



MAY 2025

WHEELS ACROSS THE PRAIRIE HERITAGE CENTER

P.O. Box 1091 • 3297 Hwy. 14 • Tracy, MN 56175 • (507) 626-1949
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An eye-catching array of American flags frames Wheels Across the Prairie's 1915 Switch engine and tender car. The "Avenue of Flags," flown in memory of Tracy military veterans, is one of several major projects completed at the Wheels this past year.

Change marks Wheels 40th year

'68 grad is new president, Wendorff is executive director

By Seth Schmidt

Lots was happening in Tracy when the Wheels Across the Prairie opened 40 springs ago, with a grand opening on June 1, 1985.

Both St. Mary's Parish and the Tracy Fire Department were hosting centennial celebrations, with the THS Scrapper marching band leading a parade through downtown Tracy.

Also on that weekend, hundreds of well-wishers packed the THS gym to honor retiring Principal Art Marben, who had also been selected as a WCCO-radio "Good Neighbor."

Elaine Nyquist had opened a new fabric shop, and shoppers crowded the downtown sidewalks for their chance to win \$500 in a new "Bonanza Bucks" Thursday night drawing.

Marlowe and Betty Lindstrom were advertising First Anniversary Specials in their downtown Coast-to-Coast store, while out on Hwy. 14, longtime Ford dealer Bud Hayes, had added a Chrysler franchise.

At the Tracy Presbyterian Church, Pastor Arvin Roos gave his farewell sermon to end an eight-year tenure. Meanwhile, American Family Insurance announced the appointment of Mike Peterreins as its new Tracy agent.

A Scrapper baseball team coached by John Coulter—and led by

players like Doug Hatch, Steve Michelson, Kurt Hannasch, Jim West, Bryan Koopman, Mark Peterson, and Dale VanDeWiele—were closing in on a Section 3 championship and trip to state. In track competition, the Scrapper girls 4x400 relay of Teresa Morin, Cherise Dold, Mark Kosse, and Julie West became state qualifiers.

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Tracy Mayor Dale Johnson Sr. presided at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Wheels Across the Prairie 40 years ago.

Reorganization aims to ease Wendorff's work load

Volunteer has been president for 15 years

By Seth Schmidt

Turns out, Jon Wendorff needn't have worried.

In the fall of 1998, the young man went to a Wheels Across the Prairie event at the Mediterranean Club. Intrigued, Wendorff wondered if there was anything he could do help out at the museum.

"I asked Mary Lou (Ludeman) what I had to do to become a volunteer. She let out a big squeal and assured me that if I was still interested next spring, I should come out and they would put me to work."

Wendorff did, and the rest is history. The one-time rookie volunteer has become the face of the Wheels museum, while serving as board president for 15 years.

"I have always loved local history," Wendorff reflects, crediting teachers Ethel Henkel (St. Mary's) and Bill Bolin (Tracy High School) with piquing that interest.

Many, many duties

In the quarter century he's worked at the Wheels, the 1981 Tracy grad has rolled up his sleeves into every aspect of the museum's operation. He's done everything from sweeping floors and mouse-proofing buildings to arranging displays and archiving artifacts. He's the first point of contact if a museum alarm goes off or if someone calls with a question. He's spearheaded efforts to digitize and organize museum records and was instrumental in establishing a family-history center. His personal interests in flowers and gardening bloom in almost every corner of the Wheels campus.

Genealogy requests, facebook postings, after-hours tours, combing through donations, coordinating with volunteers, planning programs, calling the plumber, thanking supporters, researching history, chatting with guests—you name it—Wendorff is at the pivot-point of almost everything that happens at the museum.

Over the years, Wendorff's persistence in



Jon Wendorff's desk reflects the variety of tasks he faces in a typical day.

writing grant-applications has secured tens of thousands of dollars in funding for the Wheels. Other board members especially credit Wendorff for following-up an inquiry from the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado (founded by 1949 Tracy grad Evelyn Helmlinger-Holmboe, and her husband, John Holmboe). The resulting relationship that Wendorff helped foster has resulted in over \$250,000 of foundation support for Wheels projects.

