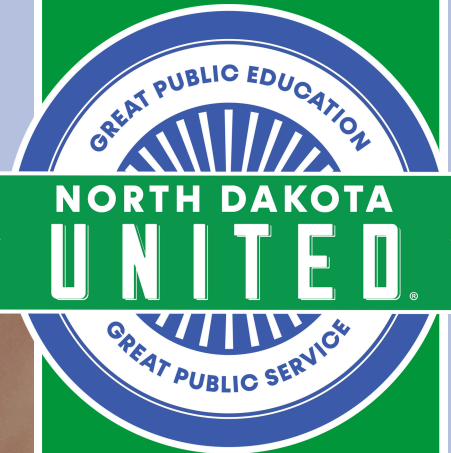


# UNITED VOICES UNITED

*Official Member Publication of North Dakota United*

FALL 2025

VOL. 12, NO. 1



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WITH ND UNITED**

**Q&A: ERIN OBAN  
OF ND4PS**

**GASCHK ELECTED  
AFL-CIO PRESIDENT**

**SCHOLARSHIP AND  
GRANT RECIPIENTS**

**Together,  
We are ND United.**

# United Voices

FALL 2025 — VOL. 12, NO. 1

*United Voices* is published in the interest of public education and public service in the state of North Dakota. Educators and public employees will always find its columns open to discussions and questions of vital concern to them and the students, families and communities they serve. For more information about North Dakota United, visit our website at [www.ndunited.org](http://www.ndunited.org).



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# Strong Public Schools, Strong ND

As a new school year begins across North Dakota, students from Wahpeton to Williston, and from Bathgate to Bowman, are back in our schools making them hum with the excitement and promise of another year of learning. The return of students to school is more than a seasonal milestone. It is a reminder of the essential role our public schools and teachers play in sustaining our communities and securing our future.

In North Dakota, our schools are not just places where children learn math, reading and science. They are often the cultural and social centers of our towns, especially in rural areas. Friday night football games, school concerts and community gatherings all revolve around the local school. In many small towns, the school is the beating heart of the community, the one institution that ties generations together and keeps rural life vibrant.

At the center of this work are our teachers and education support professionals. North Dakota's educators do more than instruct; they nurture, inspire and guide. Whether in a small elementary school on the prairie or a bustling high school in ND's more urban areas, teachers meet students where they are and help them reach their potential. These education professionals know their students by name, communicate with their families, and place our kids at the center of their best intentions. Most importantly, they educate every student who walks, runs, or rolls through their schoolhouse doors. That is the obligation and passion of every public-school teacher.



By Nick Archuleta  
NDU President

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**"Let's honor our teachers for the difference they make in the lives of students every single day."**

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Strong public schools are the key to North Dakota's future. Our economy depends on a well-educated workforce ready to lead in fields like agriculture, energy, health care, education, public service, and technology. If we want our young people to stay in our state and build their lives here, we must provide them with schools that prepare them for success and communities that value their talents.

But strong schools don't happen by accident. They require stable funding, policies that recognize the unique needs of rural districts as well as urban districts, and fair salaries that keep great teachers in our classrooms. Given the importance and impact of public schools in ND, when we shortchange our schools, we are shortchanging our communities and limiting opportunities for our children.

This school year, I encourage all North Dakotans to celebrate, support and protect the public schools that hold our communities together. Let's honor our teachers for the difference they make in the lives of students every single day. Because when we invest in our schools, we are not just funding education, we are building stronger communities, creating opportunities, and securing the future of North Dakota. Our kids deserve nothing less, and neither do we.



# The Thrill of Going Back to School

No matter how many years pass, the start of the school year always feels like the beginning of something new. The sound of locker doors slamming, the energetic chatter filling the hallways, and the sight of so many faces filled with curiosity are all welcome signs for the months ahead.

When I was a student, I looked forward to the beginning of the school year with excitement and wonder, seeing my classmates again, buying new school supplies, meeting unknown teachers, and following a different class schedule. ...

As a teacher, I look forward to a new beginning every fall, and I am in awe of future challenges. I get to meet new students and teach some of my old ones, I have a different schedule, and I learn to adjust to changes in curriculum.

The thrill of a new school year never gets old. I wonder: Which class will be the most rambunctious? How will I compete with video games and electronics to keep my students' interest alive? What dilemmas will I be presented with on a daily basis?

After teaching for almost 40 years, I still feel butterflies in my stomach thinking about the first day of school. I plan for the first week: We need to create a sense of belonging and community, a team spirit of working toward a common goal and a sense of purpose for success (we all know the importance of social-emotional intelligence in the school setting). As I think about it, my heart pumps faster and faster, recounting all my expectations to reach every student and make this our best year possible.



By Alicia Bata  
NDU Vice President  
for Education

**“After teaching for almost 40 years, I still feel butterflies in my stomach, thinking about the first day of school.”**

I feel lucky. In this profession, we get a fresh start every fall. As educators, we have the opportunity to make things work better than they did in the past. If something did not work well last year, we get a do-over; we can challenge ourselves to learn from our mistakes and improve.

The anticipation of putting into practice pedagogical research I learned in classes or read about during the summer keeps me on my toes. I am certainly thankful for a profession that not only offers us a window of opportunity for renewal but also encourages us to interact with young minds. Yes, kids keep me young. They are my best instructors in technology and the lexicon of the day!

Whether you are new to the profession or a seasoned educator, I wish you the best for this school year. As you create a sense of community in your classroom, in the cafeteria, in the gym or on the school bus, I hope you share with me that sense of pride in helping forge the future of so many young lives. Here's to learning from last year's lessons, both big and small. Let's make this school year our best one yet!





# Who Will Be ND Teacher of the Year?

*All four finalists for  
state's top honor in  
education are members  
of ND United*

It's that time of year, again! As K-12 students and educators head back to school, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction is preparing to officially name the 2026 ND Teacher of the Year at the state Capitol in a ceremony scheduled for Friday, Sept. 26.

Each year, a group of finalists are selected out of that year's County Teachers of the Year by an eight-member screening committee. This year, all four finalists are members of North Dakota United and their local education associations. Congratulations to them and all our County TOYs!

This year's finalists are:

- **Emily Dawes**, a first-grade teacher at J. Nelson Kelly Elementary School in Grand Forks and 2025 Grand Forks County Teacher of the Year;
- **Hannah Sagvold**, a business education teacher at Lisbon Public School and 2025 Ransom County Teacher of the Year;

- **Frannie Tunseth**, a teacher of grades 4-8 at Mayville-Portland-Clifford-Galesburg Public School in Mayville and 2025 Traill County Teacher of the Year; and
- **Leah Wheeling**, a sixth-grade teacher of physical education and digital literacy at Simle Middle School in Bismarck and 2025 Burleigh County Teacher of the Year.

