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FOUNDATION

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What is a legacy? How does one go about building or leaving a legacy?

One of the highlights of my job is seeing how this process works in support of NDSU. There are multiple ways to define legacy, but this is the definition that most describes our work: the enduring impact of past events, actions, or the life of an individual.

With this framework in mind, it is no surprise that a theme arose as the stories you're about to read came together. The theme of this issue, lovingly crafted by our team, is life-giving legacies.


Almost every story in this magazine holds loss. Loss of a spouse, parent, or family member. However, nearly every story has something else: love, care, support, belief, vision, and legacy.

Our community is full of intentional, future-focused, and caring people who are confident in the future of NDSU. The people building

legacies here are not all alumni — they don't all live in Fargo, invest in the same things, or go about building their legacies in the same way. We think that's beautiful.

While you read, look for the ways these legacies ripple out to create new opportunities and touch the lives of others. I encourage you to not just enjoy the stories and updates but to let them serve as a bridge connecting you back to the University.

Your connection to NDSU is invaluable and integral to the thriving community within the gates of our campus, through the region, across the country, and around the world. Each story is a testament to the impact we can make together, with you as a vital part of it.


John R. Glover
President/CEO
NDSU Foundation



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ABOUT THE COVER | Photo by Kensie Wallner

The Gold Star Marching Band strides down University Drive during the fall 2023 NDSU Homecoming Parade. Their green and yellow uniforms hearken back to William (Bill) Euren '33, director of NDSU Bands from 1948 to 1968, who updated the military-style cadet band uniforms to reflect the school colors. **Read more about the impact of Bill's legacy on page 12.**



NELL GRAHAM '24



“EVERY RUN IS A WORK OF ART, A DRAWING ON EACH DAY’S CANVAS. SOME RUNS ARE SHOUTS AND SOME RUNS ARE WHISPERS. SOME RUNS ARE EULOGIES AND OTHERS CELEBRATIONS.”

—Dagny Scott Barrios

Story by Emily Erickson '15 | Photos by Kensie Wallner

When record-breaking track and field athlete Nell Graham '24 ends a race, she blazes past the white finish line. Win or lose, she knows what awaits her on the other side: her Bison teammates, ready to give hugs, high fives, and support — sometimes in unexpected ways.

“There’s always someone there to take my shoes off,” Nell said, referring to her uncomfortable spiked track shoes. “Recovering quickly is important, and the faster you can take your shoes off, the better. I think that [support] describes our team so well.”

Originally from Dodge Center, Minnesota, Nell came from a small track and field program in high school, where she focused on individual events.

“I wanted to go to a school where I would be able to contribute on the team aspect ... but I also

wanted to be able to grow,” Nell said. Athletically and academically, NDSU felt like the right fit.

Nell’s NDSU track and field experience was unique — she was recruited to compete in the 400-meter run, but after a few years of focusing on the 400 and 4x400 relay, she dipped her toes into combined events, known as “multis.” The women’s multis are the indoor pentathlon — a one-day event consisting of 60-meter hurdles, high jump, shot put, long jump, and 800-meter run — and the outdoor heptathlon — a two-day event consisting of all the pentathlon events plus the 200-meter sprint and javelin throw.

Nell’s instinct to branch out into multis was right on the mark. She has broken the previous NDSU records in the 300, 400, 600, and outdoor 400; posted pentathlon scores that ranked 37th in the NCAA in the 2023 to 2024 season; and ended her Bison heptathlon career at No. 6 on the NDSU all-time list.

Stevie Keller '06, director of NDSU track and field and cross country, has coached Nell in track events since she joined the team.

"[The team] has a family atmosphere," Stevie said. "They train together, they travel together, and they really support each other."

The team's connectedness and dedication are palpable among the 115 student-athletes, plus the coaches and staff.

"It's special because track is an individual sport, but I'm on a team — I really feel like I'm a part of something much bigger than myself," Nell said. "It's meant a lot to be a Bison."

... Some runs are shouts and some runs are whispers ...

In 2023, Nell attended the Bison Athletic Hall of Fame Luncheon. She found her seat at table five, disappointed that her teammates were far away at table 20. But Nell's friendly demeanor found her a new acquaintance seated close by, a 12-year-old named Kate. The two of them chatted and laughed, and Nell says she was envious of Kate's kids meal.

Nell then met Kate's father, Mark Olsonawski. She recognized that name. Stevie had talked about Andrea ("Andi") Olsonawski '01, a Bison Athletic Hall of Fame inductee, seven-time All-American, and the only four-time All-American in the outdoor heptathlon at NDSU. He had talked about her skill as a multi-event track and field athlete and her supportive, competitive nature. Nell also remembered that her former roommate Sofia Naranjo Mata '23 had received a scholarship in Andi's honor.

Mark established the Andi (Noel) Olsonawski Memorial Athletics Scholarship in 2020, after Andi passed away at age 41 from brain cancer. The scholarship was established for an NDSU student-athlete in the women's track and field program, with preference to a multi-event student-athlete.

Shortly after the Hall of Fame Luncheon, Mark learned the scholarship's next recipient: Nell Graham.

In NDSU's Harry D. McGovern Alumni Center, Mark sits next to his wife, Jenny, and talks about Andi and her legacy. Andi's repeated adage as she went through her cancer diagnosis — "Do your best and let God do the rest" — remains a family motto in the Olsonawski home.

"Andi was a scholarship athlete here [at NDSU]," Mark said. "It was a blessing for her to be able to receive some financial support — and then to think of all the friendships and the relationships and the opportunities that she was given, both academically and athletically, being here at NDSU was really a blessing."

After Andi and Mark got married in 2002, they discussed their legacy, their wills, and how they intended to support their respective universities. After Andi's passing, Mark worked with Stefanie Kelly '98, director of athletic development at NDSU and Andi's former track and field teammate, to develop a plan for leaving Andi's legacy.

"We hoped our family would be a small part of these athletes' lives to help them take one more step up their ladder of success," Mark said in his speech at the Hall of Fame Luncheon.

Nell says that even if she hadn't received a scholarship, she would still be fortunate to receive an education at NDSU.

"It's hard to put into words ... what scholarships can do for people," Nell said. "Knowing that someone outside of my family and myself cares about me getting an education makes me want to do better in school and do better in track."

... Some runs are eulogies and others celebrations."

—Dagny Scott Barrios

Andi's family, her former teammates and classmates, and current track and field student-athletes are prisms through which her legacy continues to shine.

