

GUEST

Why local fire and ambulance districts need our support

I've found myself in numerous conversations across the state regarding fire and ambulance services. I was even asked once why it mattered to me since I was from one of the bigger cities. As I was doing some work this weekend, I wrote this, which hopefully explains it.

Sustaining fire and ambulance services – especially in our rural communities – has been a major topic of conversation across the state for years. However, the reality of what that truly means hit home for me this Thanksgiving.

My family and I embarked on our annual camping trip, driving across the state from Williston to Fort Ransom State Park. On that long drive, I found myself thinking about our first responders. I realized that for every mile we traveled, I could rest assured that if something happened to my family, someone would be there to help.

I did the math: that single drive took us through 14 different ambulance districts and 28 fire districts.

When people ask, “Why should I care about a fire or ambulance service three counties away?” this is the answer. We often view emergency services as isolated “local” responsibilities, funded by local taxes for local residents. But that view is outdated. The reality is that public safety in North Dakota is an interconnected web.

If a rural ambulance service or fire district closes due to lack of funding or volunteers, the burden ripples outward. The neighboring district must extend its range to cover that territory, stretching their own limited resources thinner and inevitably increasing response times.

We cannot afford to lose a single district because increased distance equals increased time, and time is the one luxury we do not have in an emergency. Those added minutes are the critical difference between life and death. In cases of stroke, trauma or cardiac arrest, that delay is often the deciding factor between a full recovery and a permanent, life-altering disability. When one link in this chain weakens, the safety net fails for all of us.

We all rely on their ability to respond, not just in our hometowns, but whenever we travel. We often take this safety net for granted; we don't think about emergency services until the moment we desperately need them. But as you travel our state, remember that fire truck or ambulance you pass might not be your local department, but they are there for you.

So, the next time you stop at a gas station and see raffle tickets for a volunteer department you’ve never heard of, I encourage you to support them. They are protecting you without you even realizing it. And if you have the ear of your elected officials, take a moment to discuss public safety. Remind them that this isn't just a local issue; it is a county and statewide necessity that keeps the entire state moving safely.

Corey Johnson
Interim Fire Chief
Williston Fire Department
Williston, N.D.

Weekly Crossword Answers
December 1, 2025

R	A	B	B	I	S		S	A	L	I	N	E		
M	A	D	E	I	R	A		A	B	A	L	O	N	E
A	B		A	N	A	L	O	G	I	Z	E		D	A
H	I	N	D	S		A	U	G		E	A	G	E	R
D	E	U	S		S	A	T	E	S		C	R	A	N
I	S	M		R	A	M		D	K	G		O	R	E
	E	X	E	C					R	O	G	U	E	S
A	C	R	I	S						W	U	N	D	T
B	R	A	V	E	D					M	A	I	D	
R	U	T		T	A	R		P	O	N		H	U	S
E	S	O	P		B	A	S	A	L		T	O	N	E
A	A	R	O	N		P	I	P		S	A	G	E	R
S	D		S	A	T	I	R	I	C	A	L		A	U
T	E	H	E	R	A	N		S	A	R	C	A	S	M
S	E	R	A	P	E			T	R	I	A	G	E	



UPSIDE DOWN UNDER

Hall of fame worthy

BY MARVIN BAKER

Something happened in Watford City Friday night that was monumental, but outside the world of hockey, most people in North Dakota probably didn't know about it.

There was a North Dakota Amateur Hockey Association Hall of Fame induction and when you see the details of this person, you'll wonder why this didn't happen five years ago.

Dave Hansen, who played high school hockey at Grand Forks Red River, moved to Watford City and started a hockey program there in 1985 with Arden Berg. His first team had 14 players, ages 5-14, and they skated on a local lagoon.

