

Your Weather



Friday - Jan. 26  
32 for the high  
20 for the low



Saturday - Jan. 27  
28 for the high  
21 for the low



Sunday - Jan. 28  
36 for the high  
23 for the low

A special hi, hello & how are you doing to our

Subscriber of the week:

Jim Gebur  
Drayton, ND

In this Issue:



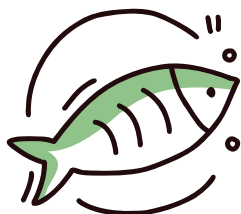
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# North Dakota's oldest citizen passes

Sixth oldest person in the nation leaves behind legacy of kindness, positivity, and bowling

By Mike Alan Steinfeldt

North Dakota's oldest Citizen has passed away. Clarabell Demers died on Wednesday, Jan. 17 at Unity Medical Center in Grafton.

Known affectionately as "Grandma D," Clarabell was born at the dawn of the second decade of the 20th century in eastern Walsh County.

Clarabell Demers was born in Acton, North Dakota, on Nov. 3, 1910, the oldest of three children born to Victor and Philomina Campbell.

When Clarabell was born, World War I was still four years away and William H. Taft was the president of the United States.

During her lifetime, Clarabell lived through the first global pandemic known as the Spanish Flu, which circulated the globe at the close of World War I.

During the course of her lifetime, Clarabell witnessed the roaring 20s, the Great Depression, two world wars, the assassination of an American president, the invention of the radio, television, computer, cell phone, and many other inventions too numerous to mention.

Clarabell married Frederick Demers in February 1930. The couple did not have an automobile when they were first married; instead, they traveled where they needed to go with a horse and buggy.

With her late husband, Demers established the popular JR's Bar in Oakwood. She lived in Oakwood most of her life.

Clarabell was a local and statewide celebrity, not only due to her age, but also her quick wit and joyfulness that she brought to everyone she met.

Demers was famous for her love of bowling and bowled in the senior league in Grafton until she was 106. On her 100th birthday she bowled her age. At the time of her death, Clarabell was the oldest living resident of North Dakota, and the sixth-oldest validated living person in the United States.

She became the oldest living person in the state of North Dakota following the death of 115-year old Iris Westman on Jan. 3, 2021.

Governor Doug Burgum released the following statement on the evening of Demers' passing.



## 'Rural Transformations: The Changing Rural Narrative'

Lunch time webinar provides insight, discussion on evolution of rural areas

By Hilary Nowatzki-May

Last Tuesday over the lunch hour, a unique webinar was hosted by the Rendezvous Region in collaboration with the Red River Regional Council.

The webinar's topic revolved around the changing dialogue of the rural narrative, with a review of current projects such as murals, talking trails, and other initiatives.

At the end of the webinar, attendees were able to hear from a panel of "newcomers" to the area who shared why they transplanted to the region and what makes northeastern North Dakota so great.

Ben Winchester, a rural sociologist at the University of Minnesota Extension, was the key speaker in the webinar, and explained his studies to those in

attendance. He says his primary job is to make data "consumable and understandable."

"The premise behind all of my work is what I call 'rewriting the rural narrative' and the idea here is that many times we do have a terrible narrative about rural communities, small towns, that our best days are behind us," he stated. "But on the

other hand, I can't find a home to buy, we're in super high demand."

According to Winchester's data, this narrative has been outdated since the 1970s, as people in their 30s, 40s, and 50s have shown a consistent pattern of people moving into these rural areas since.

'RURAL' CONT PAGE 9

## FRYING FISH FOR PHILANTHROPY

57th Annual St. Thomas Booster Club Walleye Fish Fry hosted this weekend

By Hilary Nowatzki-May

On Saturday, Jan. 27, Dennis Barker along with his son-in-law, Brent Baldwin, and grandson, Hunter Baldwin will all be on the same mission: frying fish for a good cause.

The trio of generational fish-fryers will be joined and assisted by various area businesses and volunteers to host the 57th Annual St. Thomas Booster Club Walleye Fish Fry, happening this Saturday from 4:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Although they may be a small group in a small township, the St. Thomas Booster Club has had a big impact throughout its last 39 years of existence, having distributed nearly 1.5 million dollars to local charitable organizations.

These recipients include the St. Thomas Development Corporation (\$454,316.00), the town park (\$181,809.00), and fire department (\$272,293.00), as well as

\$538,401.00 dispersed to numerous area clubs, charities, schools, and children.

"We gave away \$126,402 last year, and that doesn't all stay in St. Thomas," said Dennis. "We donate to area places also, for example, the Drayton After Prom Party and we've donated to the golf course in Drayton, and we donate to Grafton, Cavalier, Hoople, and other places."

Saturday's annual fish fry is one of the several ways that the club is able to raise these funds, along with weekly Thursday night bingo at the St. Thomas Legion, charitable gaming, and pull-tabs.

According to Dennis, this wouldn't be possible without the support of friends and other volunteers who step up to help from surrounding communities.

"Drayton has always been real good to support us. Grafton has always been real good to support us," said Dennis.

"When I say that, I mean by coming to the fish fry, bingo, and things like that. Any function that we have, we usually have really good participation from the other towns around."

Dennis, the club's current President (and past President numerous times), is currently serving another one-year term in the position with the Booster Club. He has lived in St. Thomas for 52 years and has spent each of them volunteering with the group.

"My grandson was the president before me and I'm president now. My son-in-law will be president when I leave this coming spring," he stated.

Don't worry, Dennis isn't leaving the state; the 75-year-old community servant is happily planted on the family farm, but doesn't plan on serving as president for any additional terms. In fact, the family farm is what brought his son-in-law Brent to the area from college approximately 30 years ago. .

'FISH' CONT PAGE 2



Dennis Barker (middle) with his son-in-law Brent Baldwin (left) and grandson Hunter Baldwin (right) have served the St. Thomas Booster Club for three generations. On Saturday, the trio will be frying fish for a good cause.

"Gramma D' aka, Clarabell Demers, one of the longest-living people in the world, has passed away today after a life that spanned over 113 years. Born in 1910, she remarkably outlived nearly every single one of the 92 million Americans alive in 1910.

Clarabell lived a full, fun, active and caring life — even in her 100s and 110s! The sparkle in her eye, her wit and her love for her dozens of grandkids and great grandkids was ever present. Although no official records are kept, she was likely the top female bowler in the United States in the over-100 age bracket. She did

share with me on her 107th birthday that she had just retired from bowling league because it was getting 'harder to score higher than my age.'

She was alive before WWI and witnessed 113 years of unimaginable advancements and changes in every aspect of American life. She touched countless North Dakota lives in a positive way over her remarkable life. We join the entire Demers clan, and all those in her community who had the joy of knowing Clarabell Demers, in celebrating her incredible life!"

A Burial mass for Clarabell Demers is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 25, at 10:30 a.m. at the St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church of Grafton, with visitation for one hour prior to the mass. She will be buried in the spring at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church Cemetery in Oakwood.

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