After Andi graduated from NDSU, she returned to the team as a graduate assistant, working alongside Stevie who had just completed his first year of coaching during her senior year. Her tremendous work ethic and energy inspired Stevie and former NDSU track and field coach Ryun Godfrey '96 to create the "Andi Award."

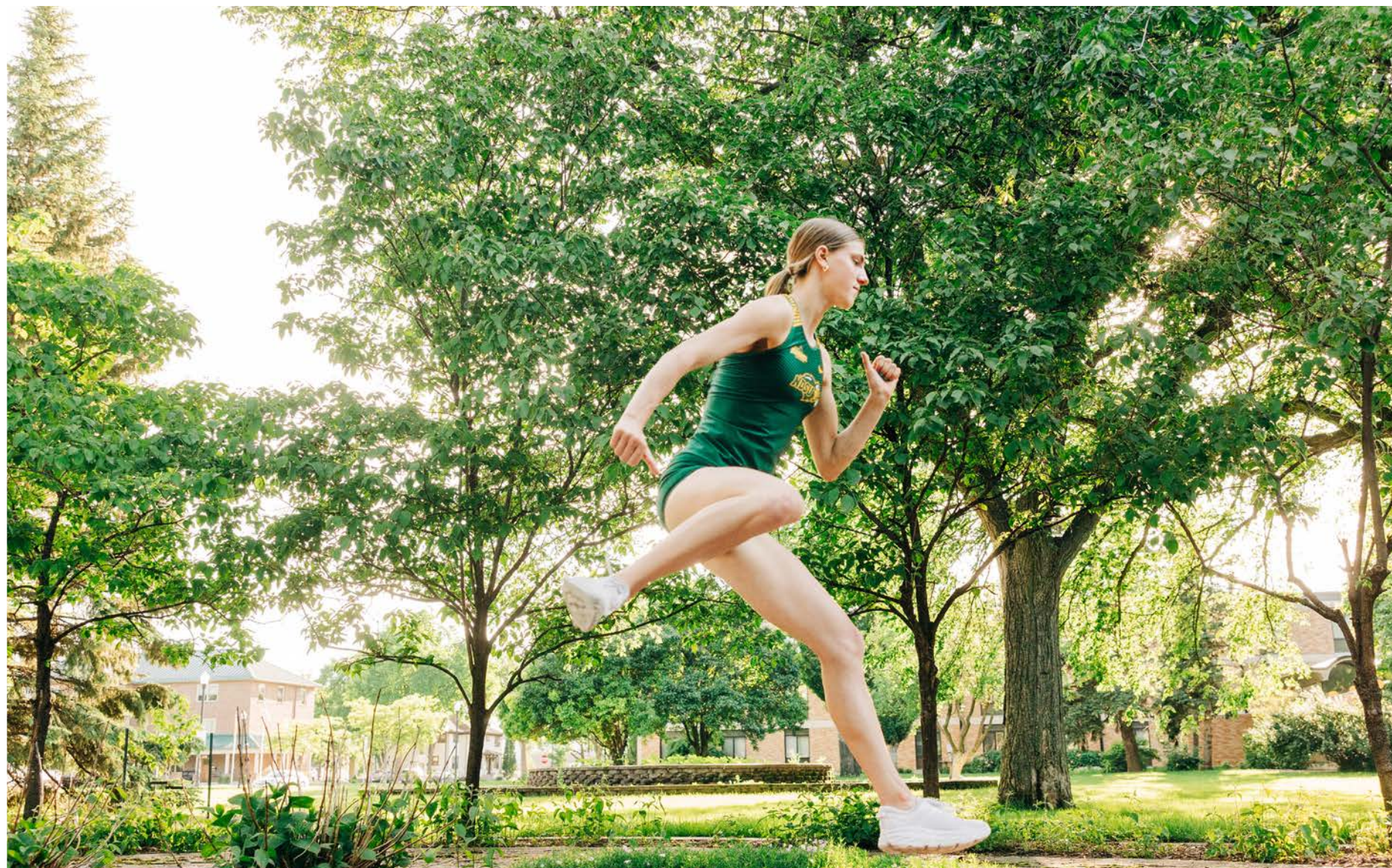
The award that started as a piece of cardstock in 2002 is now a special baton, the honor of receiving it all the more poignant after Andi's passing. To this day, it is presented at team meetings to an athlete who "goes above and beyond the call of duty," as Stevie describes it.

Andi was an encourager, Mark says. A supporter. A fierce competitor who "always made everybody around her better." Bison teammates, classmates, and coaches who surrounded Andi during her time as an NDSU student-athlete supported the Olsonawski family during their most difficult times in the wake of Andi's passing. Today, Mark; Jenny; and Mark and Andi's four children, Noel, Aaron, Ryan, and Kate, remain proud members of the Bison community.

Mark is a wellspring — he loves to talk about Andi, his children, Jenny, his faith, the blessings in his life, his goals, his connections to NDSU and the area, and NDSU athletics. He shares that, to him, NDSU defines excellence.

As he speaks, the light above him flickers. He nods his head and knowingly looks up.

"There's Andi," he says and laughs, joking that she's making sure he says the right things.



Nell Graham '24 has broken the previous NDSU records in the 300, 400, 600, and outdoor 400 and ended her Bison heptathlon career at No. 6 on the NDSU all-time list.

"For me, being somebody who didn't go to school here, and Jenny [who] didn't go to school here, through Andi's connection there's a feeling that I'm a part of something greater and bigger in this community," Mark said. "I think the Bison and NDSU have done such a great job of encompassing the whole Fargo-Moorhead community and making everybody feel like it's not just that you're a part of a team and you're [one of] 10 people on the team or 50 people on the team — it's like the whole community is a part of the Bison team."

"I never knew Andi," Jenny said. "But I feel like I did through all of these stories and everything that Mark and the kids share. I feel very, very connected to her through the network of the Bison family."

Being part of a team, part of a community, made all the difference for Andi, Mark, and Jenny — and now Nell and her teammates.

"The people I meet here and the experiences I've been given I'll carry with me throughout my entire life," Nell said. "I won't remember how fast I ran or how far I threw."

Nell's goal after graduation reflects that same compassionate mentality — earning a master's degree in speech-language pathology.

"I've always wanted a career where I'm able to make a difference in some way," Nell said. "I want to build relationships, and I want to be able to help people."

To cheer. To support. To take off someone's spikes after a challenging race. To be an encourager. To be a light. To give back.

"People don't have to give money back to student-athletes or to students — it's a choice. I have a lot of gratitude and a lot of respect for those types of people," Nell said. "I hope someday in my future, I can do the same thing because it really has changed my whole life coming to NDSU."