Fast forward 40 years and Hansen has not only been the coach for the Watford City Oilers program, but actually coached two teams for a time. In addition to that, he's coached state teams; he's been a referee; and all three of his kids Alex, Ryan and Kayla played for him. Daughter Kayla was an assistant coach, telling the Roundup, a Sidney, Mont. newspaper, that she knew

everything about the game. Through it all, Hansen has coached at least 50 hockey teams in 40 years and the program he built, along with Berg, went from those 14 kids to now, more than 250 hockey players in the Watford City program.

In addition to that, in 2016 twin hockey arenas in Watford City's Roughrider Center were built, with one dedicated and named the Dave Hansen Arena in January 2017. It's arguably one of the nicest hockey arenas in North Dakota, save the Ralph Englestad Arena on the University of North Dakota campus in Grand Forks.

So Friday night, the Watford City Park Board, the local hockey program board of directors and the North Dakota Amateur Hockey Association pulled out all the stops to honor this legendary coach, who was three times Junior Gold Coach of the Year.

At first his family was acknowledged; his wife Lynette, children Alex, Ryan



and Kayla, as well as their grandchildren. Hansen said during his speech that his family has endured a lot over the past 40 years being in a hockey family such as theirs. There were late-night trips across the state to get home, there were early Wednesday morning practices and there was time away from home during his coaching career.

Through it all, the family stood by him and as he implied, it made him a better coach, a better father and a better grandfather. And it shows. The entire humble Hansen family showed a lot of grace and dignity Friday night while at center ice.

Hansen was also responsible for something indirectly related to the hockey program that doesn't get listed in a statistic.

It's about the spirit of volunteering and how he engineered virtually an entire community to believe in his vision of one day having a promising hockey program in Watford City. From that frigid and wind-swept lagoon to a multipurpose arena to a state-of-the-art facility, Hansen drove that train, but there were a lot of volunteers working with

him and Berg to build not just the team but the enthusiasm that goes with creating a successful program. That translates to generations of fans today watching hockey games in the arena.

During his speech, Hansen talked about moving to Watford City from Grand Forks in the mid-1980s and telling someone he wanted to start a hockey program in a huge basketball town. He surely got some odd looks after making that statement, but now you can easily see the dividends.

Hansen was presented with a special award and a plaque with all 59 of the Hall of Fame inductees listed including himself, the only inductee in the class of 2025. His award will be on permanent display in the North Dakota Hall of Fame headquarters in Jamestown.

Hansen created a spark that has been burning bright for 40 years and will no doubt be around another 40 years.

(Marvin Baker is a news writer for the Kenmare News and formerly Foster County Independent.)

- Weekly Crossword -

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. American automotive titan
- 4. Tire term
- 7. Two-year-old sheep
- 10. Indigenous people of Thailand
- 11. Anti-Soviet Cold War group
- 12. Actress de Armas
- 13. Not moving
- 15. Cool!
- 16. Plants of the arum family
- 19. Connected with touch
- 21. Pen stain
- 23. Monetary units
- 24. School kids' art project
- 25. Early Bell Canada executive
- 26. Sword
- 27. Hates
- 30. Fixed in one place
- 34. Pie __ mode
- 35. Moved swiftly on foot
- 36. Carrier on vehicle
- 41. A path to get through
- 45. "Rule, Britannia" composer
- 46. Spiritual leader
- 47. Flowing
- 50. Respectful compli-

