

ECCC celebrates 10th Anniversary Lights of Hope



Karen Omoth (left) and Mindy Meier (right) release butterflies. Photo by Nathan Price.

On Saturday, Sept. 6, Eddy County Community Cares celebrated their Lights of Hope 10th Anniversary. They kicked off the morning with a 3K/5K color run, and later gathered in Centennial Park for root beer floats, a program and a butterfly release.

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BELQUIST—

mie’s father, Elliott Belquist, his 100th career victory as the Rockets’ head football coach.

Belquist is in his 16th year at the helm of the Rockets after taking over the head coaching position in 2009, and with 100 wins now under his belt, Belquist said he’s found himself reflecting on some of his old teams and memorable moments from years past.

“It makes you reflect a little bit, reflect on the other teams and the players and how previous seasons went,” he said. “I guess that’s the thing it did for me was make me think back and realize that holy, I’m getting old!”

Belquist certainly has plenty of fond memories to look back on.

Over the years he’s led his team to two state championships – in 2012 and 2024 – and more recently has overseen one of the most dominant stretches in the history of 9-man football in North Dakota.

Belquist was a vocal advocate for the football co-op between NR-S and Maddock back in 2022, and the Rockets have won 25 of 26 games in the regular season and playoffs since the first year of that co-op in the 2023-24 season.

His efforts have also earned him the title of 9-Man Football Coach of the Year in both 2012 and 2024, and he is now in the midst of mounting a credible defense of last year’s state championship.

Of course, Belquist said he remembers their first state championship well.

Coming into that 2012 season, little was expected of the Rockets, who were ranked as just the No. 4 team in their region.

“We had a nice group of seniors and juniors in that class, and that was one of those years that just got better and better, and the guys just started believing with win after win,” recalled Belquist. “That was a special season.”

Belquist also recalled, in detail, his first season as the Rockets’ head coach, especially their loss to the eventual state champions by just two points in the first round of that year’s playoffs.

“That was a big learning curve that year,” he said. “And then we had those nice years with Bo Belquist, Teddy Allmaras and Tucker Longnecker and all those guys from those 2017 to 2019 seasons where we made some runs at it.”

Belquist said much of

their success over the years stems from an incredibly consistent core of coaches, who have now been alongside Belquist for well over a decade each.

Defensive Coordinator Reed Weisenburger has been coaching with Belquist from the very beginning, and Assistant Coach Tyler Cook has been on the sidelines with Belquist since 2011.

“I’ve been very blessed to have a core of assistant coaches that have been with me for many years, and that plays a big role,” Belquist said. “Keeping that consistency is huge for a program. ... The terminology flows every year, you’re not trying to do new things every year and the kids pick it up.”

Though Belquist insisted their success isn’t about him, many of his players certainly credit their head coach for keeping them prepared day in and day out.

“He’s got all our concepts down, and our mentality comes from him,” said NR-S senior Easton Benz. “He keeps us ready every week and lets us know what it means to be a Rocket.”

“He means everything to the team,” added Easton Simon, another senior. “Each week we know he’s going to come prepared. He’s got the game plan, he studies and he does everything needed to prepare for the game each week.”

“We know we can trust him calling plays and get us in the right mindset before and during the game, and just make us the best team we can be.”

Meanwhile, Belquist’s success isn’t limited to head coaching the football team.

A 1999 graduate of NRHS, he was an exceptional high school athlete in his own right. He was a highly-ranked pole vaulter in the state, helped his football team make a couple deep playoff runs, and was part of the school’s appearance at the state championship for baseball his senior year.

He first became an assistant football coach at NR-S in 2006 under Tubby Bymoen, and in the years since he’s become the Athletic Director in 2017, as well as the head track and field coach since 2021, the head girls’ basketball coach from 2007 to 2013 and currently since 2021, and was the head baseball coach for nearly 15 years from 2006 to 2020.