In April, DPI and Superintendent Kirsten Baesler honored 48 North Dakota educators who were named County Teachers of the Year from their respective counties. DPI plans to visit the schools of all four finalists for individual award events, and we will be featuring spotlight articles on each finalist in our next issue of *United Voices* and on our website.

Stay tuned to our [News & Media Center](#) for in-depth coverage of the announcement ceremony and Member Spotlights of this year's honorees. Biographies of our finalists. Learn more about our finalists on the following two pages.

## Emily Dawes

Emily Dawes is a literacy specialist at Lake Agassiz Elementary in Grand Forks. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in



Elementary Education from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, and a Master of Science in Reading Education from the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. In 2025, Emily was named Teacher of the Year for the Grand Forks Public Schools and was honored as the Certified Employee of the First Quarter for the 2024–25 school year.

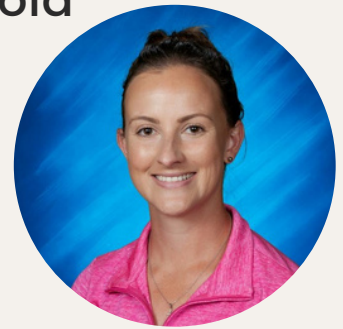
An experienced educator, Dawes has taught students from early childhood through third grade. She is very cognizant of implementing best practices and works diligently to create a classroom where students can not only feel safe, accepted and valued, but also experience rigorous and engaging academic instruction. Her goal is to ensure that each child receives high-quality learning experiences that support their growth and confidence as learners.

Dawes said she loves to incorporate music, movement and humor into her teaching style, making learning joyful and memorable. She emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships and believes that trust is the foundation for all significant learning. She credits her own children as her greatest teachers, helping her better understand what students really need from their educators — compassion, patience and belief in their potential.

Her favorite teaching quote, “No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship,” originally by James Comer and cited by Rita Pierson in her TED Talk, perfectly reflects her approach to teaching with heart, purpose and connection.

## Hannah Sagvold

Hannah Sagvold is an educator at Lisbon Public School in Lisbon. She teaches eight Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses,



including business fundamentals, entrepreneurship, computer applications, accounting, management, business law, multimedia, desktop publishing and a school-based enterprise. Sagvold holds a Bachelor of Learning Management in Secondary and Vocational Education and Training through Central Queensland University, Australia, as well as Master of Science in Special Education with an emphasis on Developmental Disabilities through Minnesota State University-Moorhead.

Sagvold said she is passionate about the impact of CTE in high school settings and its role in shaping confident, capable young professionals. She prioritizes career-readiness skills that extend beyond the classroom through project-based learning and involves students in real-world challenges that develop critical thinking, communication and collaboration. With a strong emphasis on community integration, Sagvold designs learning experiences that connect students with local businesses, and mentors to deepen relevance and engagement.

Prior to her current role, Sagvold was a special education teacher. She remains deeply committed to creating inclusive classrooms where all learners feel valued and supported. With this background, she has been able to advocate for equitable access by embedding differentiation into the general education setting.

Outside of the classroom, she is vice president of District 7 North Dakota Cattlewomen, as well as secretary of the McLeod Rodeo Association and a mom to two young children.

## Frannie Tunseth

Frannie Tunseth currently serves as an interventionist at Mayville-Portland CG Public Schools in Mayville, where she works with students in



grades four through eight, delivering targeted reading and math interventions. Tunseth leads the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) at the middle school level and plays an integral role in using assessment data to guide instruction and improve student outcomes.

Tunseth holds a Bachelor of Science in Education with a major in elementary education and a minor in special education from the University of North Dakota. She earned a Master of Education from the University of North Dakota and an Educational Leadership Certificate from the University of Mary in Bismarck. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Teaching and Leading from the University of North Dakota, where her research focuses on practitioner inquiry and trauma-informed practices in P-12 education.

She was honored as North Dakota County Teacher of the Year in both Griggs County (2022) and Traill County (2025), recognizing her dedication to student achievement, inclusive practices and community engagement. In addition to her K-12 work, Tunseth serves as a graduate teaching assistant at the University of North Dakota, instructing future educators in assessment and writing methods. Tunseth said she prioritizes equity, relationship-building and reflective practice in her teaching. She is passionate about creating trauma-informed, student-centered learning environments that foster academic growth and emotional well-being.

## Leah Wheeling

Leah Wheeling is a dynamic educator who thrives in all aspects and levels of education. She currently teaches sixth-grade Digital



Literacy and Physical Education at Simle Middle School in Bismarck and serves as an adjunct instructor for three methods courses at the University of Mary. In addition, she coaches middle school track, teaches swim lessons, and loves her vocation as wife and mother to husband Thomas and children Michael and Sarah.

Over her 14-year career, Wheeling has taught choir, general music, swimming, health and seventh-grade PE. She said she is passionate about creating activity opportunities beyond the classroom, leading programs such as Training and Games (TAG) and Board Game Club. An advocate for lifelong learning, Wheeling serves as a board member and past president of NDSHAPE. She regularly presents at state, regional and national conferences, and co-hosts professional development for educators.

Wheeling holds a Bachelor of Science in K-12 Physical Education and Music from Bemidji State University (2012), and a Master in Sport and Physical Education Administration from the University of Mary (2016). She was named North Dakota Society of Health and Physical Educators (NDSHAPE) Middle School PE Teacher of the Year in both 2016 and 2024, and received the 2024 Governor's Innovator Award. Wheeling's passion for education is infectious, reflected in how her students respond to her engaging and innovative teaching. Wheeling believes in the potential that every learner has to positively experience physical activity as they embrace the journey of lifelong wellness.





# For the Love of Public Schools

Education leader Erin Oban discusses new group, ND4PS



**BY JOEL CRANE**  
Press Secretary

North Dakota United is a proud coalition member of North Dakotans for Public Schools (ND4PS), a new organization whose mission is to strengthen, protect and celebrate public education in North Dakota. *United Voices* sat down to talk with Erin Oban from ND4PS recently. Our conversation has been edited for brevity and clarity.

**Q:** Can you tell us about how ND4PS came to be? Who are the coalition members, and why did they come together?

**A:** North Dakotans for Public Schools was created pretty organically during the 2025 legislative session, mostly in response to a wave of bills that would have created voucher programs, also known as “education savings accounts.” There was a clear gap identified by state-level education organizations; they were looking for a way to inform and engage

parents, community members and the general public about issues affecting public education. Especially people who support public education but don’t belong to an association that helps them to do that.

I had just left USDA Rural Development and, with my legislative background from eight years in the state Senate, I wanted to help. So, I organized a coalition of those people who otherwise maybe had been left out of the process a little bit. In a short time, we informed and engaged thousands of people in the legislative process who maybe wouldn’t otherwise have done so.

