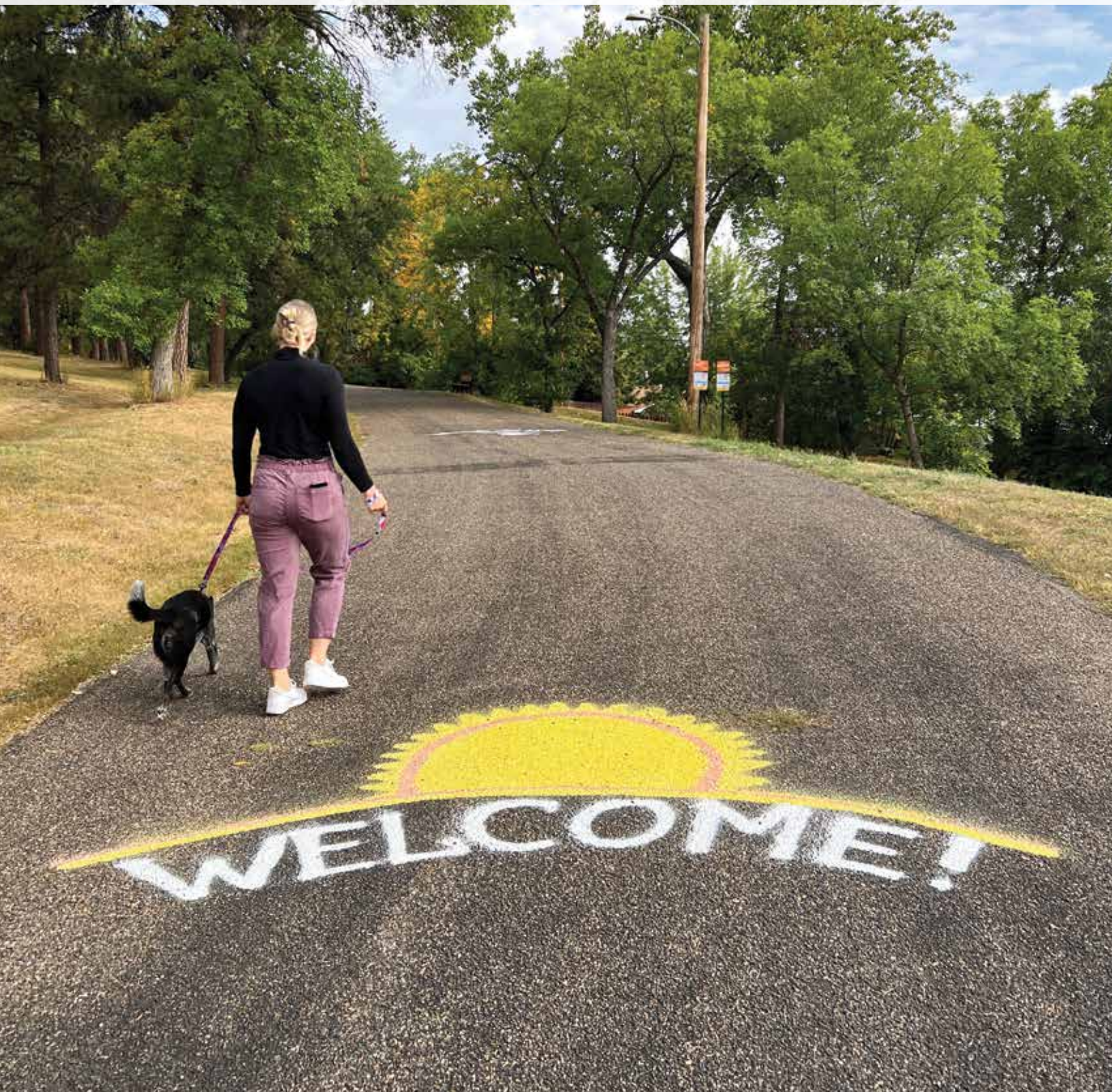


# FOCUS

The Official Publication of the North Dakota Recreation and Park Association

Fall 2023





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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer is officially over, and fall has begun. The outdoor pools have been drained, the ice is going in and we are getting ready for the start of fall programs. This is my favorite time of the year. Days are getting shorter, and the weather is getting cooler, but that should not stop us from taking advantage of the many great parks and trails we have in our communities.



Last week, I took my twin granddaughters, Layla and Ceceila, to a newly renovated park close to our house. The weather was cool and breezy, and the girls had their winter jackets on and hoods up, but they had a blast. It made me think that we all need to take some time and recreate like we did when we were growing up. Take advantage of the trails, bike paths and the last few rounds of golf. We need to make that time for ourselves and take a step back and enjoy the last few days before the snow falls and we have to move indoors for a few months.

Throughout the state, we have great indoor facilities to take advantage of during those months we cannot get outside. Many of us have incorporated the exploding sport of pickleball into our facilities, whether we use tennis courts or gyms, this activity is contagious. I remember playing pickleball in physical education but have yet to give it a try since. This is one of my goals this winter, to pick up a racquet and relive the glory days of phy ed. So, our job will be to continue to promote these indoor facilities and indoor programs we offer and keep the individuals in our community recreating.

That reminds me of how important what we do really is and how people really do not know what we do. Last month, I was at a local college job fair, and I was amazed by the number of times I was asked what we do. After trying to explain the many things we offer from programs to facilities to park maintenance and to the many partnerships we have with clubs and groups in our community, I just started to say we play. We are all having a hard time finding people to work in our facilities and help coach or officiate our leagues, but I feel somehow, we need

to tell our story of what we do and have to offer in our communities. I am not sure how we do that and would welcome any suggestions, but if we can get our story out there of the many great things we do and have to offer, maybe many of our part-time and even full-time positions would get filled.

