

—AREA ANNOUNCEMENTS—

THURSDAY, APRIL 9

The Lord's Pantry located at Trinity Lutheran Church in Turtle Lake from 2 to 4 p.m. No referrals or pre-registration required. All in need are welcome to receive food at no cost.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

Community Cupboard of Underwood, 208 Lincoln Ave food distribution from 10 a.m. to noon. McLean County residents in need are welcome. No referrals or pre-registration required.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11

Underwood Public Library Ag Story Time with the Underwood FFA students from 9:30 to 10 a.m.

WEEKLY

EVERY TUESDAY

The Community Cupboard of Underwood Thrift Store is open every Tuesday 1 - 5 pm. 208 Lincoln Ave. Underwood

EVERY THURSDAY

AA Meeting, Turtle Lake Methodist Church on Thursday evenings at 7.

Community Clothing Share-Exchange at 221 Main St. in Turtle Lake has a clothing opportunity at no cost each Thursday from 12:00 -6:00 p.m.

AREA LIBRARY HOURS

WASHBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY - Monday-Thursday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

UNDERWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY - Monday & Wednesday -9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday & Thursday 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday 9 am-12 pm

TURTLE LAKE PUBLIC LIBRARY - Monday & Thursday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

MCLEAN-MERCER REGIONAL LIBRARY, Riverdale - Monday-Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

MEALS ON WHEELS

Noon meals are provided for those 60 and over. Call a day in advance to reserve or cancel a meal. 748-2493 for Hazen, Beulah, Stanton, Zap and Golden Valley. 448-2472 for Turtle Lake and Mercer. 734-6426 for Wilton and Washburn. 442-3488 for Underwood and Garrison. Milk, bread and margarine are served daily. Suggested contribution of \$4.00 per meal. Full cost of the meal is \$11.61. Frozen meals are available for weekends and holiday closures.

April 13 through April 17

MONDAY: Chicken Monterey, Rice Pilaf, Green Beans, Peaches and Pears and Wheat Bread.

TUESDAY: Baked Salmon, Rice Pilaf, Peas, Bananas and Oranges and a Dinner Roll.

WEDNESDAY: Cheeseburger on a Bun, Lettuce, Tomato, Pickle, Onion, Mustard, Mayo and Ketchup, Potato Wedges, Coleslaw and Warm Spiced Apples.

THURSDAY: Turkey and Dressing Casserole, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans Almondine and Cranberry Velvet.

FRIDAY: Taco Stuffed Potato, Red Beans and Rice, Chilled Pineapple, Breadstick and a Cookie.

WEATHER

Date	Max	Min	Precip	Date	Max	Min	Precip
Mar 30	47	27	.00	Apr 5	43	27	.02
Mar 31	34	21	.00	Precip Mar	0.35 inches		
Apr 1	31	26	.03	Precip Jan-Dec	1.50 inches		
Apr 2	33	28	.00	Snow Mar	3.2 inches		
Apr 3	31	26	.50	Snow Jan-Dec	10.4 inches		
Apr 4	45	27	.00	Snow Season Sep-Jul	21.1 inches		

Larry Dziuk

WEST RIVER TRANSIT

PUBLIC MEETING

9:30 a.m. CST

BOARD MEETING

10:00 a.m. CST

3750 E. Rosser Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58501

April 16, 2026

Ambulance Annual Banquet

---OPEN TO PUBLIC---

Come meet your local Underwood Ambulance EMS members during their Annual Banquet.

April 19, 2026

6:00 pm

208 Grant Ave
Underwood, ND

(April 9 & 16, 2026)

At the center

MFRC marks 45 years of service

BY PHAIDRA YUNKER
Reporter

Quiet conversation filled the halls of the McLean Family Resource Center on April 1 as Executive Director Lisa Gusewelle led visitors through the building she and her staff call home base.

During the first tour of the day, she walked Seth O'Neill and Victoria Jane Welk of the North Dakota Domestic and Sexual Violence Coalition past the pantry shelves, the common kitchen area and a hallway lined with inspirational quotes and planning boards. The tour continued through offices and the thrift store, where visitors paged through decadesold scrapbooks, before the group stopped to visit with local law enforcement officers, chatting over coffee and slices of cake as they marked the milestone together.

The all-day open house drew 47 visitors and marked 45 years since the organization first opened its doors April 1, 1981. The center, originally founded as McLean County Women's Outreach under director Rita Ruona, has served as a resource for survivors of domestic and sexual violence across the region since its earliest days.

The North Dakota Domestic and Sexual Violence Coalition, which O'Neill and Welk represent, is a statewide organization that supports local advocacy programs, provides training and technical assistance, and works to strengthen the statewide response to domestic and sexual violence.