The following organizations, which have acted like a steering committee so far, essentially pooled their resources and helped us get off the ground with their respective established infrastructures: North Dakota United, North Dakota School Boards Association, North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders and North Dakota Small Organized Schools.

Since then, we've started soliciting donations from individuals and other organizations.

**Q:** So, would it be fair to say ND4PS is more of a grassroots coalition of people, supported by organizations that helped get it started?

**A:** That's very accurate. The organizations pooled resources, but the coalition is really made up of parents, families and community members: people who recognize that public schools are central to economic development, community life and local business.

My role is essentially as a mom who has a kid in public school, who also happens to have legislative experience that is helpful to this process, and someone who believes really strongly that the best way to improve decision-making is to include more members of the public. At its heart, ND4PS is random, regular North Dakotans lending their voices to a cause they know is right.

**Q:** Can you talk about the coalition's goals and how you aim to strengthen public education?

**A:** After the session, we defined our mission: to strengthen, protect and celebrate public education in North Dakota.

That means advocating for vital resources and personnel for our schools, so our public schools can continue to support ALL children, countering misinformation and encouraging community engagement, and facilitating greater engagement between all the stakeholders in public education. We plan to continue opposing harmful policies like vouchers.

Finally, we want to celebrate successes in our schools, which is something educators and families don't always take the time to do. For some reason, it is not in our nature to brag about good things that happen. In part, I believe it's probably because many educators believe good outcomes are the result of simply doing their jobs. But we want to talk about the good things. We want to be a place



**“** *If you care about kids, if you care about the constitution, if you care about the strength of our communities, you should care about public education.*

– Erin Oban,  
North Dakotans for  
Public Schools

where good news about public schools is shared and celebrated, especially at a time when bad news seems to catch on a lot faster.

**Q:** Why is public education so important to society, and especially to North Dakota?

**A:** For starters, it's right there in our state constitution. We must provide high-quality public education to every family in North Dakota. It's also a cornerstone of democracy, and a public school is probably one of the most important partners to families in shaping the future of our state.

If you care about kids, if you care about the constitution, if you care about the strength of our communities, you should care about public education. That's why thousands of North Dakotans love their public schools and want to be members of this coalition. And when you love something, you invest in it. That's what we're committed to doing.



**Q:** What about ND4PS's policy agenda? Beyond defeating vouchers, do you have other specific priorities?

**A:** Right now, there isn't a detailed policy agenda. We began in response to one specific issue that North Dakotans felt really strongly about, but we think this is about a much broader goal, and that is the importance of having high-quality public education in as many communities as possible, for all the kids and families that it serves. For us, it's supporting anything that strengthens, protects and celebrates public education.

**Q:** Looking ahead, what would success look like five years down the line?

**A:** Success would mean empowering members of the coalition to be champions in their own communities. Whether it's in response to a comment they overhear in a coffee shop, in testimony they provide at a school board meeting, or in a conversation with a legislator, to name just a few possible examples, we want people to feel prepared to stand up for public schools. ND4PS will be successful if hundreds of people across North Dakota become more prepared and feel more empowered because of the work this organization is doing.

**Q:** You've also launched some public visibility efforts. Can you talk about those?

**A:** Sometimes celebrating is as simple as physically showing support for something that matters. Yard signs and videos spread a positive message and let people know they're not alone in valuing public schools.

The yard signs, in particular, have caught on quickly – we can't keep up with demand. Communities across the state have embraced them. You'll see them in Ray, which is my hometown. Go, Ray Jays! Also, Stanley, Minot, New Town, Dickinson, Beulah, Richardton, Taylor, Glen Ullin, Solen, Mandan, Jamestown, Edgeley, Fort Ransom, Lisbon, Oakes, Fargo, Wahpeton, Devils Lake, Lakota, Drayton, Grand Forks and many more. People are



## How to Get Your Own Yard Sign

ND4PS yard signs are available at 11 locations in cities across the state – in Bismarck, Fargo, Minot, Jamestown, Ray, Oakes, Grand Forks, Devils Lake, Williston, Mayville and Dickinson – with more locations coming soon.

For the full list of pick-up locations and addresses, or to fill out a form to request one, go to the ND4PS site at [ndforpublicschools.com/yard-signs](https://ndforpublicschools.com/yard-signs).

**We Love Our Public Schools!**

hosting pick-up spots, delivering signs and sharing them with friends. It's really created something of a movement.

**Q:** Is there anything else you want to add?

**A:** Yes. I want to be clear: ND4PS doesn't believe public schools are perfect. They're run by humans, and humans make mistakes. But that doesn't mean we give up on them. If you love something, you invest in it and work to make it better.

So, while we recognize the flaws of our public schools, we still believe public schools are worth protecting, strengthening and celebrating.



# Be More. | Be Be You. | NDU!



*No matter if you only recently joined North Dakota United or you've been a member for years, we all can play a role in growing our union – in numbers, power and influence – by spreading the word with colleagues*



**BY KELLY HAGEN**  
Communications Director

When it comes to member organizations, like ours at North Dakota United, the more hands, minds and hearts you have working together, the stronger you will become. The simple truth is this: More members means more muscle! By growing our membership, we increase our influence, we crank up the volume of our collective voices, and we expand our capacity for doing quality work on behalf of all the people we serve in our professions — the students, families and communities of our great state.

Growing our union requires a true team effort, and all of us can play an important role, both as individuals and as a group. In the Cover Story for this issue of United Voices, we have assembled a number of the important resources and benefits that our members enjoy by being a part of NDU, along with ways that you can get involved.

Help us to grow North Dakota United by sharing this resource with your friends and colleagues who work in public education and public service. For more information on how to join, visit our website at [ndunited.org/join](http://ndunited.org/join).

And thank you for all you do, united for North Dakota. Together, we are ND United!





# Be the Best YOU with NDU

## Members receive free professional development courses

We here at North Dakota United know that even the best educators and public workers need support sometimes! That's why our union exists – to make sure you don't feel alone.

In addition to our advocacy efforts and local organizing support, we also provide professional development with a focus on customized learning, based on your personal wants and needs.

With the help of the NDU Foundation, we provide FREE professional development courses to ALL NDU members! You can save \$100 for every course you choose to take. **Last year alone, ND United members saved over \$137,200!**

Here are a few of the PD options we offer:

- **Elevating the Profession through Educator Ethics:** This in-person training aims to maintain and exceed the model of education ethics and standards. This course is offered in a variety of formats – including as an independent study, small group or district-wide training – and is eligible for one credit through the University of North Dakota.