I would like to echo the many comments I heard in Grand Forks on what a great job the Grand Forks Park District did with the NDRPA State Conference and congratulations to this year's award winners and to the newest Hall of Fame inductee. It was rewarding to hear about the many great programs and individuals and the dedication they have to our profession.

Just a few dates to keep in mind. NDRPA membership renewals will be sent out in November, and CPSI is scheduled for March 19-21 in Bismarck at the Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center.

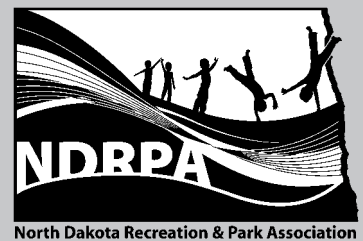
Thank you for your hard work and hours spent away from family and friends providing the many recreational opportunities to individuals in our communities. Remember to take the time for yourself and family and recreate like we did when we were growing up.

From the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District and the Wald family, we hope you have a safe, happy and healthy holiday season!

**Mike Wald, NDRPA President**

## Mission

Advancing parks, recreation and conservation for an enhanced quality of life in North Dakota.



## Strategic Goals

1. Member Services: Provide training, information and networking for parks and recreation stakeholders.
2. Policy Advocacy: Represent parks and recreation interests on public policy issues.
3. Public Outreach: Promote the benefits of parks and recreation and the importance of conservation, health and wellness, and access.

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**Next *FOCUS* deadline:** Jan. 15, 2024

Cover photo: Rocky Butte Park, Dickinson Parks and Recreation

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## New Leadership Elected to Board of Directors

Bismarck Parks and Recreation District Facilities and Programs Director Mike Wald is the new NDRPA president, succeeding Mike Orr, whose term ended in September. Orr remains on the board as past president and Joe Barsh of the Williston Parks and Recreation District is the new president-elect.

Other board members remain in their current roles for the coming year: Ashley Martinson, Valley City Parks and Recreation, is secretary-treasurer; Cole Higlin, Mandan Park District, is public policy chair; Amy Walters, Jamestown Parks and Recreation, is education chair; and Dylan Thiem, Bismarck Parks and Recreation District, is the engagement chair.

New leaders began their service on the NDRPA board of directors at the September annual meeting in Grand Forks. Board contact information and a list of committee members can be found at [www.ndrpa.com](http://www.ndrpa.com).



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**JAN. 15, 2024**

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**MARCH 19-21, 2024**

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# COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

## Kerry Waldo – Ellendale Park Board President

Serving in a park district role in a small town is a balancing act. Kerry Waldo of Ellendale found out just how precarious that balance is when she helped take on what is known locally as the “Saddle Mates” project just before joining the park board in her hometown.

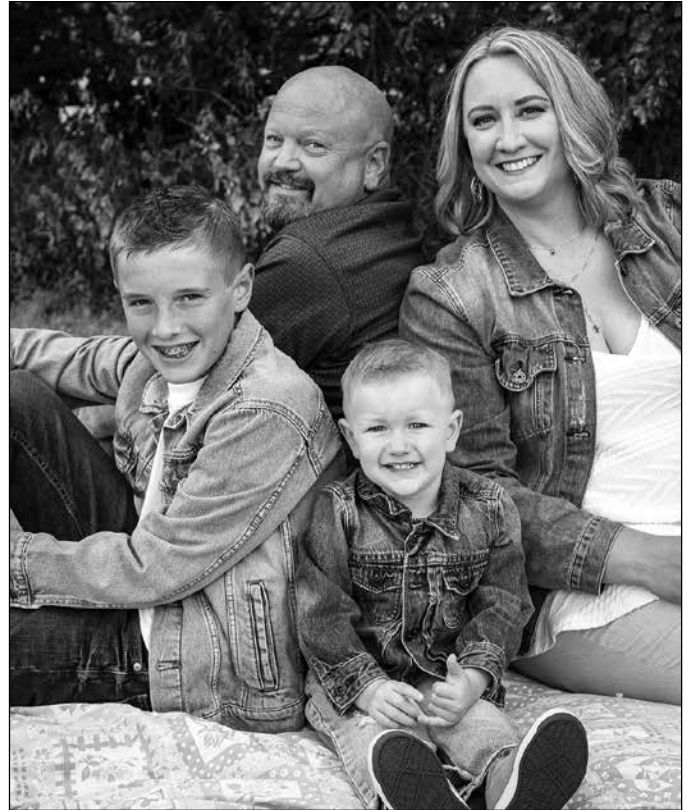
Saddle mates, those springy animal-shaped riding apparatuses found in parks, needed replacing after nearly 70 years in the city park. Simple enough, right? “Easier said than done,” said Waldo, who is now the town’s park board president. “It took us a few years to complete the project. It was not a financial issue but homing in on other resources.”

A project that began in 2015 and included a lot of volunteer hours, COVID delays, and the help of experts at a local steel plant and autobody shop, was completed in 2021 to “big cheers from many families,” Waldo said. “Those of us who grew up here had very particular memories and favorites. Former retired residents had kept up with the story and submitted pictures from when they were young, as well as name suggestions during the naming contest.”

Today, Pepto (pig), Turbo (turtle), Moo-Ella (cow), Quack Sparrow (duck), Buttercup (bunny), and Gilbert (rooster) thrill young kids just as they had their parents and grandparents. Waldo said that is one of the pleasures of serving on a small, hometown park board.

The Waldos moved to her hometown in 2014 to be closer to family. They spent as many hours as possible at the pool, in the parks and playing recreation baseball and soccer. “When you live in a small town, you are asked to run for various committees or boards, volunteer at church, coach ... just to make the town run smoothly,” said Waldo, who also works for the Dickey County Health District, coaches elementary volleyball and high school track and owns a small screen-printing operation. “I knew to pick one that would be fun serving on, and our family has always had a vested interest in taking care of our park system.”