"I love this museum and I really like what I do," Wendorff says modestly.

At the same time, however, the Wheels leader admits that the scope of his volunteer, unpaid position has at times become overwhelming. For this reason, he supports the new organizational structure approved by the Wheels board this spring that has Dorothy Rademacher taking over as board chair, with Wendorff becoming the heritage center's executive director. Giving up the administrative duties of board president, he feels, will allow him to better concentrate on improving the museum.

"It has really helped having Dorothy here," he says.

Amy Foster's election as vice president, succeeding long-time board officer Jane Muedeking, is another major change that's taken place at the museum this spring.

"Jane has done so much for this museum," Wendorff adds. Even though Muedeking has retired as a museum officer, he hopes she will remain active as a board member.

Rapid growth

Wheels Across the Prairie has grown dramatically during Wendorff's years with the museum, starting with the 1999 arrival of the log cabin from Murray County. Seven years later, St. Mark's Episcopal Church was moved in from the corner of Center and Center streets.

The construction of the 5,400 square-foot Helmlinger-Johnson building a decade ago vastly increased the Wheels' exhibit space. Highlights over the past five years have included the arrival of a Great Northern Railroad section foreman's house from DeGraff, the eastward relocation of multiple buildings along newly-constructed sidewalks, a refurbished barbershop, a new military building, an array of American flags being raised along new streets, and major utility and drainage improvements.

"I am really proud of what we have accomplished out here. This museum has really become a hidden gem out here on the prairie," says Wendorff, whose resume includes the Schwan's ice cream plant in

Wendorff: Continued on page four

4-Her of 1960s returns to help Wheels as president

By Seth Schmidt

Dorothy (Hamilton) Radermacher's Tracy roots go deep.

The 1968 Tracy grad grew up on a farm north of Dovray, rolled up her sleeves as a Holly All-Stars 4-Her, earned her first paycheck at the Christian Manor, and married a young man from Tracy.

But like many of her generation, Dorothy moved elsewhere, first to Lake City in 1971, and in recent years to an acreage near Forest Lake.

She maintained her Tracy ties by keeping in touch with family, including her parents, LaVonne and Merle Hamilton, who moved off the farm and into a home on Park Street. After their deaths Dorothy joined other family members in buying a memorial bench for her parents at Wheels Across the Prairie. Yet it wasn't until 2023 that she actually visited the Wheels in person.

"I was absolutely blown away at what was here," Radermacher remembers. "I was so impressed with everything that has been done at the Wheels."

The motivation for her first visit, was her wish to donate Army memorabilia from her late husband, Ronald, who had flown over 400 missions as a helicopter gunner in Vietnam (1966-67), for Wheels' new military building. But after seeing the Wheels heritage center in person, she felt inspired to do more.

First, she got involved in discussions with several Wheels board members, about the possibility of bringing a vintage military chopper to the museum. Soon she was volunteering time and offering suggestions. On May 1, Radermacher was elected as as Wheels Across the Prairie's interim board president. Among her first goals is the reorganization of the board's committee responsibilities, updating bylaws, setting goals, and establishing a system for more regular committee meetings.

Longterm board president Jon Wendorff, in turn, assumed the duties as executive director for the Wheels.

The new structure, Radermacher explains, is designed to build volunteer support, establish a clearer chain-of-command, and allow Wendorff to concentrate on museum operations without the board president's responsibilities.

The goal is to build on past successes and build public awareness.

"There are people throughout the area, and even in Tracy, who have no idea what a treasure we have here," Radermacher comments.

Beyond Yellow Ribbon

She has extensive experience with several non-profits, including the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Community Network program, which she has been involved with since 2017. Beyond the Yellow Ribbon non-profit raises funds to assist military veterans find resources for current needs.

Help from the Yellow Ribbon program, Radermacher explains, could range from mental health services for the affected by post-traumatic stress syndrome to making an overdue rent payment.