THE POWER OF TIME

NDSU and North Dakota agriculture have been a part of the Joe '51 and Norma '23 (Skunes) Peltier family for generations.

More than a century after their ancestor Jessamine (Slaughter) Burgum became the first woman to enroll at North Dakota Agricultural College in 1891, a new facility and endowment — both bearing the Peltier name — are making NDSU agriculture more accessible to people across the state and around the world.

Story by Micaela Gerhardt

Families often pass down heirlooms — wedding dresses, recipes, letters, and jewelry. A watch, a quilt. Perhaps furniture. Beyond these traditional familial keepsakes, Keith Peltier '75, '77, Jeff Peltier '76, Suzette Peltier '79, and Betty-Jo (Peltier) Wilson '83 inherited a belief in North Dakota agriculture.

Their late father, Joe Peltier '51, was active in the creation of the Northern Crops Institute (NCI). He also served as chairman of the North Dakota Crop Improvement Association, the first chairman of the North Dakota Sunflower Council, and a member of the North Dakota House of Representatives and State Board of Higher Education. He modeled the kind of tenacity that turns belief into action.

“You don’t have to boil the ocean or solve the problem, as long as you’re moving a solution forward,” Betty-Jo recalls her father saying. “You can apply that yet today,” she added. “NDSU’s got a lot of goals, you know, and as long as you’re moving toward that goal, you’ll be successful.”

This belief and work ethic has catalyzed recent growth at NDSU. The Joe and Norma Peltier Vice

President for Agriculture, an endowment supporting a key leadership position, was awarded to its inaugural recipient, Greg Lardy '91, in the spring of 2024. The Peltier Complex, a state-of-the-art agricultural products development center, opened its doors in the summer of 2024.

“We want to see NDSU and the state of North Dakota continue to grow,” Jeff said. “This is one facet of helping make that happen, but it’s a team effort to make it all happen, so it’s not just a building — the [Peltier Complex] is a foundation.”



Keith, Jeff, Suzette, and Betty-Jo were raised in Arthur, North Dakota, which became the family locale in 1882 when early settler Joseph Arthur (J.A.) Burgum purchased land southeast of Arthur for \$2 an acre. Later, he met and married Jessamine (Slaughter) Burgum, the first female student to enroll at North Dakota Agricultural College (NDAC), now NDSU.

In 1906, a group of forward-thinking farmers filed the Arthur Farmers

Elevator for incorporation, one of whom was J.A. Burgum. By 1923, he and Jessamine had purchased the controlling percentage of shares.

Keith, Jeff, Suzette, and Betty-Jo spent many summers working at the elevator, which was later managed by their father. Keith and Jeff were charged with cleaning grain bins and bagging seed while Suzette and Betty-Jo helped with bookkeeping and office work.

As they grew older, Keith, Jeff, Suzette, and Betty-Jo decided to pursue degrees at NDSU, following in the footsteps of their father, Joe; grandmother, Marjorie (Burgum) Peltier '39; and great-grandmother, Jessamine.

Their parents, both teachers by trade, had instilled the value of an education, but attending NDSU was never a requirement.

“The education and experience I got at NDSU, you know, we can compete with anybody in the country and anybody in the world, really,” Keith, an NDSU Foundation Trustee, said of the possibilities he sees at NDSU and across the state. “We’re just as smart and as capable ... North Dakota holds a backseat to nobody.”

It’s what the Peltier family has always known: to take pride in where they are from and to move something forward for the benefit of their

community. Joe passed away in 2014; in his memory, Norma made a significant investment in both the Complex and endowment. She earned an honorary doctorate from NDSU in 2023 and passed away in 2024.

“I was thinking about it, you know, ‘Why North Dakota?’ and really, our parents were proud of where they [lived],” Suzette said, reflecting on her family’s decision to invest in these agricultural initiatives. “Had they been born in Montana, this story would be about Montana. They both grew up in North Dakota and they both grew up in agriculture. It was there from the beginning, so it was there for us.”

A PARTIAL FAMILY TREE

From the first female student at NDAC (now NDSU) to the four siblings — all alumni — who are carrying on the family mission to move NDSU agriculture forward.



Jessamine (Slaughter) Burgum (enrolled in 1891) and Joseph Arthur (J.A.) Burgum

Marjorie (Burgum) Peltier 1939 and Joseph C. Peltier

Joseph C. Peltier 1951 (BS educational administration) and Norma (Skunes) Peltier 2023 (honorary doctorate)

Keith Peltier 1975, 1977 (BS zoology, MS agricultural economics) and Cathy Peltier 1977 (BS home economics - education)

Jeff Peltier 1976 (BS agricultural mechanization) and Anne Peltier

Suzette Peltier, MD 1979 (BS microbiology) and Jon Thorpe

Betty-Jo (Peltier) Wilson 1983 (BS computer science) and Wade Wilson 1983 (BS computer science)

NDSU campus in August 1950, the fall of Joe Peltier’s senior year
(Photo courtesy of the NDSU Archives)

The Arthur grain elevator
(Photo courtesy of the Peltier family)

JOE AND NORMA PELTIER VICE PRESIDENT FOR AGRICULTURE



Greg Lardy, inaugural holder of the Joe and Norma Peltier Vice President for Agriculture endowment, has agriculture in his blood. He grew up on a farm and ranch near Sentinel Butte, North Dakota, with four younger brothers. Greg's parents, who were 4-H leaders and supporters of the local chapter of Future Farmers of America, shaped his decision to pursue a career in agriculture, even when, during high school, he observed the farm economy suffering through high interest rates, foreclosures, and years of drought.

"Growing up on that ranch really instilled several key values. One is, you know, my family had a deep faith, and they knew that no matter what the hard times were, you're going to get through them," Greg said. "That's been something that I would say has been very important to me and my current role too — faith that no matter what challenges you're going to face, there will be opportunities to work toward a greater good and get through the difficult times."

Keith met Greg during his time serving on the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education. He and his family admire Greg's strong Christian values, even-keeled attitude, and North Dakota roots.

"I got to know Greg before he was the vice president of everything," Keith chuckled. "He showed a great presence and maturity on how to handle things. Then, when the opportunity came for us as a family — and my mother

contributed most of the [gift] financially — to be able to endow that position and have Greg be responsible ... we knew we were entrusting our gift to a really great guy, and he would use it to the best of his ability."

Greg considers himself a student of leadership, learning from books and courses as much as from "being in the trenches and taking responsibility." While his office is based on campus, Greg spends significant time gaining understanding from North Dakota commodity groups, Research Extension Center advisory boards, and all 53 county Extension offices about how NDSU can help address the current needs of farmers, ranchers, stakeholders, and the industry.