Waldo was first elected to the park board in 2016,



Kerry Waldo, husband, Scott, and sons, DJ and Andrew.

re-elected in 2020 and elected president in 2022. Her goals are simple, given the financial situations common to nearly all small-town park districts. “To maintain and add to our park services as we are able with the resources we can gather,” Waldo explained. “(To) pursue grants and other funding sources to accomplish this.”

Specifically, Waldo is focused on upgrading the ice rink, adding a splash park and completing a walking trail that will someday link all three of Ellendale’s city parks. In the long term, the board hopes to secure funding to give its citizens a place to gather, walk, play, and stay warm through the long winter months.

Pool operations alone take between \$90,000 and \$110,000, or half of the annual budget, Waldo noted.

“We are a small town with a small tax base. Subtract payroll and mandatory maintenance, that leaves us with very little to play with each year. But we do our best to balance that with attractive programming and being a good community partner. We save up and try to do something big every few years.”



Waldo said she reads in *FOCUS* what other districts are doing and looks for any best practices that could be implemented in Ellendale. "You never know when the right information will land in the right hands. It's crucial to have a hub to organize that for us so we are not reinventing the wheel. That said, it is only valuable to us if we take advantage of the system," Waldo said.

During her time on the park board, Ellendale has added a dog park (thanks to fundraising by the Lions Club), installed a vinyl pool liner that should add decades of life to the pool built in 1986, rebuilt the kiddie pool with zero entry and water features, and added pickleball courts. It is currently working on converting the standalone ice rink into a more complete winter park with sledding hills and a permanent warming house.

Parks remains a family affair for the Waldos. Her son, DJ, is a lifeguard at the pool and plans to become WSI certified for next season. Her husband, Scott, is the pool operator and does other maintenance. Her youngest son, four-year-old Andrew, is always down for a trip to the kiddie pool or park, and soccer and T-ball are right around the corner.



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## Walt Stack Umpires' Headquarters Dedicated in Bismarck

Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) dedicated the Walt Stack Umpires' Headquarters, the Stack Shack, at Cottonwood Park Softball Complex on Aug. 18. The building will provide a dedicated space for umpires during softball tournaments held at Cottonwood Park.

The project was made possible through the generosity of donors from the softball community, family and friends across the country who contributed to the Step into the Batter's Box Capital Campaign through the Bismarck Recreation Council. The \$183,073 project was completed with support from 226 donors, along with a BPRD matching grant.

The Stack Shack is a fitting



permanent memorial to Walt Stack, who began his umpiring career in 1959. In 60 years as a leader in Bismarck softball, Stack served as the Bismarck umpire-in-chief, North Dakota umpire-in-chief and as a representative on the national umpires' staff. A man of many accomplishments

and accolades, Stack died in May 2021. He left an enduring legacy of service to family, friends, community, and the sport of softball he loved so much. Stack's lifetime presence positively influenced softball experiences for players, spectators and the hundreds of umpires he mentored.



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## Devils Lake Tabs Nybo as Park Superintendent

NDRPA Hall-of-Famer Dennis Nybo is the new parks superintendent in Devils Lake. Nybo assumed the new position on Oct. 16.

"I'm pretty excited," Nybo said. "The staff here is great. I've worked with them and continue to hopefully have a great relationship with them."

The former New Rockford Parks and Recreation director is a 34-year parks and recreation veteran who had served in New Rockford since leaving the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District in 2019. Nybo was inducted into the NDRPA Hall of Fame in 2021.

Nybo earned a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation administration from the University of North Dakota in 1988 and previously worked for Rolling Meadows Park District in Illinois, Bismarck Parks and Recreation District and Devils Lake Park District. He is a certified park and recreation professional and a certified pool operator. Nybo has been actively involved in many sports associations, including Prairie Rose State Games, North Dakota Amateur Basketball, National ASA Softball, North Dakota Amateur Hockey Association, and USA National Hockey.

He has received the Outstanding Local Program/Volunteer Award from the National Hershey's Track and Field Program. Nybo has served, and continues to serve, on numerous committees and has held several leadership roles with NDRPA, including Sports Committee chair, *FOCUS* editor and NDRPA president. In 2003, NDRPA recognized him with the Fellow Award, now known as the Distinguished Professional Award.



Dennis Nybo

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## Adaptive Programs Meet Williston Parks



In spring 2023, Williston Parks and Recreation District (WPRD) added adaptive recreational programs after being approached by Rick and Heidi Guetzkow. In 2018, their daughter, Victoria, inspired them to create the Williston Wonders (Wonders), a group of individuals with special needs of all ages that come together to enrich their lives socially and physically through recreational activities. The program gained traction, but the Guetzkows felt like they had reached everyone they could and needed help reaching more special needs families. They presented an idea to Amanda Nelson, recreational manager at WPRD, and Brooklyn Douglas, recreation coordinator.

Together, they worked to bring the Wonders to WPRD, ensuring the vision of a supportive environment for individuals with special needs of all ages to interact socially, try new experiences and be physically active. Wonders is about getting rid of rules and norms and just having fun. Mostly, it provides affordable and easily accessible programs for everyone.

Wonders kicked off on May 8 with a kickball game between the group and a current WPRD program, Girls Run Strong, which presented a donation of \$2,714.43 to help expand their program and buy more adaptive equipment.

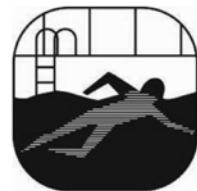
T-ball season started shortly after and was welcomed by many of the Wonders, especially Jonathon Mitchell, who has been with the Wonders since it began in 2018. That was followed by cornhole, which some participants had never played before. When the cornhole season ended on July 31, the community came together for a dinner and tournament. The local American Legion provided

food and ASK Transportation prepared the meal. More than \$5,000 was raised through free-will donations and numerous businesses sponsorships.