The center began with a focus on supporting women experiencing violence in rural McLean County. Over the decades, its services expanded, and the organization became the McLean Family Resource Center, reflecting a broader mission to support survivors and families.

Gusewelle said recent changes have focused on reducing barriers for families seeking help. One of those changes involves access to food pantries.

"It used to be that there would be a scheduled time that the food pantry was open," she said. "Now there is access whenever it is needed. People just give us a call, and we will put together a box for them. They can pick it up on their own schedule."

The center also works closely with Child Protection Services to support children entering emergency situations.

"Children will leave a situation with literally nothing, not even clothing," Gusewelle said. "We set them up with proper clothing, toiletries, comfort items and a bag to put it all in."

MFRC now offers free support groups for survivors and their families. In Washburn, the group meets the first Thursday of each month at 11 a.m. at the center. In Turtle Lake, the group meets the second Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at Northland Health Center.

Gusewelle said the total number of survivors served over the center's 45-year his-

tory cannot be calculated because records are shredded after seven years, but she estimated the number is in the tens of thousands.

She said the open house offered time to reflect on the center's history and the people who shaped it.

"The day allowed me to set aside my work emails and some of those other commitments that get in the way of human connection and just focus on people and telling the story of MFRC. The people who were committed then, the people who are committed now and the people in between," she said.

She said many visitors shared memories of Jennel Olson, who worked at MFRC for 27 years, representing more than half of the organization's lifespan.

"Programs like MFRC are critical for rural communities," O'Neill said. "They serve as a lifeline for victims of domestic and sexual violence when there are often limited resources in their communities."

He said programs across the state are seeing both an increase in the number of victims seeking help and an escalation in the severity of violence.

"Offenders are often using more severe violence to assert power and control over their victims," O'Neill said. "We are also seeing the number of victims our programs serve rise. On one hand, this means

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PLANNING

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makers in 2023 rejected House Bill 1491, which would have expanded free school meals to students in families earning up to 200% of the federal poverty level. The bill failed in the Senate by a single vote, 24-23. Supporters said the measure would help students learn, while opponents argued meal costs should remain a parental responsibility. A motion to reconsider the bill also failed.

The decision left North Dakota without a statefunded meal expansion at a time when several other states adopted universal freelunch programs. While the bill's failure did not reduce existing funding, it meant districts did not receive additional support that some had hoped would help offset rising costs.

State Superintendent Levi Bachmeier pointed to a broader trend in the state budget. He noted that K-12 education's share of the state budget has declined from 30% in 2019 to 25% today. While overall funding has increased in dollar terms, the shift in budget share has raised questions among school leaders about longterm sustainability, especially for districts with declining enrollment.

North Dakota's school funding formula ties state aid directly to enrollment. When enrollment declines, a common trend in rural areas, state funding decreases automati-

cally. Even small changes in student numbers can affect a district's budget.

Underwood, with roughly 180 students, has seen a gradual decline in recent years. Benson said the district is working to create a strong school culture in hopes of retaining families.

"It is impossible to control the movement of people," he said. "We are focused on creating the best culture for our students, parents and staff so that if they have a choice they will decide to stay here."

Both districts are also closely watching potential state aid freezes. Benson said any reduction in pupil aid would have immediate and severe consequences for Underwood.

"Any freezes or reductions would destroy our educational environment," he said. "In a small school like ours, we would have to cut programs and lay off teachers."

At the same time, districts face rising costs in areas such as transportation, utilities and health insurance. Schlafmann said healthinsurance increases are a particular challenge this year.

"These increases place additional pressure on our overall budget and limit flexibility in other areas," she said.

Benson described a similar financial strain in Underwood, citing "the unpredictability of government funding

combined with the tax levy caps" as major stressors. He also noted the district's aging infrastructure and the difficulty of meeting needs with a small student population.

Despite the challenges, Schlafmann emphasized Turtle Lake-Mercer remains focused on its mission and is approaching the coming year with a steady hand.

"We remain committed to providing a highquality educational experience for our students," she said. "We will continue to plan carefully and responsibly for the year ahead."

Benson said Underwood will continue to prioritize students in any future decisions.

"First and foremost, we will always do what is best for students," he said. "We do not waste money in Underwood. Being committed to teaching every student, regardless of needs, is a big lift and we diligently seek to do so every day."

As rural districts across the region prepare for the 2026-27 school year, both Turtle Lake-Mercer and Underwood reflect the broader reality facing North Dakota schools: a landscape shaped by national policy changes, federal funding timelines, state budget decisions and local enrollment trends.