But whatever the sport, Belquist said his primary motivation is simply pushing his players to compete to the best of their abilities, and making sure they don’t look back on their high



Amy Kippen (left) and Demi Cook (right) run during the color run. Photo by Nathan Price.

school careers one day asking what could have been.

“We all wish we could have been pushed harder and gotten more out of ourselves, and that’s kind of the way I look at it,” said Belquist. “I want to push these kids to make the most out of their experience.”

“It’s fun, it’s fun winning, it’s fun doing good ... and I just like seeing these kids enjoy the successes of winning and competing at a high level whatever it’s in, track, basketball, baseball, football, whatever.”

Last but certainly not least, Belquist made sure to credit his family and the entire community for making it possible to do what he does and enjoy the successes along the way.

“They hold the fort down when I’m gone and allow me to coach three different sports,” said Belquist about his family.

About the community, he said it’s not always the case that a local head football coach can enjoy the support and trust of parents and community members.

“The support of the community has been unbelievable,” said Belquist. “I feel like the people in our community, even Maddock now, trust us and believe in us that we’re going to do the best thing for their kids to make them mentally tougher, make them better people and make them better football players.”

NR-S—

contracted bus driver ahead of this school year, bringing the district down to just two contracted drivers.

Consequently, another route is now being done in-house by the district, and a lack of drivers with a commercial drivers license (CDL) has forced the district to use the one minibus they currently own for that daily route.

Unlike a typical large school bus – which can hold 48 or more students – a 14-passenger bus does not require a CDL to operate. And with concern NR-S could lose more contracted route drivers sooner rather than later, having a smaller bus would provide the school with far more options when it comes time to find a driver.

“As these routes look like they’re going to start coming our way more and more, and with the lack of drivers for larger buses, and now that we are using our 14-passenger on a daily route ... it’s not available for those things we were doing with that 14-passenger,” said

Schaefer.

Schaefer said the new minibus would likely be used in conjunction with the district’s Suburban to get certain activity groups to and from their away games, and that the new minibus would back-up their existing minibus – a 2012 Chevrolet with more than 100,000 miles on it.

When asked by a fellow board member why the district needs a new bus “all of a sudden,” Schaefer said they don’t, yet.

He said they’d likely be able to get through this school year without a new bus, and that any new bus they purchase likely won’t have a ton of miles on it by the end of the year.

However, he and other board members believe that now, when the budget has room for a significant expense, is the time to make a purchase, rather than waiting until one becomes necessary at a time when the budget isn’t so forgiving.

NR-S Business Manager Dave Skogen said the district’s projected surplus of \$207,004.73 for the 2025-26 school year is essentially a one-off, due to several factors.

Most notably, the district does not have a tech and engineering teacher on the payroll this year, nor a K-12 art teacher. Both positions are currently posted, and once those positions are filled Skogen said their \$200,000 margin will shrink significantly.

“This is something we can fit into the budget that we know we can use for the foreseeable future,” said Schaefer about a new minibus.

After a lengthy discussion, the board eventually carried a motion unanimously to advertise for bids for a new 14-passenger school bus.

Schaefer said he’s already spoken to one supplier that could have a new 2025 Chevrolet 14-passenger school bus ready within weeks, for a cost of approximately \$99,500.

However, it remains to be seen which companies will submit a bid and what the exact price may be. Any bids received will be discussed at the school board’s next regular meeting in October.

In other school board business on Monday, Sept. 8, the board approved their final budget, their final certificate of levy and held a public tax levy meeting.

In total, the district’s final budget projects \$5,395,926.57 in revenue and \$5,188,921.94 in expenditures for the 2025-26

Community Calendar

**NEW ROCKFORD COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE** on Thursday, Sept. 18 from 11:45 a.m. to 6 p.m. at St. John’s Catholic Church in New Rockford. To schedule, make an appointment online at [vitalant.org](http://vitalant.org) or call 1-877-25-VITAL. Use blood drive code: newrockfordnd.

**CRAFT & BAKE SALE EAGLES AUXILIARY FUND-RAISER** on Saturday, Oct. 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the New Rockford Eagles Club. Lunch will be served.

