

NORTHERN VIEW

Thank you both for your service

For me, the second-best moment of Wednesday's mass COVID vaccination at the Alerus Center – after my receiving dose No. 2 – came as I sat in the waiting area for the recommended 15-30 minutes to make sure I didn't faint or break out in hives.

National Guard soldiers meandered through the rows of the recently inoculated, smiling, checking on us. "How are you doing, sir? Feeling OK? Any problems?"

In the row just ahead of me, a man and woman sat together, a married couple, probably. He looked to be in his 80s, she maybe a few years younger.

He wore a distinctive cap, red and black plaid, with ear flaps up, a broad brim and a little button on top. An Elmer Fudd cap, we used to call it.

As we all sat waiting, a young woman in the uniform of the National Guard approached the old man in front of me and knelt to address him.

"I saw your hat," she said. "My grandfather always wore a hat like that, and seeing it reminded me of him, and so I wanted to stop and – patting her heart – "send some good thoughts to you."

And that started about a 15-minute conversation.

"Where are you from?" the old-timer asked her, and she said she was from Bemidji originally but came to Grand Forks in 1997, at the time of the big flood.

"So, this is home now," she said.

The man told her that they were from Thief River Falls. She beamed and said she knows Thief River Falls.

And I think he said something about her being in uniform – he spoke very softly, and she leaned close to hear – and mentioned that he, too, had once been in uniform. Vietnam, maybe.

"Thank you for your service," she said, as sincerely as could be.

They continued to talk, the old man and his wife in their folding chairs, the woman in uniform kneeling to be close, smiling as they traded life stories. Like all of us, of course, they wore masks.

They were still talking, mostly beyond my ability to hear, when their prescribed waiting time was up. "I shouldn't hold you up," she said, starting to rise, but the old veteran asked her another question, and she drew near again, looking pleased.

My wait time was up, too, but I didn't want to leave.

In a writing class I teach at UND, one of the assignments is to write a profile of someone. I encourage the students to consider writing a grandparent's life story, especially if they had never had that sort of a deep, thoughtful conversation. In another writing exercise, I have them write a thank-you note to someone who mattered in their lives, and again I suggest a grandpa or grandma might really appreciate such a gesture.

I read a story a year or two ago – I've forgotten where – about a study of grandparents and how they navigate advanced age. The study's main finding was that "active grandparenting" – engaging with grandchildren, listening to them, showing love and interest – can slow mental and physical decline.

That has been the first article of my impeachment of COVID-19, that for a year it has hobbled my ability to be, as my youngest says, G-Pa Chuck. (Another limiting factor, of course, is that she, her big sister and her big brother all have busy lives – work, college and, for 11-year-old Emma, school and friends and a demanding gymnastics schedule. I understand and accept that. It's as it should be – they have lives to live – but the virus means I can't watch her practices or competitive meets.

So, I watched this relatively young woman in uniform talk earnestly, sincerely, with the older couple, the man in his evocative Elmer Fudd hat, and I was happy.

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CHUCK HAGA

GF COVID-19 vaccinations expanded

By Hannah Shirley
Grand Forks Herald

Grand Forks County is now vaccinating Tier 6 of Phase 1B, which includes anyone 18 and older with two or more high-risk medical conditions.

If you have two or more high-risk medical conditions, visit mychart.altru.org or call 701-780-6358 to make an appointment to receive a vaccine. If you have already put your name

on the waitlist, there is no need to reach out again, and someone will contact you to schedule your vaccine.

The Pfizer vaccine is currently the only vaccine authorized for people younger than 18. It is authorized to be given to anyone 16 and older, according to Grand Forks Public Health. Anyone younger than 18 who is interested in receiving a COVID-19 vaccine should call the Altru COVID-

19 hotline at 701-780-6358.

Phase 1B Tier 1, which includes people who are 75 and older, and Tiers 2 and 4, which includes people who are 65 and older with high-risk medical conditions, and Tier 5, which includes people who are 65 and older with no high-risk medical conditions, have already been called to be vaccinated. If you are in these tiers and have not yet been vaccinated, follow the above instruc-

tions. People in Tier 3, which includes everyone living in congregate living facilities such as homeless shelters, treatment facilities and corrections facilities, are in the process of being vaccinated.