"From my standpoint, I'm just incredibly privileged to serve in a role where I can make a difference," Greg said. "It gives you an opportunity to really connect with what I think the true land-grant mission is, which is service to the citizens of the state."

Named faculty and leadership endowments provide strategic, perpetual funding for the holder of the position. In accordance with donor intent, Greg plans to implement a stronger leadership development program for employees and to enhance efforts around student recruitment in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources.

Greg earned his BS in animal and range sciences from NDSU in 1991. After earning his MS and Ph.D. in animal sciences, he returned to NDSU where he has worked for 27 consecutive years.

Extension beef cattle specialist
1997 to 2009

Department head of animal sciences
2009 to 2018

**Interim director of NDSU
Extension and acting director of
the North Dakota Agricultural
Experiment Station**
2018 to 2019

Vice president of agricultural affairs
2020 to 2023

**Joe and Norma Peltier Vice
President for Agriculture**
2024 to present

27 YEARS AT NDSU

TEACHING

Preparing future generations of agriculturalists who will be poised to meet consumer and industry needs

RESEARCH

Creating space for scientists to collaborate and optimize end-use quality of regional agricultural commodities

OUTREACH

Helping domestic and international customers utilize regional agricultural commodities through educational programming



PELTIER COMPLEX

North Dakota is the country's 11th largest agricultural exporting state, according to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. With a population of approximately 779,094 people, North Dakota's agriculture industry produces more than its residents can consume. As a result, most of the state's products are exported to places with higher populations in the U.S. and abroad.

"Trade is important for North Dakota — it's critical for our economy," Keith said. "The more we can make the products we produce here valuable, the better it is for the state and for everyone included."

A good deal for everybody — that would have made the late Joe Peltier proud. His values and many accomplishments in agriculture were the inspiration behind the Peltier family's investment in the facility. In addition to being an educational space for NDSU students, faculty, and staff, the Peltier Complex will bring the NCI, North Dakota Trade Office, USDA laboratories, and NDSU researchers under one roof, promoting greater collaboration to add value and expand the market for northern-grown crops.

"It's multipurpose as it should be, because NDSU isn't just about teaching — it's about working with the community and businesses," Jeff said.

Keith, Jeff, Suzette, and Betty-Jo remember the days when domestic and

international consumer groups would visit NDSU and make a stop at the historic Arthur grain elevator, followed by lunch at the Peltier home, which was prepared by their mother, Norma. Today, consumer groups will experience a new kind of hospitality within the Peltier Complex.

"International guests are going to see that we're very serious about what we do here and how we view our commodities as one of the premier suppliers around the globe," Greg said.

A new facility provides a critical foundation for teaching, research, and outreach, but it's people who saw a vision for the Peltier Complex and brought it to fruition. The North Dakota Legislature, agricultural commodity groups, benefactors, and the Peltier family came together to invest in the continued impact of North Dakota agriculture.

"You look at the things the Peltiers have been involved in — they're incredibly generous," Greg said. "They've been strongly rooted in the state for many generations, and the things that the family has done to benefit agriculture but also local communities, and the fact that they continue to invest in family-based businesses throughout the state, just points to a strong belief in the future of what North Dakota and what the agriculture industry really means to them." 🌱

NORTH DAKOTA LEADS IN AG EXPORTS

Wheat
\$1.5 billion
State Rank: 1

Soybeans
\$1.4 billion
State Rank: 9

**Other oilseeds
and products**
\$765 million
State Rank: 1

Corn
\$421 million
State Rank: 11

**Feeds and other
feed grains**
\$309 million
State Rank: 11

2022 data (U.S. Trade Representative Report)

Story by Micaela Gerhardt
Photos by Kensie Wallner

Alejandro's Symphony

Percussion performance major Alejandro López '25 is expanding the language of music at NDSU.



1st Movement

No Secrets

accel. (play at an increasing speed)

On a music stand outside of NDSU's Beckwith Recital Hall, pairs of bright orange earplugs incite adrenaline. To the incoming audience, they are simultaneously a gift and a warning — the possibility of noise and discomfort, offered almost like fortune cookies.

Inside the dimly lit recital hall in the Challey School of Music, glimpses of instruments appear out of shadows. The metallic pipes of a marimba glisten where the stage lights catch reflection. Large timpani basins appear like ships submerged in the sea at a dark and steady hour. People find their seats.

The lights lift, and percussion performance major Alejandro López '25 steps onstage. Applause. Dressed in all black, he stops to smile and bow, then finds his place behind the marimba, two mallets in each hand. He situates the mallets in his grip, mimicking the motion of playing without touching the instrument, without making a sound. He shrugs his shoulders to loosen the body, as if he's about to begin a race. Then, music.

“When you're up there [onstage], everything, all your emotions, everyone can see through you,” Alejandro said. “You have no secrets. It's like you and the audience, and you're telling them your story.”

Born and raised in the mountain-cradled city of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Alejandro studied at a highly competitive music conservatory in a class that began with 100 students but, by his senior year, had dwindled down to 16. Determined to follow in the footsteps of his older sister, Lauren, a professional flautist living in Tennessee, he began applying to American universities.

He needed to learn English, so he paid for three months of language lessons using money he made performing with the famed Spanish opera singer and conductor Plácido Domingo but failed his first English proficiency test. The hours-long exam cost hundreds of dollars and included writing, reading, listening, and speaking sections. Thankfully, on a second attempt, he passed.

Through his solo percussion recital, Alejandro tells the story of his journey to NDSU, offering themes and variations on self-discovery. The first piece, “Two Mexican Dances — II Movement” by Gordon Stout, is reminiscent of home, he says. It's as if he's in a park listening to a few guys playing folk music on a shared marimba. It's friendly to the ear.

He contrasts melodic marimba with the raucous drumbeat of timpani in his next set. “In Jazz” and “In Funky” by Claudio Santangelo feature jazz music and hand drumming on timpani, an instrument more typically composed for orchestra, taking both musician and audience beyond the realm of expectations.

Alejandro's family watches his recital from Honduras on a livestream, and Lauren watches from Tennessee. Before the final piece, a duo for multi-percussion he performs with his friend and fellow percussion student Jon Karels '25, Alejandro speaks directly to the camera, addressing his family in Spanish. He says he wishes they could be sitting in the front row.

Where his family cannot physically be present, NDSU students, faculty, staff, and community members fill in the seats. Across networks and hometowns and countries of origin, people listen. In this space, there is a shared language.