- **Book Studies:** A variety of relevant topics to enhance professional skills and awareness are offered throughout the year. The format of the book studies enables communication and collaboration, along with an opportunity for self-directed learning. Book studies are free for NDU members, but cost \$100 for non-members. An additional \$50 must be paid to UND to have your credit recorded on your transcript.

- **Podcast PD:** NDU now offers this new, asynchronous format of providing professional development. Participants will simply listen and reflect as their schedule allows. With six different podcasts to choose from, Podcast PD allows educators to make personal choices for their learning based on their content area and professional interests, while helping them to earn up to five credits.

We hope you find these resources helpful! Go to [courses.ndunited.org](https://courses.ndunited.org) for a complete listing of available professional development courses and to sign up.



# Do More With ND United

Here are a few ways to get more involved with your union

As educators and public employees, there is no better way to connect with each other, as colleagues, friends and neighbors, than through our shared union. North Dakota United offers a lot of opportunities to get involved, from advocacy at the state Capitol and locally, to leadership conferences and trainings:

- **Go to Summer Leadership & Advocacy Summit:** Each year, NDU leaders, activists and staff come together for our annual Summer Leadership and Advocacy Summit! Together, we learn how to grow and strengthen our local associations and advocate for students, colleagues and communities across the state. Look for more information on how to sign up for the 2026 SLAS closer to the end of the school year!
- **Join North Dakotans for Public Schools:** During the 2025 ND legislative session, we helped establish a coalition group dedicated to preserving public education in our state called North Dakotans for Public Schools. We encourage you to sign up for updates and like and follow them on Facebook!
- **Keep up with latest news:** ND United regularly updates our website with outstanding member stories, news articles, helpful resources, engaging video content and more! Check out all of the latest content and a back catalogue of stories from our award-winning member publication, *United Voices*, or you can find the latest news releases and articles from local, state and national sources by clicking here.
- **Check out the NDU Legislative Report Card:** In 2023, we created a Report Card website where we tracked legislators' votes on our most important bills, and we're proud to announce that we have recently launched the 2025 edition! Go there to check out how your local legislators voted on our issues, and be sure to share with your friends, family and fellow supporters of public education and services in our state.
- **Connect with us:** By filling out an interest card at this link, you can personalize the communications you receive from us and we'll let you know about ways you can get more involved in our union's efforts.





# It Pays to be a Member

Members get access to financial assistance, discounts and more

In these tough economic times, we know that our educators and public employees can use any financial assistance that is available. By being a member of North Dakota United, you are eligible to receive numerous scholarship and grant opportunities through our NDU Foundation, Disaster Fund assistance during troubled times, legal assistance and consultation, as well as discounts on insurance, shopping and travel.

Here's a quick rundown of the many programs available to you through your membership:

- **NDU Foundation Scholarships and Grants:** The ND United Foundation scholarship and grant opportunities are open for ND United members, as well as their dependents. The Foundation currently offers a wide variety of different scholarships and grants specifically designed for individual educators, public servants, and college students to enhance their skills. For more information, please visit our website at [www.ndunited.org/foundation/scholarships-and-grants](http://www.ndunited.org/foundation/scholarships-and-grants).
- **Legal Assistance:** When you need us, NDU staff are here to assist with employment-related disputes at no additional cost to you. Learn more at [www.ndunited.org/member-benefits/legal-services](http://www.ndunited.org/member-benefits/legal-services).
- **Liability Insurance:** North Dakota United provides \$1 million of liability insurance protection for its members for any covered claim arising during the course of the insured's employment activities. Find out more about this at [www.ndunited.org/member-benefits/liability-insurance-protection](http://www.ndunited.org/member-benefits/liability-insurance-protection).
- **Disaster Assistance:** The Disaster Fund was established for the purpose of assisting members who have been impacted by major disasters such as floods, tornadoes, fire, etc. The fund will reimburse members for uninsured losses up to the amount of their insurance deductible, but no greater than \$1,500. Contact us at 701-223-0450 if after a disaster to find out if you qualify.
- **Discounts on Products & Services:** By being a member of NDU, you get exclusive access to Member Benefits programs from both of our national affiliates, the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers. Make your money stretch further by saving on everyday essentials, car rentals, travel, insurance, and more. Learn more about these programs at [www.ndunited.org/member-benefits/discounts-products-services](http://www.ndunited.org/member-benefits/discounts-products-services).

# Leading the Way for Labor

NDU member makes history as ND AFL-CIO president



**BY KELLY HAGEN**  
Communications Director

It's now been over a decade since the merger that created North Dakota United in 2013, which was itself an enormous "historic first." When we first joined together the members of the North Dakota Education Association and Public Employee Association, we also brought thousands of new members under the umbrella of the North Dakota AFL-CIO, the state's federation of labor unions.

NDU members account for roughly half of the North Dakota AFL-CIO, and in 2025, another first occurred in the history of organized labor. On June 6 at the annual AFL-CIO Convention in Bismarck, a member of ND United was, for the first time in history, elected as president of our state's "union of unions."

Ashley Gaschk, a middle school teacher in Mandan, had been active for years as a member of her local, the Mandan Education Association, and on the state level within ND United. At the same time, she had been dedicating more of her time and energy toward advocacy within the larger labor movement through the state AFL-CIO and



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***"I think it's really exciting to have a teacher at the head of a labor organization."***

**– Ashley Gaschk,  
ND AFL-CIO President**

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regional group, the Missouri Slope Labor Council. And so, when the opportunity arose for someone new to step into the role of president and secretary-treasurer for ND AFL-CIO, she answered the call.

"It is a big job, and I'm excited to take it on," Gaschk said. "I'm eager to learn a whole lot, very quickly, but it seems that we have an amazing labor movement that is very dedicated and passionate and definitely willing to work together and to help me as I transition into this new role."





**ABOVE:** North Dakota AFL-CIO President Ashley Gaschk took to the speaker's podium to close out the annual convention in Bismarck in June.

**AT RIGHT:** Officers being sworn into new terms at convention included: from left, Deb Carter as vice president; Dana Hillius as a trustee; Gaschk as president; Bob Wolf as trustee; and Nick Archuleta as trustee.



One of those leaders in the labor movement who is helping Gaschk step into the role is the president of the Missouri Slope Labor Council, and field consultant for ND United, Dana Hillius. When Landis Larson, the previous president of the ND AFL-CIO, had let it be known that he wouldn't seek another term, Hillius asked Gansch if she might be interested in running for the office.

"She's the type of leader who just keeps showing up, no matter what," Hillius said. "I have long admired her tenacity, and she's the first person I asked when we knew there would be a vacancy. She was surprised that she was asked, but immediately showed interest."

Not only is Gaschk the first member of ND United to become president of our state's AFL-CIO since NDU joined the federation in 2013, she is also the first teacher and the first woman to hold the office. In Hillius' view, Gaschk is the right leader for this moment in history.