High-risk medical conditions include cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD, Down Syndrome, heart conditions, immunocompromised state, obesity and severe obesity,

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Photos by Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Board members of the Love One Another Now (L.O.A.N.) program – from left, Stephanie Williams, Lorna Ratchenski, Rhonda Schweitzer, Sandy Peterson, Betty Paton and Macie Shane – are photographed in their Cavalier, N.D., program center.

Donations spur LOAN program in Cavalier

Started in 2014, program helps kids with clothing, school supply needs

By Ann Bailey
Grand Forks Herald
Cavalier, N.D.

Whether it's prom dresses, pencils or pants, Pembina County students can get them, at no cost, through a charitable program in Cavalier.

The Love One Another Now program, abbreviated to LOAN, was founded in August 2014, by Lorna Ratchenski to help students in families with financial need.

The program provides clothing, outerwear and school supplies to Pembina County students in grades pre-K through 12, along with three Valley-Edinburg



Betty Paton shows one of many prom dresses available at the Love One Another Now store in Cavalier.

schools. During the spring, many prom dresses also rotate in and out of the LOAN program as people donate them and as girls

who need them come into the store.

During the past six and half years, the program has grown from helping about

a dozen students to more than 200.

Ratchenski, who farms with her husband, Wayne, near Cavalier, started the program after praying about, and searching for, ways she could help youth in the community, she said. She decided to provide clothing and school supplies, at no cost, to students during a three-week period before school started in 2014. With the help of friends, family and members of Ratchenski's church, 21 Pembina County children were outfitted with clothing and school supplies.

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Tigirlily hits No. 1 on iTunes charts



Jared Olson / Submitted photo
Country music duo Tigirlily is Kendra (right) and Krista Slaubaugh.

By Ryan Johnson
Forum News Service

HAZEN, N.D. — A country music duo that hails from North Dakota has the No. 1 song on iTunes right now.

Tigirlily, which consists of sisters and Hazen natives Krista and Kendra Slaubaugh, are now based in Nashville. They celebrated the release of their new single, "Somebody Does," on Tuesday, Feb. 23, and posted to social media Wednesday morning announcing that they woke up with the No. 1 iTunes song in America for all genres.

"PLEASE DON'T PINCH US!!!!!! This is one of our wildest dreams come true, so we want to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts," they posted to Twitter.

The sisters told The Forum on Wednesday morning that they released a teaser for the song on social media a few weeks ago and got their biggest response yet for a clip of a forthcoming tune.

"Right away, we were like, 'We need to put this song out into the world,'" Kendra says.

They hoped to crack into some digital charts, and making the Top 20 seemed like an "amazing" goal," she says. That's why Wednesday morning was "better than Christmas" when they saw it reached No. 1 in all genres, not just the iTunes country chart.

"It's overwhelming in the best way possible," Krista says. Tigirlily has performed and released music since

2013, when the sisters were teenagers, and has built up a following over the years through releasing songs and playing concerts around the country. They relocated to Nashville in 2017, and they now have more than 450,000 followers on TikTok.

Even after moving to Tennessee, the sisters have kept up their ties to North Dakota, including a virtual concert in April 2020 to benefit the Great Plains Food Bank during the coronavirus pandemic.

The sisters kept busy during the pandemic with virtual events, but they've also been able to perform regularly in Nashville, where Kendra says Tigirlily plays a gig

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PROGRAM

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“In the fall of 2015, I thought ‘It’s worth doing again,’” Ratchenski said. During a five-week period before school started, 68 children received clothing and supplies.

In November 2015, a teacher told Ratchenski there was a great need throughout the school year for what she and the volunteers were doing, and gave them a list of 53 students whose families needed clothing and school supplies. The cost of the items, \$972, was covered by a timely and unsolicited \$1,000 donation to Ratchenski from United Lutheran Church in Cavalier.

“That was our first official donation to the program,” Ratchenski said.

As word about the work of the volunteers spread, donations to the program and requests for help increased. In 2016, Ratchenski formed a nonprofit program, underwritten by Cavalier Baptist Church. A board made up of Ratchenski and eight other women, who live across Pembina County, oversee LOAN.