"It's awesome that all these people got to come out and help us raise money for the Williston Wonders. We are having so much fun," Victoria Guetzkow said.

Fall has not slowed the Wonders, who had their first track meet Oct. 16. It truly is amazing to watch this group of individuals accept and conquer new tasks without fear. Next up will be basketball, a favorite of Wonders original member Payge Johnson.

Moving into the new year, the Wonders program will not slow down, and WPRD will continue to work diligently to reach all families that can benefit from the Wonders program. WPRD's mission, regarding the Wonders, is to always provide affordable recreational activities to all, regardless of age or ability, and ensure the number one goal of the Wonders is never lost: "Let's get out there and have some fun!"



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## New Turf at Dakota Community Bank & Trust Ballpark in Dickinson

In September, Dickinson Parks and Recreation replaced the artificial turf infield at Dakota Community Bank and Trust (DCBT) Ballpark. The bid was awarded to Sprinturf LLC in February 2023 to replace the turf, which was originally installed in spring 2012. Sprinturf subcontracted with Cordova Construction locally for the subgrade work, and the entire project took approximately 40 days.

As part of the project, the turf was expanded to include additional areas in foul territory on the first- and third-base lines and an additional eight feet into the outfield. The project also included installing replaceable Velcro panels for the batter's boxes, catcher's box, pitching mound, first base, and second-base slide area. These additional improvements will make it much easier for the park's staff to maintain the field. Funding for the project was provided by Dickinson Parks and Recreation, Dakota Community Bank and Trust, Dickinson State University, and Dickinson Baseball Club. DCBT Ballpark is the home venue for Badlands Big Sticks, Dickinson State University Baseball, Dickinson High School Baseball, and Dickinson Baseball Club. Dickinson Parks and Recreation looks forward to the field serving the needs of the community for many years to come.



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## A Splash of Recreation: Sheyenne RiverFest

Sheyenne RiverFest is one of Valley City Parks and Recreation's newest summer events. Held in August, RiverFest features more than 170 kayakers from all over the Midwest, weaving together nature, recreation and a profound sense of community.

Originally hosted by a committee of area partners, including the Sheyenne River Water Trail, Fort Ransom State Park, Valley City National Fish Hatchery, the City of Valley City, Valley City Fire Department, and passionate community members, the event was handed over to Valley City Parks and Recreation to plan, oversee and execute while still utilizing the entire committee to expand into something even bigger than before.

Sheyenne RiverFest 2023 festivities began with a scenic cruise down the Sheyenne River Valley National Scenic Byway hosted by the Bridge City Cruisers car club on Friday, Aug. 4. Saturday featured a craft and vendor show at the Rec Center gym in Valley City with food trucks and 30 registered vendors. While unpredictable weather delayed the kayak launch from Saturday until Sunday morning, it did little to dampen the spirits of the record-breaking 199 registered kayakers and more than 170 resilient paddlers embracing the postponed adventure.

The kaleidoscope of kayaks painting the river in a spectrum of colors journeyed from the National Fish Hatchery south to Chautauqua Park in Valley City, passing beneath the iconic Hi-Line Bridge. Not only



did this event bring visitors and residents together to enjoy the benefits of outdoor recreation, but it also brought in many spectators to see the wave of colors created by the kayakers. Community members added entertainment along the way, including a gentle riverside serenade by a local guitarist and singer.

Sheyenne RiverFest is poised to become one of Valley City's biggest events. It serves as an example of the transformative power of collaboration, community engagement and the willingness to undertake ambitious projects. In doing so, Sheyenne RiverFest becomes a catalyst for community vitality, enhancing retention rates and elevating the overall quality of life in Valley City.

A black and white photograph of a golf course. The image shows a large green with a sand trap in the foreground. The golf course is surrounded by trees and foliage. The text "NORBY GOLF COURSE DESIGN" is overlaid on the image in a large, bold, serif font. Below the image, there is contact information for Norby Golf Course Design.

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## Thinking Outside the Box in Bowman

Two years ago, the Bowman Parks and Recreation board saw an opportunity to turn an empty 25,375-square-foot box store into an amazing activity complex for the community and surrounding region. That day, Shopko was destined to become The Edge – Bowman County Activity Complex.

It all started with a plan to expand to the current Rouzie Recreation Center, which consisted of the 80-year-old high school gym with a stage, band room converted to a weight room, small cardio room and bath house, and an outdoor pool built in 1985. An architect in 2021 estimated the cost to be approximately \$250 per square foot, or \$1.7 million.



At a city commission meeting in August 2021, a commissioner raised a question: “Have you thought about the Shopko building?” It was sitting empty on the edge of town. The reply was no, as the last time the board checked, it was well over \$1 million and would not fit within the budget constraints for renovation.

The following day, the commission learned the Shopko price had dropped, and by the next meeting, the board had chosen to pursue the purchase of the Shopko building with a purchase price of \$35 per square foot.

Thinking outside the big box store, the board maximized the space and imagined what activities could be done in that building. The initial vision was realized and The Edge – Bowman County Activity

Complex opened in January. The Edge Complex contains:

- 5,600-square-foot walking path – 9.5 laps = 1 mile
- 2,150-square-foot studio with a sound wall to divide the room in half
- 2,400-square-foot multipurpose court for volleyball, basketball, pickleball, and games
- 800-square-foot racquetball court
- 2,400-square-foot cardio/weight room
- 640-square-foot, two-story indoor playground
- 500-square-foot ninja course
- 500-square-foot climbing wall and spinning obstacle
- 1,760-square-foot parkour trampolines
- 1,400-square-foot dodgeball trampolines
- Two 600-square-foot party/meeting rooms
- Kitchen/concession room
- Lobby and reception area
- Four offices
- Two maintenance areas
- Two second-floor storage areas

The project started with a \$600,000 budget. When initial bids came in at least double what was estimated due to the crazy economy, the staff and board sought more funding. The Bowman County Commission understood the project would benefit the community and the county and gifted \$300,000. The city of Bowman, which had supported an earlier add-on to the Rouzie, committed \$50,000 per year for seven years for a total of \$350,000.