"It's time," he said, "and it's not as big of a change as it may have been 20 or 30 years ago. But she's still walking into, say, the North Dakota trades, which is predominantly male. When she went to the North Dakota Trades Convention, she was the only female in the room. I think bridging that gap between workers is a real opportunity."

Transitioning from a career as a classroom teacher into the top elected position of the state's federation of labor unions may be daunting, but Gaschk said she is mostly just excited about new possibilities and opportunities. "I am looking forward to learning more about different parts of North Dakota," Gaschk said. "I was born and raised in Bismarck, (and) I've been working in Mandan for the last eight years. I'm excited to travel to other parts of the state and learn about the different industries and, kind of, hidden gems all over North Dakota. And to meet the workers who are providing services and building North Dakota and maintaining what we already have here."

Looking a little further down the road, she said she is also excited about speaking up for unions and working families at the state Capitol. "I'm looking forward to another legislative session," she said, "where we can all work together with people across the labor movement, but also other interested, dedicated groups, to advocate for what's good for working people and what's good for our state."

From being a young person, herself, and having worked with middle school-aged students in the classroom, Gaschk feels that our next generation of workers in the state are showing higher levels of interest in both joining established unions and starting new unions in fields where they haven't previously existed.

"I'm not very surprised that there's a new interest in the labor movement," Gaschk said. "Having been working with middle schoolers for the last several years, like, they're really paying attention. They are pretty sensitive to injustice, and they're curious about why things are set up the way they are. And when things don't seem to make sense, they question, why are we still doing things this way?"



Attendees listen to ND AFL-CIO President Ashley Gaschk speak at "Celebration of Labor" event held in Bismarck on Sept. 4.

Gaschk is only a few months into the job, but she's already started to apply the lessons in organizing she learned from being an educator and union member with NDU. "I think it's really exciting to have a teacher at the head of a labor organization," she said. "We need to do more organizing across all industries, but I think that there's a lot of passion and dedication and organizational skills that could be tapped amongst our educators and state workers."

Under Gaschk's leadership, the ND AFL-CIO organized two "Celebration of Labor" events, in Fargo and Bismarck, around Labor Day. Large crowds showed up at both, to break bread together, listen to speakers from various unions and labor groups, and discover commonalities we all share. The attendance and energy she felt at both events gave Gaschk hope for the future.

"Young people growing up today are more aware of the disparities in our society," she said. "If you are coming into the workforce and you get the message, join with us and we can make our workplace better and we can make our futures better."



# A Career of Caring

*From temp worker to office manager, Ellie Sharbono's 33-year journey with North Dakota United has been defined by hard work, compassion and connection.*



**BY KELLY HAGEN**  
Communications Director

Anyone who has entered into the office space of North Dakota United's headquarters in Bismarck — be they an employee, one of our members, or even just a random person off the streets, looking for guidance — in the past three decades has usually know who to go to, straightaway. If you need a helping hand, a clever solution to a vexing problem, or simply a friendly face who will always make you feel welcome, you simply must knock on the office door of Ellie Sharbono.

"That means a whole lot to me and makes me feel really good, if people feel that way, and they trust me," Sharbono said, when told she had earned a sterling reputation for providing such steady, dependable service. "I always like to help ..."

After 33 years of service, our longtime office manager is now retiring. Behind her, she is leaving a long legacy that has been built on trust, kindness and unwavering dedication to members of our union.

"Ellie is just going to be so hard to replace," said NDU President Nick Archuleta. "Over the past 33 years, Ellie has woven herself into the tapestry of North Dakota United. Her innumerable contributions to the



***"We've gone through good and bad, personal and professional, and it really did become like a family."***

— Ellie Sharbono,  
NDU office manager who is retiring  
after 33 years of service

organization and her selfless dedication to our members stands as a testament to the seriousness with which she did her work.

"On a personal level, it will be tough to go without a daily dose of Ellie's friendship, humor and kindness. Of all her many qualities, it is that thread of kindness that has bound it all together and made Ellie such an important part of our organization. We wish Ellie a very long and joyous retirement and thank her sincerely for all she's done to make this organization a success."

To properly tell Ellie's story, we should start from the beginning. Sharbono's journey with the organization began in the early 1990s, with the North Dakota Education Association, when she took a temporary job that quickly became something more.



Ellie Sharbono speaks at the end of the 2025 ND United Delegate Assembly, as President Nick Archuleta, Executive Director Chad Oban and attorney Michael Geiermann applaud for her.

“When I came to work here as a temp, it just kind of felt like it fit, to me,” she said. “I didn’t realize at the time, but I was pretty aligned with everything this way. This is what I believe, you know — in public education and our union.”

That initial fit turned into a career that spanned more than three decades, during which Ellie wore many hats, supported countless staff, and played a role in nearly every major event and project that our union undertook.

From stuffing envelopes in her early days with NDEA, to managing Delegate Assemblies, Teachers Conventions and board meetings, Sharbono has become known for her reliability and calm exterior when under pressure. She was the person who could connect the dots and keep things moving, no matter how chaotic things got.

“I just kind of feel like I can’t even say what I do sometimes because I do so many different things, and you never know who’s going to come through that door, next,” she said. “So, I’m just ready. I want to help people like that, and I want to make sure that we do the best that we can. Because we want to be our best for our people.”

Her work ethic was not about recognition or titles. It was about finishing the job and doing

it well. “My favorite [part was] finishing projects,” Sharbono said. “Some things were so hard, and then you finish it, and it’s really a nice rush when you finish the big project.”

But for Ellie, the work was never just about projects and deadlines. It was about people.

“I really did like the member connection,” she said. “I really like the staff, definitely all of the people that I’ve gotten to know. We’ve gone through good and bad, personal and professional, and it really did become like a family.”

Her compassion extended to members as well as colleagues. “If anything, I hope that I could have made things easier for them in what they’re doing,” Sharbono said. “Thank you for letting me do that.”

Ellie admits it feels surreal to finally close this chapter. “This has been so much of my life that this is just a really... I feel strange right now, just trying to clean all this stuff out,” she said. “It’s like something that I never thought would come. But it came.”

And so, North Dakota United members and staff must now bid farewell to not only our office manager, but to a friend, a colleague, and the kind of person whose dedication can never be replaced — only remembered with supreme gratitude. Thank you, Ellie!





Jason Grueneich, founder of Shine Bright and Live and 2025 Bush Fellowship recipient, sits in the balcony during session at the Capitol with Melissa Gjellstad as part of Lobby Day in 2023.

