

# HETTINGER COUNTY HERALD

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Seven or eight stores in the region have shown an interest in starting discussions about developing a grocery distribution cooperative to cut costs and better manage inventory. | PHOTO BY LUANN DART

## Stocking the shelves

Grocery stores exploring co-op concept

BY LUANN DART  
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Hettinger County grocery stores are exploring a novel idea in North Dakota by possibly forming a grocery distribution cooperative.

While the idea is still in the talking phase, several area stores, including those in Hettinger County, are planning to meet with Brian Gion, a cooperative development specialist with the Rural Development Center, to discuss forming a group purchasing system.

During its annual meeting Oct. 8, the Regent Consumers Cooperative Store board of directors reported the New England Community Store board is coordinating a preliminary informational meeting with Gion and interested area stores to discuss a potential rural access

distribution co-op.

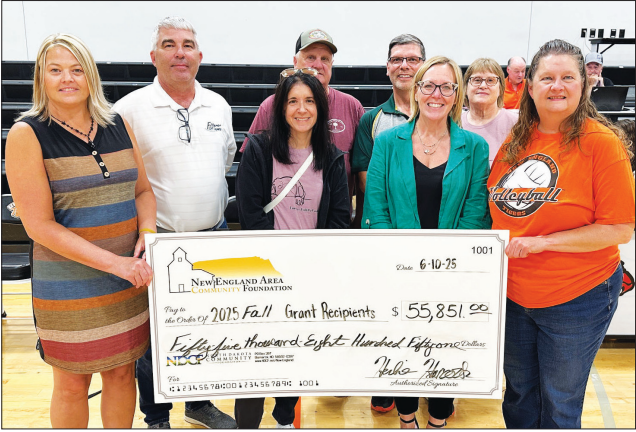
It would be modeled after a group purchasing system in Walsh County. Incorporated in 2021, the Rural Access Distribution Cooperative is a shared services cooperative in Walsh County that allows grocers to place collective wholesale orders. This collective purchasing increases the total volume ordered, which provides significant savings and more opportunities for variety.

Under a local concept, several grocery stores would submit a group order to a distributor. The distributor then makes one delivery to a hub store, decreasing freight costs. Each grocery store would then retrieve its order from the hub store.

“So, it’s one delivery charge from the big distributor,” Gion explains.

But there are other benefits than just

SEE STOCKING THE SHELVES | PAGE 2



Present at the grant awards were, back row from left to right, Bob Carlson with the Hettinger County Historical Society, John Fielding with the New England Community Grocery Store, Margie Rademaker with Furever Full, front row from left to right, Shari Wolf with the New England Area Community Foundation, Chris Fitterer representing the golf course, Dawn Kadmas with Furever Full, Jill Friesz representing the N.D. Newspaper Association Education Foundation, and Shannay Witte, chair of the New England Area Community Foundation. Not in the photo is Dr. Sydney Ratliff, who accepted the grant on behalf of the New England Public School. | PHOTO BY GAYLON PARKER

## New England grants boost community

BY LUANN DART  
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The New England Area Community Foundation (NECF) Advisory Committee awarded \$55,851 in grants at an awards presentation Sept. 25 at a New England High School volleyball game.

The NECF is a permanent endowment, with the local advisory committee taking applications and granting funds based on the most pressing needs of the community, helping improve the quality of life in the New England area. The fall grant recipients were:

- New England Golf Association: \$27,501 for creation of a nine-hole golf course in New England
- New England Community Grocery Store: \$15,000 to create a 24/7 app-based store

SEE GRANTS | PAGE 7

## Regent store holds annual meeting

BY LUANN DART  
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Regent residents gathered for the official annual meeting of the Regent Consumers Cooperative Store Oct. 8, when they heard the financial status of the store and elected directors.

A similar meeting of the store was held in August, when the Regent community learned the store is struggling financially.

Since opening in 1936, the Regent Co-op Store has tenaciously kept its doors open through the decades as a community-owned store.

Since 2014, North Dakota has lost 47 rural grocery stores in communities with populations of 2,100 or less, leaving only

90 remaining, according to the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives Rural Development Center.

“We know as a community how important the store is. ... If we’re going to keep it, it’s a community effort,” a community member said during the meeting.

Last week, the audited financial statement showed an operating loss of \$34,499 year to date.

The store had a profit in July and August, but showed a loss in September, Brenda Wiseman said while presenting the financial report.

She complimented the directors on their efforts in addressing some concerns.

SEE ANNUAL MEETING | PAGE 2



The Regent Co-op Store is exploring areas to save money and cut costs. | PHOTO BY LUANN DART