To cover the remaining shortfall for the \$2.4 million project, Parks Director Chanell Walby launched a sponsorship campaign. Businesses were sent a letter outlining the project and Walby and board members contacted businesses to set up tours and visit about the project. The campaign raised \$200,000.

The final piece was a seven-year, \$1.7 million bond, which Bowman is paying off through a one-cent sales tax passed in 2018 with a sunset of 2028. Careful planning and community buy-in were keys to getting the sales tax approved by the public. The tax historically collects a little over \$300,000 per year. The one-cent tax revenue is to be used by Bowman Parks and Recreation for capital improvements and



maintenance. About 75 percent of the one-cent sales tax pays for the bond with the remaining 25 percent being used for other improvement projects. The bond will be paid off by the end of the 10-year sunset.

Thinking outside the box has opened endless possibilities. Walby's vision of seniors using exercise equipment, eating a nutritious meal and listening to children playing; families playing pickleball, racquetball and shooting baskets; and parents walking or working out while their children were jumping on the trampolines came to fruition in just 15 months.

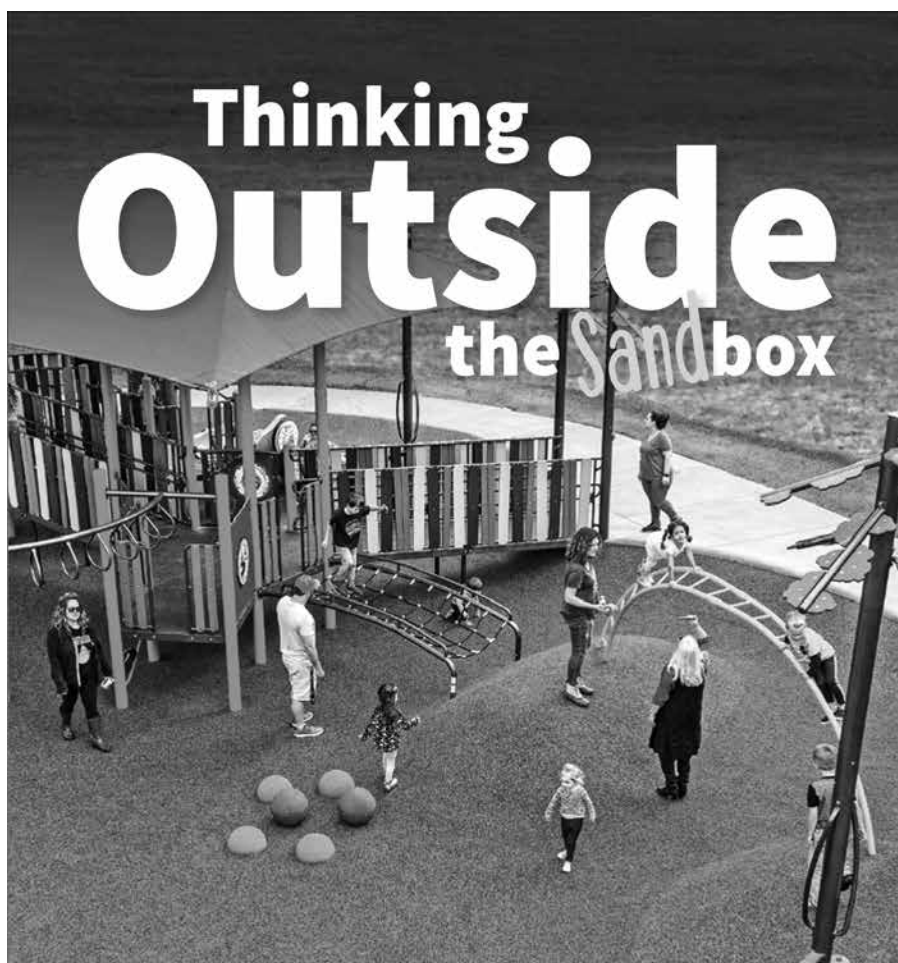
When the opportunity came to take an empty building and turn it into an attraction and healthy space, the Bowman Park and Recreation board literally opened the door to bring more people



and businesses to the region to satisfy the 100-mile radius for birthday parties, special events and year-round fitness. Bowman is an affordable place to live and raise a family. The oil industry is close, there are strong family farming and ranching businesses, good healthcare, a vibrant faith community, an active economic development and chamber of commerce, and a main street and Highway 12 corridor that are flourishing.

The Edge is holding its own financially without charging big-city prices. Discounts are available and seniors 60 and over are free. The board has hired a third full-time staff member, Josie Smyle, as the customer experience manager in charge of hiring, training, scheduling the facility, and marketing for the district.

The next time you are planning a trip, include Bowman and The Edge in your plans.



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# 2023 NDRPA Awards Highlights

Through its annual awards program, the NDRPA recognizes member individuals and organizations who, in the past year, went above and beyond to deliver exceptional programming to the public. In addition, deserving members are considered for the association's Hall of Fame and scholarship program.

This year, awards went to Bismarck Parks and Recreation Facilities Manager Dylan Thiem (Outstanding Young Professional); Mandan's Dale Pahlke Rodeo Arena (Golden Egg); West Fargo Park District's SAIL Program (Innovative Programming); and Bismarck Public Schools and the City of Bismarck for the Local Food Program (Partnership).

Karen Assel of Bismarck was inducted into the NDRPA Hall of Fame, while Amy Walters of Jamestown and Randi Litchey of Fargo were given Dr. LaVernia Jorgensen Memorial Professional Development Scholarship awards.