# Shining Bright & Living On

Past NDU member's journey from public service to HIV advocacy



**BY KELLY HAGEN**  
Communications Director

When Jason Grueneich first started working at the North Dakota Department of Transportation in 2020, he discovered a renewed passion for public service. “Learning how to navigate difficult times and still provide services instilled in me that, just because the world may be crazy, people still need to be taken care of,” he said. Seeing public service in that lens first compelled him to join North Dakota United as a member and activist for public workers in our state, that same year. And now, that perspective has also delivered to him a new calling — founding Shine Bright and Live, North Dakota’s first nonprofit dedicated solely to supporting people living with HIV.

This year, Grueneich was awarded a prestigious Bush Foundation Fellowship to strengthen his leadership and expand the

reach of Shine Bright and Live. The fellowship, he explained, is not just a grant for a project but “an investment in me, in the hope that I will continue reinvesting in my community and help raise up other leaders.”

For Grueneich, this work is deeply personal. He has lived with HIV for years and faced the heavy stigma that still surrounds the disease in his home state. “When I moved back, I was scared what any employers of mine would think,” he said. “There’s a lot of outdated information on HIV that is still very prevalent, even within our medical communities in rural areas, as well as among our elected officials.”

That stigma became even more real after the death of his partner, Johnnie, in 2023 following a relapse into addiction. “Instead of processing the grief, I jumped into the nonprofit,” Grueneich said. “That was something he and I had been talking about. He was really supportive of me.”

By January of this year, Shine Bright and Live officially launched, focused on education, advocacy and what Grueneich calls a “whole health” approach. The nonprofit has already stepped in where gaps exist, helping to secure federal HIV funds that would have otherwise been lost to North Dakota. “HIV isn’t an immoral disease; it has nothing to do with morality,” he said. “It’s a medical disease. It affects people across all walks of life.”

Education is central to Shine Bright’s mission. Grueneich often encounters people — even lawmakers — who still believe myths about HIV transmission. “For someone to ask, ‘What if somebody went out and spit at someone and gave them AIDS?’ I thought they were messing with me,” he said. “It didn’t connect that they were serious. Right there, I realized this is a lot bigger than I thought.”

Modern science tells a different story. With proper treatment, people living with HIV can achieve an undetectable viral load, which means the virus cannot be transmitted. “HIV is no longer a death sentence. It hasn’t been for 20-plus years,” Grueneich emphasized. “Most of the struggles people face come from stigma, not the disease itself.”

Grueneich’s work in HIV advocacy is intertwined with his union roots. A former state employee and member of North Dakota United, he credits the union with giving him the courage to raise his voice. “It was Lobby Day at the Capitol with North Dakota United (during the 2023 legislative session) that first got me interested that maybe I have a way to talk to legislators,” he said. “The union really gave me the courage of who I am — that I can stand on my feet as a citizen of this state with a voice.”

With Shine Bright and Live, he continues to build community support. In its first two months, the nonprofit raised \$2,500 from local donors — proof, Grueneich says, that

## How You Can Help

Shine Bright and Live has launched a website that helps explain their vision for change and purpose, and they offer ways that anyone interested in helping them in their mission can lend assistance.



Go to [www.shinebrightandlive.org](http://www.shinebrightandlive.org) to learn more about this outstanding organization, and please consider supporting their cause by donating your time, energy and/or funds.

**Shine Bright and Live**

North Dakotans want to help. “The reality I took on was that no matter if funding falls through or not, this has to keep going,” he said.

For Grueneich, the Bush Fellowship represents not just personal growth but a commitment to making Shine Bright and Live a lasting resource. He left his position at ND DOT and, subsequently, active membership in NDU, to make Shine Bright and Live his new focus for at least the next two years. “If I want a community organization to be sustainable, I have to learn how to be sustainable,” he reflected. “It’s a shift in how I approach the world and myself. I’m excited and a little scared at the same time.”

He hopes others will join him in that mission. “Reach out and invite Shine Bright and Live to come talk to you — at your schools, your churches, your union meetings,” he urged. “Donate your time, your money, your skills. HIV is not something to be scared of. It’s something we can face together, with compassion and community.”





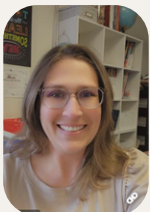
# With an Eye to the Future

NDU Foundation proudly shares full list of 2025 scholarship and grant recipients

The North Dakota United Foundation is proud to announce the distribution of more than \$75,000 in scholarships to dozens of deserving educators, public servants and students this year. Each recipient received an award ranging from \$200 to \$5,000.

“These grants and scholarships are an investment in the future of North Dakota,” said Brenda Seehafer, chair of the ND United Foundation. “We are looking to tomorrow by supporting these recipients’ professional and educational goals.”

Congratulations to this year’s recipients:



**Krista Amann**, of Rogers, has been awarded a Horace Mann ND Agents Graduate Education Scholarship for her graduate degree in educational leadership from the University of Mary.

**Erin Bohnenstingl**, a middle and high school educator in Lidgerwood, was awarded a NDU Workplace Innovation Grant for STEM education classroom drone project.

**Gratia Brown**, of Valley City, has been awarded a Horace Mann ND Agents Graduate Education Scholarship for her graduate degree in education from Minot State University.

**Sarah Crossingham**, of Dickinson, has been awarded a Horace Mann ND Agents Graduate Education Scholarship for her graduate degree in education from the University of North Dakota.



**Emily Curren**, of Bismarck, is the recipient of an ND United Member/Dependent Scholarship for her science degree at North Dakota State University.

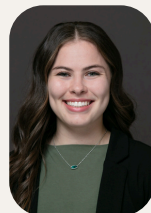


**Gracie Doe**, of Killdeer, is the recipient of an NDU Member/Dependent Scholarship for her Bachelor’s of Science in nursing & psychology degree at North Dakota State University.

**McKayla Donat**, of Bismarck is the recipient of an ND United Member/Dependent Scholarship for her English degree at George Washington University.



**Savanna Dreher**, of McHenry, received a Thomas & Garnet Wurst Scholarship.



**McKenna Ernst**, of Dickinson, is the recipient of an ND United Member/Dependent Scholarship for her marketing degree at North Dakota State University.

**Karady Evans**, of New England, an undergraduate elementary education major at Black Hills State University, has been awarded an ND United Education Scholarship.



**Myah Fitzsimonds**, of Walhalla, is the recipient of a Ron & Ann Anstrom Scholarship for her graduate education degree at Mayville State University.

**Tiara Flying Horse**, of Bismarck, an undergraduate elementary education major at United Tribes Technical College, has been awarded an NDU Education Scholarship.

**Saige Forseth**, of West Fargo, has been awarded a Horace Mann ND Agents Graduate Education Scholarship for her graduate degree in elementary education from the University of Jamestown.