2nd Movement

The Boy on the Bus

largo (slow and expansive)

As a kid, Alejandro dreamt of being a bus driver. Then, around the age of 7, he noticed that the person playing the drum set at church was using foot pedals that looked a lot like a gas pedal and brake.

“I go on stage [after church] and I see drums, and they're like two pedals, right? The one they use for the bass and the one they use for hi-hat. But I wasn't thinking of that,” Alejandro says, cracking up as he remembers. “I was thinking, ‘Oh, this looks like a bus,’ you know? ‘This is it. I want to play that instrument.’”

He worked three jobs to save money to come to the U.S. Months after he arrived, with plans to study

at a university in Florida, the COVID-19 pandemic shut the world down and created new obstacles to higher education. The university in Florida rescinded its scholarship offer.

Without friends or even instruments to play, Alejandro spent a year and three months in quarantine with his grandmother in Washington, D.C. He dreamt of his family and friends, of Tegucigalpa, of riding the bus listening to symphonies and boleros and Frankie Ruiz in his headphones, of touching a drum set again.

As pandemic restrictions lifted, Alejandro began sending out audition tapes, including one to NDSU. Sigurd Johnson, associate professor and director of orchestral activities and percussion studies, remembers hearing Alejandro play for the first time.

“He was already playing things that we might hear from a graduate-level student,” Sigurd said. “It was pretty clear that we wanted him to come to school here, and the cool thing about Alejandro being an undergraduate [was] ... knowing that he was going to have an impact on our program for four years and also that hopefully we were going to have an impact on his development for four years as well.”

When Alejandro heard he had received the Euren Fellowship, a full-tuition scholarship for music majors established by Bob '67, '09 and Sheila '23 Challey, he cried.

“I called my sister right away, I called my dad, and I just told them I got the scholarship,” Alejandro said. “That was a moment where I could finally see the light again.”

3rd Movement

Friolero

agitato (restlessly)

When he performs, Alejandro is an undeniable talent. Everything, from his posture to his breath work to the dynamics and phrasing he draws from each instrument, is commanding and intensely musical. But offstage, he has struggled with finding his identity in a second language.

“In Spanish, I’m a very extroverted person. I like talking to people, I like making friends,” Alejandro said. “When I



came here, I was completely different. I was shy, I wouldn’t talk to anyone. It was like being a different person. It felt so bad — it’s like struggling and fighting against yourself.”

He could have had a steady job and good life back in Honduras but felt called to go beyond his comfort zone. Then, he experienced his first winter. Without a car, Alejandro spent nearly an hour walking to and from campus every day of his freshman year. He often found himself rehearsing until midnight, or sometimes even 2 a.m., then walking back to his apartment during a cold snap he says never seemed to end.

“I had to leave my family behind, leave my friends, leave my girlfriend, leave everything I knew: my culture, food, behavior, everything,” Alejandro said. “I left everything of me behind to follow my dream.”

Sharing his musical heritage and passion for percussion with the greater Fargo-Moorhead community helps him feel more connected to both homes — the one he has in Honduras and the one he has at NDSU. He has hosted clinics during the Raging Red Band Festival and NDSU Jazz Festival and has also given demonstrations in percussion methods classes.

“Most of those involved his skill in rhythms, techniques, and background in Latin percussion music,” Sigurd said. “He is rightly proud of his music heritage and has so much to talk about and show us of the music, especially percussion, from Honduras and his region of the world.”

It’s important to Alejandro that when he teaches and performs, he is present in the joy of making music rather than worrying about playing or explaining things perfectly. He knows people will feel what he is feeling, and he wants

them to see that he’s enjoying it, even if the journey to this joy was not easy.

Now in his senior year, he has made many friends in the music program — and he grins as he says he never imagined one of his best friends would be someone from Minnesota.

“I still feel like I’m a little bit different, of course, because that’s something I won’t be able to change,” Alejandro said. “I’m from a different culture, I was raised different, I grew up believing and doing different stuff, but it’s not a problem anymore, you know? It’s more like who I am.”

4th Movement

Dance to It

allegro con brio (lively, with brightness)

In jazz band rehearsal, Alejandro drives the beat on a Latin funk piece in 7/8 time. It’s an irregular meter, but the band is charging through it, their comradery evident. Alejandro and the pianist jokingly flex their arms, each laughing at the other. A few of the trumpeters take every opportunity to dance on the rest measures, though Matthew Patnode, professor of saxophone and jazz studies, says you can’t really dance to the “Juan Beatov Stomp” — something about that odd beat.

They’re speeding things up today. Matthew claps to keep his band on the up-tempo; the students tap well-worn white sneakers on tile. Their goal is to play the piece at 108 beats per minute, but on this day, they’re aiming to keep everyone together at 105. When Alejandro and the “bones,” as Matthew calls the trombones, fall out of sync, the band looks to Alejandro to keep feeding them the hits.

The jazz band is one of four NDSU ensembles where Alejandro currently performs. He’s also a member of the Wind Symphony, University Symphony Orchestra, and Percussion Ensemble, and during his freshman and sophomore years, he played on the snare line in the Gold Star Marching Band.

As a Euren Fellow, Alejandro balances feelings of immense gratitude with the responsibility not only to participate in multiple ensembles, but to perform to the highest level of his ability every day, because people are depending on him and looking to him as a leader.

“Since I got here, I always feel like ... I don’t like saying this, because I don’t like to, you know, talk good about myself, but they made me feel like a superstar kind of thing,” Alejandro said. “It comes with a lot of responsibility for sure, but the faculty and my friends and just the people in general and the music environment has made me feel like I’m capable of doing that.” 🐜

Pedal Point:

The Challey Legacy

Alejandro is a recipient of the Euren Fellowship, a full-tuition scholarship established by Bob '67, '09 and Sheila '23 Challey in honor of Bob’s uncle, William (Bill) Euren '33. Bill served as the director of NDSU Bands from 1948 to 1968.

Bob and Sheila have also invested in the upcoming renovation of the Reineke Fine Arts Center; travel funds for the Gold Star Marching Band to perform at National Championship games; assistantships for graduate students in the music program, and more.

“The Challeys are incredible people,” Sigurd said. “They take such a direct and personal interest in our School of Music and Division of Performing Arts — and along with that, the whole of NDSU.”



Scan the QR code or visit [NDSUFoundation.com/magazine](https://ndsufoundation.com/magazine) to hear Alejandro talk about his approach to music in a video by Studio 46.



glad you're here



NDSU students bring companionship and events to residents in memory care at Fargo's Touchmark retirement community.