Awards were presented at the state conference in September in Grand Forks. A brief snapshot of award winners follows. Detailed stories will follow in subsequent *FOCUS* magazines.

## OUTSTANDING YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD



Outstanding Young Professional Award  
*Dylan Thiem,  
Bismarck Parks and Recreation District  
facilities manager*

## GOLDEN EGG AWARD



Dale Pahlke Rodeo  
Arena at Dakota  
Centennial Park  
*Cole Higlin,  
Mandan Parks and  
Recreation director*

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING AWARD



West Fargo  
Park District's  
Stay Active and  
Independent for  
Life (SAIL) Program  
*Left to right:  
Allison Hauschild,  
West Fargo Park  
District recreation  
specialist, and  
Lance Belisle, West  
Fargo Park District  
recreation manager*

## PARTNERSHIP AWARD



Bismarck Public  
Schools and City  
of Bismarck Local  
Food Program  
*RaNae Jochim,  
Bismarck Parks  
and Recreation  
District recreation  
manager*

# HALL OF FAME

Karen Assel of Bismarck became the 28th member inducted into the NDRPA Hall of Fame. She was honored for her many years of service during the awards banquet at the NDRPA annual conference in Grand Forks in September.

Karen joined NDRPA as a student member at the University of North Dakota (UND) in 1979 and as a professional and allied organizational member with the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department in 1980. She then served 38 years with the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department, including terms as the NDRPA Membership Committee chair and an officer on the board from 1983 to 1984.

Karen was active on several annual NDRPA Conference committees, including the Therapeutic Recreation Conference Committee, Awards Committee and State Hershey Track and Field Meet Committee. She also was instrumental in collaborating with NDRPA on the Prairie Rose State Games during its 25-year run. In the meantime, she served as a liaison to NDRPA to support continued funding and eligibility for the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program.

Her impact also extended beyond state recreation and parks. She was involved with the National Recreation and Park Association, National Association of Resource Planners, National Congress of State Games, Rocky Mountain State Park Executives, Reservation Program Managers Organization, Bismarck Cancer Center, Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation, Great American Bike Race Organizing Committee, Dorothy Moses Elementary PTO, and Bismarck High School Advisory Board.

During her career, Karen received the NDRPA Award of Excellence for recognition of outstanding leadership; NDRPA Touch of Excellence Award for Hershey Track and Field Meet coordination; North Dakota Young Career Woman award; North Dakota Federation of Business and Professional Women award; Jack Brown Award of Excellence as part of the Prairie Rose State Games Board; and the Cal Renner Award of Excellence, the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department's highest honor.

Prior to launching her parks and recreation career, Karen studied outdoor recreation at the University of Idaho through the National Student Exchange



Program in 1978-79. She earned a bachelor of science in health, physical education and recreation with an emphasis in park administration, from UND in 1980.

"I've known Karen since she entered the field in 1980 with North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department," former Bismarck Parks and Recreation District Director Randy Bina said. "I was able to work with Karen on multiple projects, programs and committees with NDRPA, Prairie Rose State Games and North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department.

She was a true professional who enjoyed and believed in the parks and recreation profession, working hard to provide recreational opportunities for our citizens and visitors. North Dakota is a better place because of Karen. Induction into the NDRPA Hall of Fame is meritorious. Congratulations!"

Former Williston Parks and Recreation Director Larry Grondahl shared, "I had the opportunity to work with Karen, not only through NDRPA, but also with the Recreation Club at UND. Her dedication, innovation and attention to detail were among many of her great qualities. She followed other women like Dr. Lavernia Jorgenson and Dr. Sandra Modisett as some of the truly great leaders in NDRPA, and I cannot think of anyone more deserving of the NDRPA Hall of Fame award."

Bismarck Parks and Recreation District Commissioner Mark Zimmerman worked with Karen for many years on the Prairie Rose State Games and also during his tenure as North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department director. "From the early years working with her as a board member and volunteer for the Prairie Rose State Games, I appreciated her commitment to the best program for all citizens who participated in the games. Karen was always there doing whatever needed to be done to make the annual statewide event a success," Zimmerman said. "Working alongside her at the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department, I witnessed her professionalism and passion for state parks in her interaction with staff and, most importantly, her interaction with the visitors to the parks and participants to the department's recreational programs. Karen was an integral part of the continued growth and improvement of North Dakota State Parks and Recreation over her years of service to citizens and visitors to our state."



# ND PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT UPDATE

## Introducing Pembina Gorge State Park

The Pembina Gorge State Recreation Area (PGSRA) will be developed into North Dakota's 14th state park with funding secured during the 2023 legislative session.

Development of the park will include underground utilities, roads, an approximately 35-site campground, six all-season, full-service cabins, a comfort station, shop, and seasonal staff accommodations at a cost of approximately \$8 million. Future development of the park may include a visitor center with indoor and outdoor learning areas and retail and office space. The 2023 Legislature approved \$6 million for the new park facilities. The additional \$2 million for the initial development came from a matching federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant.

"The Pembina Gorge is a pristine area that holds incredible promise," North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD) Director Cody Schulz said. "With more than 1.2 million people within a two-hour drive, the Pembina Gorge and this state park will spur additional tourism to the area. We are grateful to the legislature for this generational investment into the project. Our vision is to enhance and grow the area into an overnight destination property that draws visitors throughout all four seasons."

## Funding Awarded for New Trails and Outdoor Recreation

The NDPRD Recreational Trails Program (RTP) received 15 applications totaling \$2 million in project grant requests for the 2023 grant cycle. The RTP has allocated approximately \$1 million through the Federal Highway Administration. Recent projects selected for funding include:

- **Hunter/Arthur JPA – Northern Cass Pass Amenities (\$36,000)**

This project will enhance the three trailheads located on the multi-purpose pedestrian corridor by adding lighting for safety, informational kiosks and benches. Wayfinders and signage will be added along the entire six-mile trail. Interpretive signage will be constructed along the entire trail utilizing the observation of the surrounding natural resources.