The board operated the program out of the basement of a Cavalier



Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Lorna Ratchenski, founder of Love One Another Now, started the program in 2014 to help students in families with financial need.

store for a few years. In November 2020, Wayne Ratchenski bought the former First United Methodist Church in Cavalier for his wife, and LOAN moved to the location on First Avenue South.

Clothing, winter outerwear, school supplies, underwear and prom dresses are separated by type in rooms throughout the church. Every student who comes to LOAN receives items that include shirts, blue jeans and a dress outfit. They also are outfitted with a backpack and school supplies, winter gear and gym clothes.

Pembina County and Valley-Edinburg

teachers who notice a student needs school supplies or clothing contact the LOAN program and a volunteer delivers it to the school. If several items are needed, the student makes an appointment to come to the LOAN building and picks them out. Dressing rooms are spread throughout the store so students can be sure the items fit well.

“Every item you see is donated by people all over the county, or purchased with money that has been donated,” Ratchenski said during a tour of the LOAN program store.

Besides giving students gently-used

clothing, members stretch the dollars donated to LOAN by shopping at area stores’ sales.

“We are the best clearance shoppers you’ve ever seen,” said Betty Paton, a LOAN program board member.

For many of the students, the clothing they receive from the LOAN program is the first they’ve had that has not been handed down several times between family members. Witnessing the thrill of the children choosing items is heartwarming, volunteers said.

“The reason it means so much to me is

because when I was growing up, I was one of those kids needing things,” Paton said.

Besides receiving monetary donations, LOAN holds events throughout the year to raise money for the program. Pembina County students also host events to raise money for the program.

The need for the LOAN program continues to grow as families in the county struggle financially, Ratchenski said.

“I had a grandmother who was choosing between school supplies and medicine she needed for herself,” she said. “When she heard about the LOAN program, she could get both.”

Board volunteers get as much out of the program as they give to others, they said.

“For us, it feels like a privilege and honor to help these families,” Ratchenski said.

Information about the LOAN program: (701) 265-2423 or find it on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1055493014513402>.

To make a donation: LOAN Program, 14255 Highway 5, Cavalier, N.D. 58220.

HAGA

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They were still talking when I decided I had to leave. I stepped forward and asked if I could interrupt for just a second.

The soldier stood, concern on her face. Was I in trouble? Was I having a reaction to the vaccination?

“I apologize for eavesdropping,” I said. “But I wanted to thank you, both of you, for your service. And” – looking at her – “I think your grandpa would be very proud of you, for this.”

I could tell from the look in her eyes that I was right to say it.

Chuck Haga had a long career at the Grand Forks Herald and the Minneapolis Star Tribune before retiring in 2013. He can be contacted at crhaga@gmail.com.

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each Saturday from 2:30-6:30 p.m.

“It’s been really fun to get back into performing,” she says.

And more music is on the way from Tigirlily, though it won’t be released in an album format. Instead, Kendra says fans can expect to continue hearing new songs that get released one at a time through digital music outlets, including Spotify and iTunes.

“We’re kind of taking it single by single right now just because it’s such a digital world now,” she says, adding they’re constantly writing and working on new music.

Readers can reach Ryan Johnson at 218-791-9610.

COVID-19

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pregnancy, sickle cell disease, smoking, and Type 2 diabetes mellitus.

People who are not eligible for Tiers 1 through 6 are asked to wait to put their names on the waitlist until their tier is

called. Phase 1B Tiers 7 and 8 are childcare workers and school district employees.

Once vaccinations of those groups have been completed, the county will move on to Phase 1C, which includes essential workers and people of any age at increased risk for COVID-19.

It’s still too soon to know when vaccinations might begin

for future tiers and groups, and a timeline will depend largely on federal allocation of COVID-19 vaccine doses. Grand Forks Public Health will continue to update which tiers have been called through local media and through their social media.

“It is always exciting when we enter new priority tiers,” Grand Forks Mayor Brandon

Bochenski said in a statement. “Our centralized vaccine distribution is the gold standard in one of the highest vaccinated states in the nation. The vaccine is currently the strongest economic stimulus we have and crucial in building consumer confidence. Our effective system is something our community should be very proud of.”

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