Story by Sarah Coomber | Illustration by Leah Ecklund

"I'm angry," said the woman, eyes darting side to side beneath a furrowed brow and neatly styled gray hair.

She sat, shoulders hunched, on a padded bench in a hallway decorated with cheerful paintings. Lowering her voice, she continued to mutter.

I had just entered Devonshire, the highest-level memory care neighborhood in Touchmark at Harwood Groves, a south Fargo retirement community.

Walking with me was Anna Strand '27, moving with the confidence of an athlete, her face like sunshine. She stopped in front of the bench.

"Hi," she said, addressing the woman by name. "We're going to make bouquets. Do you want to join us?"

The older woman's voice quieted. She looked up at Anna. "No. I'm angry," she said and turned her gaze back to the floor.

"She often says this," Anna explained softly, after we moved on. "But she'll join us later."

Anna's assessment of the woman made perfect sense to me. I had watched my own

mother struggle with dementia at the end of her life, moods swinging and behavior shifting. When her challenges became too great for my father to handle at home, they moved into Touchmark, where staff helped care for my mom as she drifted away.

Touchmark's memory care environment is now the site of a pilot project for NDSU students and researchers. During the spring 2024 semester, Anna was among seven interns who visited on the weekends and led events for its 20 residents.

A morning in memory care

On a Saturday in April, four of the interns met up in Devonshire's Cozy Corner room: Anna, a nutrition science major, and Addisyn Douty '25, Taylor Gohdes '25, and Tyler Hoang '25, all exercise science majors. They set white vases and grocery store flowers on a long table and invited the residents to join them in making bouquets.

Soon the table was ringed by residents sitting in chairs. Doris Day sang "Que Sera,

Sera" from an oldies playlist that wafted from the students' portable speaker. For the next hour or so, residents came and went, some sitting down, choosing their own flowers to put in vases, others watching the students select and arrange flowers for them. One woman sank into a chair to watch and, after a few minutes, nodded off.

When "At the Hop" began to play, a woman wearing a blue fleece sweatshirt lit up. Sitting at the table, she began to snap her fingers, shimmy her shoulders, and bounce her feet to the 1958 hit. "I love to dance!" she smiled.

"Brings back the memories, doesn't it?" twinkled another woman, her hair short and white.

After a while, the angry woman we met earlier entered the room. Her eyes had changed from stormy to curious, and there was a hint of a spring in her step. Some at the table turned their heads to see who was coming, and her mood swung to irritated.

"Why are you looking over here?" she asked. "It's like you're expecting something straaaaange to happen."

They turned back to their flowers.

Watching this woman navigate the morning's happenings, I felt a sense of recognition.

I had observed my own mother swimming in similar emotional currents. Her confusion with everyday tasks often resulted in frustration. She would scowl and make herself immovable. Sometimes she would tell my dad she was leaving to go back to her hometown, far away, where she insisted she would rejoin family and friends, some of whom were no longer alive.

Dementia is caused by changes in the brain that lead to problems with memory, language, problem-solving, and other skills needed for everyday life. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause, accounting for 60% to 80% of all dementia

cases. Others include vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia, and Lewy body dementia.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, in North Dakota alone approximately 14,000 people ages 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's. Nationwide, there are nearly 7 million. By 2050, that number is predicted to rise to nearly 13 million, unless a cure or preventive measures are found.

Will anyone be left untouched?

A confluence of generations

The student internships and related research projects at Touchmark are funded by an endowment named "Improving the Quality of Life for Persons with Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease." It was created by Terry

at NDSU and later became CEO of Carlson Travel Agency. She was an active community leader in Davenport, North Dakota, where she started an enrichment program for kindergartners, founded a theater group, and organized parades. Asked to coach a sport she'd never played, she led a softball team to a state championship.

"She was this energetic inspiration throughout our lives," Terry said.

Jean remained active until the very end of her life, but when she faced dementia, she moved into Touchmark for memory care.

Terry and Darrol noticed that Touchmark's events calendar was full, but on weekends the offerings were fewer and not as many staff were available to accompany memory care residents.

"They might not always remember the conversation we had the day before, but I think they get excited when we come, because they remember the way that we make them feel."

Anna Strand '27

Scherling '77, '08 and her father, the late Darrol Schroeder '52, '08, in honor of Donna Jean (aka Jean or DJ) Schroeder '49, Terry's mother and Darrol's wife.

Jean had been an economics major

As Darrol visited Jean every day, he and Terry wondered about her neighbors whose families lived far away. They started imagining ways that NDSU students might help them stay engaged:





Wouldn't it be wonderful if students would practice their musical instruments in the hallway? And wouldn't it be fun for physical education students to come and play a little soccer with a balloon?

Another thing Terry noticed was that after her mom entered memory care, she gained weight. She would stand in front of her mirror, looking at her stomach with consternation. Terry learned that dementia causes some people to lose touch with hunger sensations

— they can't tell when they need to eat or can't tell when to stop.

Wanting to improve life for those living with dementia, Terry and Darrol brought their ideas to the NDSU Foundation and set up the endowment with a focus on nutrition and weekend enrichment activities.

The funding is making it possible for NDSU Health, Nutrition, and Exercise Sciences faculty Sherri Stastny '88, '89, '07 and Ryan McGrath to hire student interns and set up research projects focused on nutrition and events. Sherri is a licensed registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in sports dietetics. Before joining the NDSU

faculty in 2002, she worked as director of food and nutrition services in several health care systems. Ryan is the director of Healthy Aging North Dakota and is also on the faculty of the University of North Dakota's department of geriatrics.

"I'm grateful that I have an opportunity to see some results during my lifetime," said Terry, who retired as a major general in the U.S. Air Force, senior leader in the Department of Homeland Security, and founder and CEO of a national security consulting firm. "I hope that my parents would be pleased and proud of the impact that their gift has had on individuals with Alzheimer's and the University that they love so much."

Last fall, Sherri's nutrition and dietetics students identified snacks as a place where changes might help residents keep their weights more stable. Four of her seniors spent three days meeting with Touchmark's residents, nursing staff, and executive chef and exploring the memory care snack menu to make healthy changes.

"We all like our treats," Sherri said, "but we tried to switch it up with nutrient-dense snacks." Instead of a frosted sugar cookie, how about an oatmeal raisin cookie? They explored nut mixes, trail mixes, veggies and dips, and dried and fresh fruits.

To address the need for more things to do on weekends, Sherri and Ryan offered paid internships and training to students in the College of Health and Human Sciences using funds from the endowment.