- **City of Turtle-Lake – North Country Trail 4WD Brush Mowers (\$34,980)**

The City of Turtle Lake proposed to purchase three Orec four-wheel-drive riding brush mowers. This will enable volunteers to mow the North Country Trail efficiently.

- **Grafton Parks & Recreation – Leistikow Park Community Trails (\$67,973)**

Grafton Parks and Recreation plans to replace maintenance equipment for Leistikow Park Community Trails in Grafton. A Mattracks Track Kit, in addition to leasing a Tool Cat UW56, will allow staff to cross-county groom and maintain the trails year-round.

- **Bismarck Parks and Recreation District – Cross-Country Ski Grooming Equipment (\$181,122)**

Bismarck Parks and Recreation District plans to purchase winter cross-country ski grooming equipment to allow for additional miles of trail to be maintained for two new sites in north Bismarck.

- **North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD) – Snowmobile Trail Grooming Equipment (\$250,000)**

NDPRD, in partnership with Snowmobile North Dakota, plans to procure a Tucker groomer, groomer implements and snowmobile trail signs to assist with the grooming and maintenance of the 2,800 miles of statewide trail. They also plan to procure additional snow trail grooming equipment for local cross-country ski trails within the state.

- **Lincoln Park District – Moch Park Trail (\$41,284)**

A new gravel trail will be constructed connecting both Dolan Drive and 28th Ave SE to the existing Moch Park dog park.

- **Barnes County Park Board – North Country and Sheyenne River Water Trail Amenities (\$43,206)**

This project is for the replacement of a trailhead shelter along the North Country and Sheyenne River Water Trail within Clausen Springs Park.

- **Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa – Sky Chief Park Trails Bridge Linkage (\$171,658)**

The goal of this project is to provide more accessible trails at Sky Chief Park by linking the trails with newly constructed metal bridges and a floating dock.

- **Fargo Park District – Orchard Glen Park Trail Extension (\$237,875)**

Fargo Park District plans to extend two miles of the already existing Orchard Glen Trail to include

crushed gravel surfacing. Other goals of the project include signage and the placement of benches along the new portion of trail and the construction of a vault toilet and shelter facility.

- **Morton County – Valerie Entzel Memorial Park Trailside Facilities (\$35,929)**

This project will create safe access to an improved trailside facility on Lewis and Clark Trail (alongside Highway 1806) near Valerie Entzel Memorial Park in Mandan. This project will provide a place for off-highway parking. It will include a gravel road leading to a gravel lot to include handicapped parking, security lights, picnic shelter, picnic tables, trash receptacles, and park benches.

- **New Salem Park Board – New Salem Multiuse Path Renovation (\$20,000)**

This project will involve crack sealing and restoring 1.2 miles of the New Salem walking trail that features Salem Sue.

- **Williston Parks and Recreation – Little Muddy Trail (Project Alternate) (\$225,000)**

This project involves the repaving of approximately three miles of the Little Muddy trail to make the trail more accessible.

In addition to the Recreational Trails Program, NDRPD administers the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF). Recent projects selected for LWCF funding:

- **Spirit Lake Tribe – Parks and Recreational Support Building (\$288,875)**

This outdoor recreation support building will provide the Four Winds Community Lake Youth Sports organization with ADA-accessible bathroom facilities for usage at high school football games, track and field events, the summer youth baseball program, and other outdoor recreation.

- **Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa – Heritage Park (\$236,750)**

This project will support the development of a restroom/shower house, playground and campground for Heritage Park that is adjacent to the Heritage Center off Highway 281 in Belcourt. There are also plans to replace the existing Pow Wow Arbor and beautify the site by adding a community garden.

- **North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department – Pembina Gorge Campground Development (\$2 million)**

The next round of Recreational Trails Program applications is tentatively scheduled to open May 1, 2024. The applications will be administered through the online platform, Web Grants. For further information, please visit [www.parkrec.nd.gov/business/grants](http://www.parkrec.nd.gov/business/grants) or contact Char Langehaug, grants coordinator, at 701-328-5357.