**Alliana Freund**, of Cando, an undergraduate education major at Valley City State University, has been awarded a Cindy & Gary Rath Education Scholarship and an NDU Education Scholarship.

**Brittany Gores**, an educator in Fargo, was awarded a Dr. Joanne Pearson Fine Arts Grant for supplies for her art club to use during classes and for students to take home.

**Sabrina Haas**, of Napoleon, an undergraduate elementary education major at Valley City State University, has been awarded an ND United Education Scholarship.



**Gabrielle Helfrich**, of West Fargo, has been awarded a Halstenson Family Music Scholarship for her graduate music education degree at American Band College.

**Alison Heyen**, of Colfax, is the recipient of an ND United Member/Dependent Scholarship for her elementary education degree at Valley City State University.



**Gretchen Hickel**, of Ray, received a Ted Meckle Memorial Scholarship.



**Emery Holland**, of Casselton, has been awarded a Harris & Arlyce Widmer Family Business Education Scholarship for her degree in business education from Concordia College.

**Andrea Hoyme**, of Kindred, an undergraduate elementary education major at Mayville State University, has been awarded a NDU Education Scholarship.

**Brynn Hyttinen**, of Washburn, an undergraduate elementary education major at Dickinson State University, has been awarded a Les Snaveley Memorial Education Scholarship.



**Mason Iverson**, of Binford, received a Thomas & Garnet Wurst Scholarship.

**Auxmite Wren James**, of Fargo, an undergraduate public history major at North Dakota State University, has been awarded an NDU Foundation Ethnic Minority Scholarship.



**Krista Hulderman**, of West Fargo, has been awarded a Betty Lu Lenthe Speech Education Grant for the Sheyenne High School Speech and Student Congress teams to attend a national tournament. (Students from speech team shown at left.)



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**Brinklyn Johnson**, of Valley City, an undergraduate business education major at Valley City State University, has been awarded a Harris & Arlyce Widmer Family Business Education Scholarship and a NDU Education Scholarship.



**Kylie Johnson**, of Glenfield, received a Thomas & Garnet Wurst Scholarship.

**Myla Kaldor**, of Hillsboro, received a Robert & Janet Lorch Family Education Scholarship.



**Shaylee Kunze**, of Ray, received a Ted Meckle Memorial Scholarship.

**MaKenna Landsverk**, of Ray, received a Ted Meckle Memorial Scholarship.

**Nicole Lindgren**, an educator in Minot, was awarded an NDU Workplace Innovation Grant to purchase walkable technology for her high school walking for fitness class.



**Lydia LaFromboise**, of Bottineau, pursuing an Associate of Arts in Bible & Ministry at Free Lutheran Bible College & Seminary, has been awarded an NDU Foundation Ethnic Minority Scholarship.

**Heidi Livingston**, of Lamoure, is the recipient of a Ron & Ann Anstrom Scholarship for her graduate degree in education & math at Valley City State University.



**Hannah Meschke**, of Dickinson, an undergraduate elementary education major at Dickinson State University, has been awarded a Fern Pokorny Education Scholarship.

**Gracie Miller**, of Hillsboro, received a Robert & Janet Lorch Family Education Scholarship.

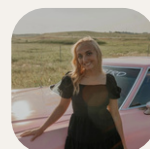


**Mackenzie Motter**, of Clifford, has been awarded a NDU Education Scholarship for her undergraduate degree in elementary education from the Valley City State University.

**Signe Nagle**, of Fargo, is the recipient of an ND United Member/Dependent Scholarship for her history and political science degree at Columbia University.

**Tara Okerson**, an educator in Rolla, has been awarded a Holland Family Experiential Learning Grant to purchase a telescope for her classroom which will be utilized during significant space events and particularly throughout her astronomy units.

**Taylor Peterson**, of Bismarck, is the recipient of a Mary Cripps Special Education Scholarship for her undergraduate degree in special education from the University of Mary.



**Madisyn Reese**, of McHenry, received a Thomas & Garnet Wurst Scholarship.

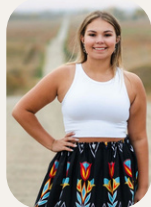
**Madison Samuelson**, of Sarles, an undergraduate elementary education major at Lake Region State College, has been awarded a NDU Foundation Ethnic Minority Scholarship.



**Braelyn Scott**, of Grand Forks, has been awarded a Harris & Arlyce Widmer Family Business Education Scholarship for FBLA-related activities.

**Brenda Seehafer**, of Rolla, has been awarded a Howard Loftesnes Memorial Education Scholarship for her Reading Literary Specialist coursework.

**Will Spickler**, of Glenfield, received a Thomas & Garnet Wurst Scholarship.



**Avery St. Germaine**, of Rolla, an undergraduate communications major at the University of North Dakota, has been awarded a NDU Foundation Ethnic Minority Scholarship.

**Madeline Stangle**, of Emerado, is the recipient of an ND United Member/Dependent Scholarship for her science degree at the University of Jamestown.



**Kaydee Stewart**, of Bowman, is the recipient of a Bill Oban Special Education Scholarship for her graduate degree in education from the American College of Education.

**Erik Stordalen**, an educator in Bismarck, was awarded a Dr. Joanne Pearson Fine Arts Grant to support the development of the Century High School Bands by providing additional traditional, rope tension drums.

**Ryan Strande**, of Thompson, is the recipient of a NDU Education Scholarship and an ND United Member/Dependent Scholarship for his social science education degree at Mayville State University.



**Brayden Sutherland**, of Enderlin, an undergraduate elementary education major at the University of Jamestown, has been awarded an ND United Education Scholarship.

**Easton Tibbs**, of Crosby, has been awarded a Harris & Arlyce Widmer Family Business Education Scholarship for FBLA-related activities.

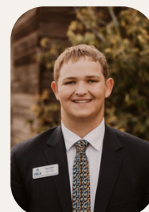
**Allisyn Tollefson**, of Cavalier, is the recipient of a Mary Cripps Special Education Scholarship for her undergraduate degree in special education from Mayville State University.

**Jessica Van Winkle**, an educator in Bismarck, has been awarded a Holland Family Experiential Learning Grant to build her Special Education students' experiences in the world of reading through providing a newsroom-like atmosphere.

**Vanessa Vollmer**, of Grace City, received a Thomas & Garnet Wurst Scholarship.



**Zack Volson**, of Balfour, has been awarded a Harris & Arlyce Widmer Family Business Education Scholarship for his undergraduate degree in education from Minot State University.



**Brian Walz**, of Minot, is the recipient of a Ron & Ann Anstrom Scholarship for his graduate math degree at Minot State University.



**Emily Wicktor**, an associate professor at Valley City State University, is the recipient of a Joseph A. Westby Leadership Award for her work as program and organization coordinator for the Minnesota Writing and English group and annual conference.