Throughout spring

semester, the interns took turns organizing events in the memory care area for weekend enrichment. Ahead of each visit, they ran them by Touchmark staff and their professors.

Some of the events included creating and enjoying healthy snacks, like making protein balls and smoothies. Others encouraged movement and social connection: songs and games, dancing, walking excursions, dyeing Easter eggs, planting gardens, creating pancake batter art, and bringing in musicians — including Taylor's grandmother, who played hymns on the piano.

Anna described a pillow project, where participants tied together two fringed pieces of fabric. Although the task was too complicated for some, it still felt like a success.

"It was so cool seeing everyone here," she said, "hearing people laughing and talking, some going on walks, some making pillows."

It wasn't about the craft — it was about being together.

Engaging with the gray tsunami

As students and residents connected weekly, Sherri and Ryan evaluated how their interactions affected both groups.

Based on questionnaires filled out by Touchmark staff, the researchers saw noticeable improvements in the older adults' levels of social engagement, anxiety mitigation, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life after weekends when the student interns were on site.

"Do we find this program to be beneficial? Well, 10 out of 10 every single time," Stephanie Doppler, clinical care manager at Touchmark, said. "Whenever there's an activity, the anxiety goes down, because they're not necessarily looking for their family or

thinking they have to go somewhere or worried about what's going on. They're involved and engaged."

Plus, she says, knowing an event is coming up gives residents something to look forward to. Afterward, they tend to be calmer and rest better in the evening. That's good for the seniors as well as their caregivers.

"It's rejuvenating for team members to have new people bring in new ideas," Touchmark executive director Anne-Marie Fitz '08 said.

In another area of research, Sherri and Ryan are studying how these experiences affect the student interns.

They had the students fill out surveys at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester.

Preliminary data indicate the interns gained confidence in overall dementia care, professionalism, relationship building, working with the memory care group, and facing unexpected challenges. Ryan said the interns brought a "trailblazing attitude and willingness to try new things."

They also got exposure to career paths in the field of elder care.

As the U.S. population ages, the gray tsunami is coming. According to the Alzheimer's Association, the U.S. will need to nearly triple its number of geriatricians by 2050 to keep up with demand.

"No matter what we do, there's more and more need," Sherri said. "And if we can instill passion about helping older adults as a career, I'm all about that."

Ripple effects

Having journeyed with my own mother through dementia, I was fascinated to watch the students navigating those unpredictable waters, meeting each resident where he or she was at on that particular day.

Their young hands, many with

nails painted in optimistic pinks, assisted wrinkled fingers building fresh bouquets and painting cheery birdhouses as they chatted around the table.

The woman who started out angry in the hallway later sat down at the table and joined the activity, just as Anna predicted. She chose flowers and added them to her vase. Later, looking relaxed, even smiling, she painted a birdhouse.

Clearly the impacts of these weekend visits go far beyond keeping residents active.

"It's really important, the way you make them feel," Anna observed. "They might not always remember the conversation we had the day before, but I think they get excited when we come, because they remember the way we make them feel."

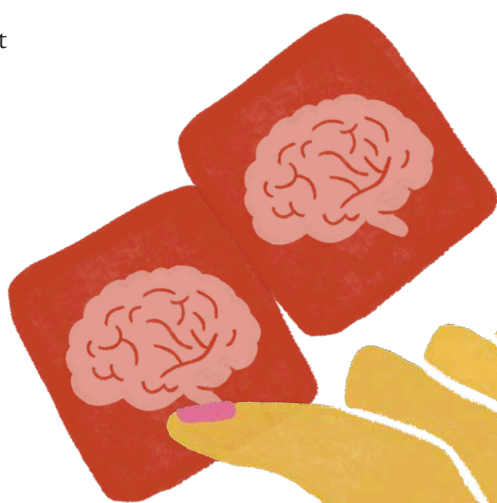
Nearby, Addisyn helped the woman with short, white hair paint a birdhouse pink and blue. The woman asked what year she was in school.

"A junior," Addisyn answered.

The woman patted her on the arm.

"I'm glad you're here," she said. 🐾

The illustrated tiles, inspired by vintage memory card games, symbolize some of the metaphors and experiences described in this story.



STRUCTURES OF CONNECTION

Joanna Slominski '04 wants us to think differently about construction – it's more than bricks and concrete.

Story by Paige Johnson '19

Summer, 2017. The highly anticipated Sanford Medical Center in Fargo had just celebrated its ribbon cutting. Actor Josh Duhamel was in attendance. Fergie performed. Joanna Slominski '04 and her team sneaked onto the building's rooftop as people celebrated. The city of Fargo stretched out before them as fireworks sparkled in the sky.

It was the biggest project Joanna, general manager, had led with Mortenson, a construction and real estate company headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with 13 geographic offices across the U.S., including one in Fargo.

"It was an extremely rewarding project," Joanna said. "It was the pinnacle of teamwork. We were all shooting for a greater goal."

A few months after the hospital opened, Joanna's son had to be rushed via ambulance to the hospital's emergency room.

After being in the details of the hospital's construction for more than five years — reading plans and coordinating efforts for the very room she was in — Joanna described the awe she had as a patient, experiencing the impact of her work in real time. It was a scary moment, but her work had helped ensure the doctors, nurses, and medical staff could give the best care to her son and make him well.

"In construction, when a project is completed, you know you've accomplished something tangible," Joanna said. "Each project is unique and contributes to the betterment of society."

Joanna, who graduated with a degree in construction engineering from NDSU, celebrated 20 years with Mortenson in 2024. She's worked on numerous major projects with the company, like Huntington Bank Stadium in Minneapolis; Towner County Medical Center in Cando, North Dakota; and the recently completed Anne Carlsen Center in Jamestown, North Dakota.

Every building you've entered has been influenced by the work of a construction engineer like Joanna. Construction engineering is a multidisciplinary field, combining the technicalities of engineering with the nuances of business. Construction engineers are involved in the entire construction process: they work with architects on the design of a space, manage the day-to-day operations of a construction site, and ensure that, once a project is completed, the building owner has the tools needed for continued operation and maintenance.

The Associated General Contractors of America reports that the construction industry contributes \$1.1 trillion, or 4%, of the nation's GDP; in North Dakota, the contribution is \$4 billion, or 5.4%, of the state's GDP. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects

the field will grow by 5% in the next 10 years.

"The need for engineers and construction professionals for the next 15 years is going to be exponentially larger than it was previously," Joanna said.