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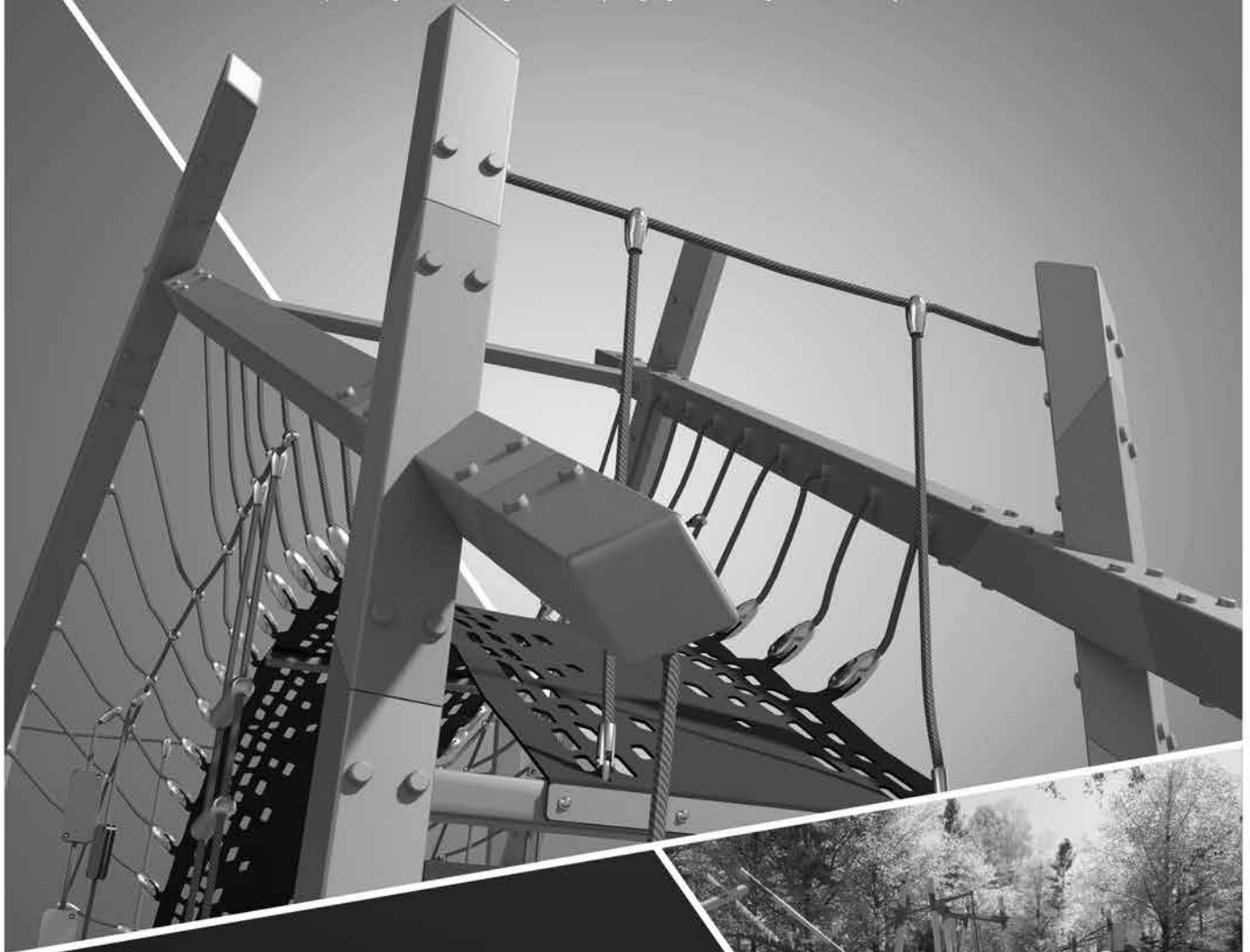
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## Bismarck Parks and Recreation District



**Matthew Guenther** was hired as the facility specialist at Capital Racquet and Fitness Center at Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) in September. He grew up in Bismarck and earned an associate degree from Bismarck State College while playing baseball. He then attended North Dakota State University, graduating in sport management with a minor in business administration. Guenther previously was facility supervisor at BSC Aquatic and Wellness Center and a facility/aquatics specialist at West Fargo Park District. In his free time, Guenther enjoys hunting, fishing, golfing, and spending time with his wife, family and friends.

## Fargo Park District



The Fargo Park District recently welcomed **Tyler Hofer** as park operations manager. Hofer attended Minnesota State Community and Technical College, earning a degree in 2007. After graduation, he joined the International Brotherhood of Electric Workers. In 2009,

Hofer earned a bachelor of science in operations management from Minnesota State University Moorhead. Hofer will oversee the operation and maintenance of more than 150 parks, 100-plus miles of trails, multiple facilities and teams of both full-time and seasonal staff. Outside of work, Hofer enjoys hunting, fishing, watching sports and golfing. He, his wife, children, and dog live in Fargo.



**Kali Mork** has been hired as the director of the Fargo Parks Sports Center. With an exceptional track record and extensive experience in the sports and tourism industry, Mork brings a wealth of expertise to lead the new facility into its first year of operation. Mork will be responsible for the strategic vision

and overall management and operation of the Fargo Parks Sports Center, the first phase of which is slated to be completed in early summer of 2024. Mork holds a bachelor of science in business administration and mass communication from North Dakota State University and boasts extensive experience in sports and recreation leadership. Most recently, Mork served as director of sports at the Fargo-Moorhead Convention and Visitors Bureau, a longtime partner of the Fargo Park District. Throughout her career, she has successfully managed major sports programs, organized large-scale events and successfully fostered relationships with the recreation and sports community across the region.



**Katelin Madsen** has joined the Fargo Park District as events supervisor. Madsen graduated from North Dakota State University with a bachelor of science in tourism and hospitality management. She has a plethora of experience across the event management and community

engagement spectrum, including the Downtown Community Partnership, Avalon Events Center, Rebuilding Together, and Bio Girls. Madsen will plan and execute a wide variety of community events with a focus on Broadway Square. In her spare time, Madsen enjoys teaching barre classes, coaching the University of North Dakota Dance Team, attending local events and enjoying restaurants in downtown Fargo. She lives in Horace with her husband and two dogs.

## Mandan Parks and Recreation



**Jason Rings** has been hired to work in maintenance at the Starion Sports Complex. Rings is a big hockey and football fan, whose favorite teams are the Colorado Avalanche and Las Vegas Raiders. He is the youngest of five children and has an eight-year-old daughter and five-year-old son. Rings' hobbies are golfing, fishing and doing anything outside with his kids.

## Grand Forks Park District



**Austin Jackson** joined the district as a fitness specialist at Choice Health and Fitness after working part-time at the facility for eight years as a personal trainer. He is recently engaged to his fiancée, Kaylee, and enjoys working out, softball, video games, and spending time with family and friends. As a military veteran, Jackson has lived in many states and in England. He came to Grand Forks in 2012.



**Katie Guetter** has transitioned from a part-time employee of over a year and a half at Choice Health and Fitness to the newest full-time membership specialist at the facility, responsible for all aspects of new membership sales, helping existing members with change requests and assisting the membership services coordinator with promotions, marketing and advertising efforts. She is originally from Argyle, Minn., and enjoys working, spending time with family and her dogs.



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