**Sarah Williamson**, of Fargo, is the recipient of a Ron & Ann Anstrom Scholarship for her graduate English degree at North Dakota State University.



**Scout Woods**, of Wahpeton, an undergraduate biology major at North Dakota State University, has been awarded a NDU Foundation Ethnic Minority Scholarship.





# Summer Learning

Local leaders came together to sharpen skills & learn at Summer Leadership and Advocacy Summit



**BY JOEL CRANE**  
*Press Secretary*

This summer, about three dozen North Dakota United members gathered at Horizon Middle School in Bismarck for NDU's second annual Summer Leadership and Advocacy Summit (SLAS). Over two days, members took part in workshops on organizing, growing membership, negotiating and communicating more effectively with their members and throughout their communities.

The summit started with a welcome from President Nick Archuleta and a presentation from Erin Oban on North Dakotans for Public Schools. From there, it was off to the races.

One of the most useful things a local leader can do is to map membership inside their local education association. Using charts, spreadsheets and building maps, leaders can visualize membership, spot opportunities for growth and plan outreach more strategically.

"We're the biggest district in the state and when we started mapping, it showed us we have so much room for growth," Jessica Van Winkle, president of the Bismarck Education

Association, said. "I'm glad we have these resources, because it gives my building reps a visual tool. Hopefully it helps them build their own leadership in their schools and creates momentum to seek out potential members."

Mapping can help local leaders pair new members with mentors, plan events where they're most needed, and make sure nobody falls through the cracks when there is a slate of new hires.

"It helps us spend time where it matters most," said Charles Rerick, an elementary music teacher in Grand Forks. "Instead of casting a wide net and hoping someone clicks a link, we're having individual conversations with the right people. It makes a big difference in how I reach out to potential members."

Organizing isn't always easy: sometimes it feels like an uphill battle. People join for different reasons, bring different levels of commitment, and sometimes even wonder about union membership altogether. That can make leadership difficult. At SLAS, members talked through those challenges and learned strategies to push past apathy, strengthen connections, and build momentum in their locals.



“For me, I think the biggest thing SLAS highlighted ... is that visibility is a huge piece of the puzzle.”

– Charles Rerick, GFEA leader

“For me, I think the biggest thing SLAS highlighted ... is that visibility is a huge piece of the puzzle,” Rerick said. “My local struggles with that a little bit, highlighting the positive work they’re doing. Shining a light on that is big.”

Strong communication across multiple audiences can be one of the best tools that a local education association has to utilize for organizing, but it’s often overlooked. Local leaders also learned communications strategies to more effectively message to members, potential members, and the general public. They also got a look at the communications resources NDU staff can provide.

“We’re thrilled with the work NDU communications staff did on our video. We’ll show it at our first building representative meeting and use it as a recruitment tool. Honestly, I had tears in my eyes. It was amazing to see members who haven’t spoken up before rise to the challenge and show their awesomeness,” Van Winkle said.

“There is a texting tool where I can push out targeted messages to building reps,” said Rerick. “I know when I was a building rep, I often felt like, ‘I’d love to be doing something, but I don’t know what.’ Now I know how to activate those folks who are waiting for someone to say, ‘Here’s how you can help.’”

When the summit wrapped at the end of the second day, members headed for home with new practical skills, fresh ideas, and excitement about the upcoming school year.

“This conference was impactful,” said Jessica Van Winkle. “As a local leader who has risen through the ranks, both times I’ve gone, I’ve felt recharged. It gave me motivation to do all the things and reminded me that I’m not alone. It really lifts the sails.”

That’s what SLAS is all about: giving leaders tools they can put to work right away and connecting them with colleagues from around the state, so we can build a stronger union together.





Representatives from the Fargo Education Association and Fargo School Board met for a negotiations session in June. Their contract was ratified in late July.

## Gains Made in Negotiations

North Dakota United wants to recognize the tremendous work and dedication to their colleagues that hundreds of negotiators across the state displayed during contract negotiations. Collectively, ND United members stood united for a strong voice in the classroom, fair compensation for challenging work, and benefits to support our families.

Statewide, 2025 was a challenging year for K-12 educators who negotiated their contracts. As we have seen during many recent legislative sessions, our state leaders have placed tremendous challenges to school budgets by failing to invest in our fantastic public schools. Instead of investing state dollars into building the world-class educational system our students, parents, and educators deserve, our state has chosen to stand pat. When this is the case, our locals and the school boards they negotiate with are left with a smaller pool of resources to invest in educator pay and benefits.

While most of our locals fought hard to maintain contract standards, we did see some bright spots in places like West Fargo, which saw significant pay increases after years of work with their Board to address health care costs. Apple Creek also saw an increase of \$6,000 to the base of the salary schedule over their two-year contract.

This negotiations cycle highlighted, yet again, that our advocacy for better contracts starts with the state Legislature. While we will often have different perspectives from our school boards about items like scheduling and leave policies, we need to fight together at the Legislature for the resources our students and educators deserve.

If you have questions about your contract or the contracts of districts across the state, please check out the Collective Bargaining section of our website or contact your NDU field consultant directly at 701-223-0450.

# Elections to be Held at 2026 NDU Delegate Assembly



## Election of Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly

Fourteen state delegate positions are open for the 2026 NEA Representative Assembly (RA), which is scheduled for July 3-7 in Denver.

Members interested in running for NEA RA Delegate must file a nominating petition signed by 50 active members in good standing. Active members include all NDU membership categories except K-12 substitute members, Community Ally, Retired and Aspiring Educator members. Retired and Aspiring Ed delegates are elected by their constituencies.

Completed petitions with the 50 signatures, along with a short bio and head shot, must be returned to ND United, 301 N 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Bismarck, ND 58501, by Feb. 17, 2026.

NEA RA delegates will be elected either at the NDU Delegate Assembly on April 18, 2026, in Bismarck or by an every-member ballot.

## Local Association Delegate Elections

Presidents of locals of 76 or more members will receive an email from NEA in late January 2026 with their number of delegates to be elected to the 2026 NEA Representative Assembly. These local delegate report forms are due at NDU headquarters by April 10, 2026.

Local associations are allocated one delegate for each 150 active and educational support NEA members or major fraction thereof. Locals with fewer than 76 members may cluster to form delegate units.

## NDU's Affirmative Action Plan

NDU's affirmative action plan commits the Association to elect two minority delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly each year.

Ethnic minorities may be nominated for state delegate positions in the same manner as others: by submitting a petition signed by 50 active members to ND United, 301 N 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Bismarck, ND 58501 by Feb. 17, 2026.

To request a petition, contact Jill Miller at [jill.miller@ndunited.org](mailto:jill.miller@ndunited.org).





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