ments

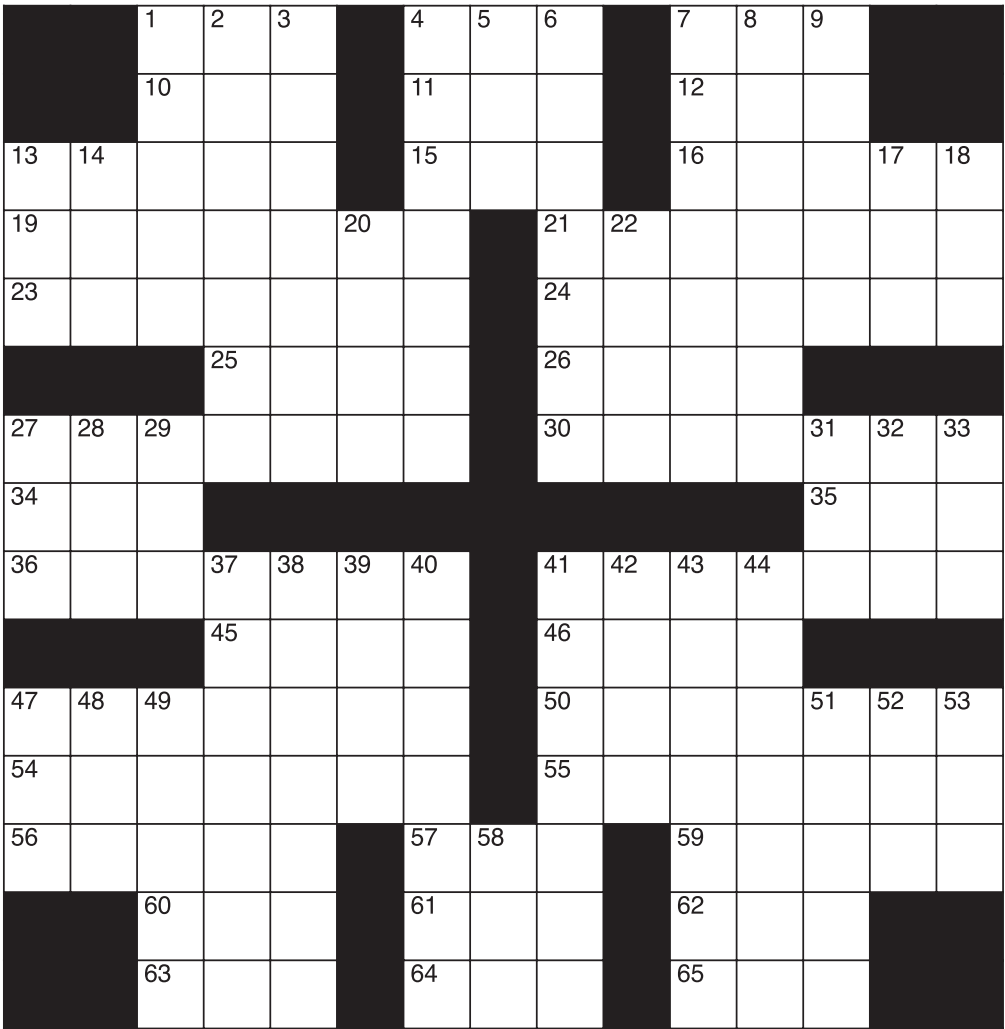
- 54. Cure
- 55. Soft, lightweight fabric
- 56. Building material
- 57. Japanese delicacy
- 59. A way to cause to be swollen
- 60. One and only
- 61. You might get one in summer
- 62. Wreath
- 63. Thus far
- 64. They __
- 65. Employee reference number

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Policemen (French)
- 2. Toy dog
- 3. Intestinal condition
- 4. Muscular weaknesses
- 5. Helps little firms
- 6. Alphabetical lists
- 7. Takes down
- 8. Facilitates
- 9. Ethnic people of Ethiopia
- 13. Engine additive
- 14. Explorers group
- 17. Written account
- 18. Consumed
- 20. Opposite of first

22. No (slang)

- 27. Government lawyers
- 28. NY Giants great
- 29. Small amount
- 31. A way to save for your future
- 32. Fall behind
- 33. Midway between northeast and east
- 37. Head pain
- 38. Wildly popular sport
- 39. "Princess Diaries" actress Hathaway
- 40. Boat race
- 41. About fish
- 42. Nursemaid
- 43. Able to be marketed
- 44. Not as large
- 47. Parts per billion (abbr.)
- 48. Paddle
- 49. Oneness
- 51. Bitter chemical
- 52. Not around
- 53. Very fast airplane
- 58. Main tributary of the Rhine



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