As an alumna, Joanna has remained highly involved with the College of Engineering and the lives of NDSU engineering students. Joanna met Elijah Dale '24, a construction engineering graduate and field engineer intern with Mortenson, in the company's Fargo office. They connected through her role on the College of Engineering's advisory and advancement board and his involvement in the Associated General Contractors student chapter at NDSU. In fact, Elijah says, Joanna encouraged him to pursue becoming president of the chapter.

"Employers have an opportunity to mentor students during internships, or even just through being involved. A lot of companies are pretty involved in student organizations here at NDSU, and I think that's huge," Elijah, who is originally from Plymouth, Minnesota, said. "Because students are the ones these companies are going to hire, it's to their own benefit to help prepare them to be ready outside of college."

During his first summer as a field engineering intern, Elijah admits he had "no clue what was going on." With the help of good mentors, by the next summer, he began to be self-sufficient. Elijah now works full-time as a field engineer for Mortenson. He says he feels "far ahead" of his peers thanks to the professional relationships he nurtured as a student and intern. He's currently on-site for a project being completed in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

"The best thing mentors did for me was challenge me and always be there for questions," he said.

"Everyone needs some kind of help at some point in time," Joanna said. "Mentorship is invaluable. My career and whatever success has happened is not because of me. It's because of the people that I have worked with and the people who have coached me through tough situations. It's never a one-person show."

One of the most impactful moments of Joanna's life came during what should have been her senior year at NDSU. The spring she was set to graduate, Joanna was awake at 2 a.m. working on her senior design project. In a cramped engineering computer lab, as bright screens reflected on tired faces and keys clacked around her, Joanna received the phone call telling her that her father had passed away. Instantly, she says, the people around her took care of her.

The construction engineering department helped her find a co-op experience that allowed her



Joanna Slominski '04
(Photo by Kensie Wallner)

tunities for both formal and informal mentorship; those opportunities extend to entry-level employees like Elijah or more advanced organizational leaders like Joanna.

Elijah speaks “almost daily” with a mentor he met while working as an intern on the Anne Carlsen Center; Joanna and Dan meet quarterly to discuss challenges, bounce ideas off one another, and, generally, check in with each other.

“When folks that you’ve been a mentor to succeed — get promoted, take on new responsibilities — those are really rewarding moments,” Dan said. “The purpose of our company is building for the greater good. But if

you really think about what we do, we make people’s lives better. Whether it’s renewable energy or a hospital or higher education or a sports facility, it enriches people’s lives. Seeing the people at our company that build those projects accomplish those things ... that’s super rewarding.”

Joanna is at the helm of the future of construction. Since the beginning of her career, she has advocated for women and under-represented people in the industry and the value of unique ideas and diverse perspectives. She’s excited to work toward innovation in the industry and continue connecting with students and recent grads like Elijah.

She hopes these connections and learning opportunities can be facilitated in spaces like the new Richard Offerdahl '65 Engineering Complex and through budding initiatives like the College of Engineering’s Industry Connections program.

“The needs of construction are going to cause us to have to think differently,” she said. “Construction is so much more than bricks and concrete. It’s a business about people.” 🐼



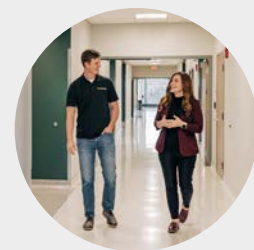
MORTENSON

Mortenson was founded in Richfield, Minnesota, in 1954 by Mort A. Mortenson, Sr. It is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with offices in 10+ cities across the U.S. The company’s resume includes Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, California; Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, Nevada; and U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.



RICHARD OFFERDAHL '65 ENGINEERING COMPLEX

In fall 2023, Mortenson and Doosan Bobcat each announced a \$5 million gift to the NDSU College of Engineering’s new academic building. Richard '65 and Linda Offerdahl provided a historic private donation of \$25 million. In addition to support from other benefactors and the North Dakota Legislature, these leadership gifts helped accelerate the construction timeline by one year; groundbreaking will begin in fall 2024.



INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS

The College of Engineering launched this pilot program in spring 2024, pairing 27 students with industry mentors from seven companies, including Mortenson, John Deere, and Marvin. Its goal is to provide students with the opportunity to learn from professionals in the field.

CURIOSITIES

On a chilly November day in 1974, a scant crowd, their 50-cent tickets in hand, dotted the bleachers of Dacotah Field to watch the Bison take on the Wisconsin-Milwaukee Panthers in the inaugural Harvest Bowl football game.

The game was relatively unexciting (described by the NDSU Spectrum as “boring, until the Bison awoke the ones that stayed by almost giving away the game”), but nevertheless, the day proved successful — the Bison won 14-6, and more importantly, a concept came to life for the NDSU thought-leaders who envisioned a day of recognition for the region’s farmers, ranchers, and agriculturists.

After the game, agricultural professionals, supporters, and representatives from each of North Dakota’s 53 counties, plus 10 from western Minnesota counties, filled a nearby auditorium for a dinner and awards ceremony, where an outstanding agriculturist was honored for their impact on agriculture in the state, region, or world.

What began the previous year as Agriculture Recognition Day, as imagined by NDSU professor and potato geneticist Bob Johansen '49, '56 and NDSU athletic director Ade Sponberg, has become Harvest Bowl, a weekend-long celebration of NDSU athletics

and the University’s impact on agriculture for the past 50 years.

In a guest column of a 1978 North Dakota Farm Research bulletin, Ade described the importance of providing public recognition to agriculture:

“Contributions from agriculture to the quality of life in North Dakota and the Upper Midwest often go unheralded, and the excitement surrounding a football game, together with recognition of individuals who have made significant contributions toward a successful agriculture, provide an excellent combination to accomplish this purpose.”

In the half-century since its inception, Harvest Bowl has become a prominent annual NDSU tradition in which participants recognize and support scholarships for outstanding student-athletes who are majoring in agriculture or have agricultural backgrounds and continue to celebrate leaders in agriculture and agribusiness.

In November 2023, more than 550 attendees enjoyed a locally sourced meal and moving ceremony at the Harvest Bowl awards dinner, and the next afternoon, 14,191 fans packed the Fargodome for the Harvest Bowl football game — just feet away from the game’s original location. 🌱



ADE SPONBERG

BOB JOHANSEN
'49, '56

TO SEE MORE PHOTOS AND ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS ABOUT HARVEST BOWL’S HISTORY, SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT [NDSUFUNDATION.COM/MAGAZINE](https://ndsufoundation.com/magazine).



50 YEARS OF HARVEST BOWL

STORY BY EMILY ERICKSON '15

ARCHIVAL ASSETS BY NDSU ARCHIVES AND NDSU SPECTRUM

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