**SHEYENNE VFW** meets on second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at Sheyenne VFW Post 2696.

**BINGO** at Ostby Hall in Sheyenne every Saturday at 7 p.m.

**SEPTEMBER ITEM OF THE MONTH** at the Eddy County Hunger Free Food Pantry is boxed mac ‘n cheese. Donations can be dropped off at First Lutheran Church, 436 1st Ave. N, New Rockford.

**EDDY CO. VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER** Same day appointments available. Please call (701) 302-8087.

**RELAX & RETREAT MASSAGE** now offering massage therapy through VA Community Care Program. For more information, call (701) 302-0325.

**TOPS 370** is a weight loss support group. Meetings are on Mondays at 5 p.m. at First Lutheran Church in New Rockford. For more information call (701) 947-2138.

**COMMUNITY AMBULANCE SERVICE BOARD** meets the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Ambulance Hall, New Rockford.

**LAKE REGION SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE** support group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Community Room of North Star Community Credit Union, Devils Lake. For info call Theresa at (701) 662-4790.

**FOOT CARE CLINIC** every third Wednesday of the month at Eddy County Public Health. Call (701) 947-5311 for appointments. Cost is \$25.

**EDDY-NEW ROCKFORD LIBRARY BOARD** meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 5 p.m.

**NEW ROCKFORD POST OFFICE** has a new phone number, (701) 505-8842. The office is open 9-11 a.m. and 12:30-4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**SHEYENNE POST OFFICE** also has a new phone number, (701) 404-1149. Open 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday - Friday.

Please contact the Transcript at [nrtranscript@gmail.com](mailto:nrtranscript@gmail.com) or (701) 947-2417 to have your event notices listed.

school year.

The budget approved on Monday does not include the purchase of a new 14-passenger bus, but Skogen said that amendment will likely be made at an upcoming school board meeting.

This school year, the district will levy just over \$1.75 million in property taxes – an increase of about \$100,000 from the prior year, but slightly less than they levied for the 2023-24 school year.

For the owner of a residential property worth \$100,000, that would mean a tax of about \$438.08 for 2025 – an increase of about \$20.12 over the prior year.

A full packet of information about the school’s tax levy, including expense and budget breakdowns as well as nearby comparisons with other schools, can be found on the district’s website under “School board info.”

The school board’s next regular meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Monday, Oct. 13 via Zoom in the morning, so as to avoid a conflict with parent-teacher conferences that evening. An exact time for the meeting has not been scheduled.

AIRPORT—

chase new anti-trespassing signage for the airport, making it a Class B misdemeanor to trespass on the property.

In other business from Monday’s city commission meeting, the commissioners received an update on

their efforts to crack down on nuisance vehicles in the city.

New Rockford City Auditor Andrew Presnell said 14-day notices have been sent out, and the commission agreed that a final 48-hour “courtesy notice” will be sent out after those 14 days have passed, which could be as soon as the week of September 22.

After that final 48-hour notice, the city will have the right to impound any vehicle that is violating the city’s nuisance ordinances.

Commissioners also decided to move forward with demolition of a dilapidated downtown property located at 806 1st Ave North in New Rockford.

The building is described as being in disrepair and “unfit for human habitation,” and notice has already gone out to the property owner, Richard Hucke, that the building is scheduled for demolition.


An appeal filed by Hucke was dismissed on procedural grounds, and a bid for demolition has also been received by the city. The structure is expected to come down this fall.

Meanwhile, the commission also approved their final budget for 2026, which is available in full at the New Rockford City Hall. A public budget hearing held on September 8 was not attended by any residents.

The city’s next regular meeting is scheduled for 9 a.m. on Monday, Oct. 6.

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**MEN'S BOWLING LEAGUE**

Men's League first bowl on **Tuesday, Sept. 23**  
Meeting at 6:30 p.m., bowling at 7 p.m.

Call (701) 650-6009 to pre-register your 4-man team.

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