Her late husband, she explains, was an example of someone who was profoundly affected by the stress of serving in a war zone, but



Dorothy Rademacher's passion for Tracy and its history has led her to serve as interim Wheels board president.

did not receive or seek help until late in his life.

A 1964 THS graduate, Ronald Radermacher was only 19 when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1965, trained as a helicopter gunner, and sent to Vietnam for a 10-month tour that began in 1966.

"He wasn't prepared for what he experienced in Vietnam," Radermacher explained. The trauma he experienced fighting the war was something he carried the rest of his life, she feels.

Upon his return from Vietnam in 1967, Ronald worked as a meat cutter at Norm's Red Owl in Tracy, a grocery owned by his parents. On June 13, 1968, Ronald was working at the store when an cataclysmic F-5 tornado blasted through Tracy.

Years later, Dorothy learned that hunkering down in the store, as the horrific twister howled past the store, was like re-living the horrors of war for Ronald.

"It was like he had to re-live the trauma of war a second time," she remembers.

Like many Vietnam veterans, Dorothy adds, her husband didn't talk about his war experiences until late in life. Navigating the VA system to help her husband get the benefits he was entitled to, inspired her to help others through Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, work Radermacher continues today.

Health-care career

Married in the summer of 1971, Ronald and Dorothy moved to Lake City in October of that same year, after his parents sold their grocery store. The newlyweds went on to live in Lake City for 42 years, where Dorothy's career took her to Lake City Hospital, Lake City Nursing Home, Lake City Care Center, Mayo Clinic Health System-Lake City, and St. Mary's Hospital-Mayo. Her work ranged from neo-natal to geriatric and end-of-life care.

A "passion for learning and community engagement" led her to service with several non-profit groups, including Chamber of Commerce, Toastmasters, Rotary, and Lions organizations. Veterans' group affiliations include the American Legion Auxiliary, VFW Auxiliary, Disable American Veterans' Auxiliary. She serves on a Dept. of Veterans Affairs and Veterans Administration committee advocating for military veterans.

In her leisure time, the new Wheels president says she enjoys playing cards, family history, quilting, and "fun times with family & friends."



Toot-toot! Planning is underway to get Wheels Across the Prairie's miniature railroad operating again this summer.

Wheels train to roll again

A goal is on-track to get the Wheels' miniature railroad rolling again this summer.

The popular children's train didn't operate last summer, due to excavations for a new septic tank and other underground utilities on the Wheels grounds. Hopes are to have the iconic train up and running by mid-summer.

Trackage will be laid out on a new course northwest of the Main Barn. Track and crossing-ties for the relocated railroad will be installed on a built-up aggregate base to keep track level, and minimize past derailment issues. The old rails, first put down two decades ago, were placed at turf-level, resulting in a less-than ideal foundation for the rails. Some sections of track need repairs prior to installation.

The miniature train was purchased in 1976 from a motel in Winthrop, where it was used as a roadside attraction. When the Wheels Across the Prairie opened its doors in 1985, the yellow



Sections of rails, now loaded onto a wagon, will place this summer at a new location.

train engine was initially used as a stationary, outdoor exhibit.

The train became a signature Wheels attraction with the train engine and the assembly of trackage.

Free train rides have been offered with all admissions, if a staff member is available to drive the train.

Wendorff: Credit to all museum supporters

Continued from page two

Marshall, Chuck's Jack & Jill in Tracy, and a 26-year stint with the Marshall Walmart.

He credits others for Wheels Across the Prairie's on-going growth.

"I am just so grateful to all of those who have given so much to this museum, whether it be volunteer workers, members or financial supporters."

His "pay" as an unpaid volunteer, he feels, has come from the satisfaction of seeing the heritage center grow, and helping carry out Wheels Across the Prairie mission of preserving and passing on Tracy's heritage.

Log cabin restorations resume in June

What is the oldest man-made structure in Tracy?

No, it's not one of the late 19th-century brick edifices in downtown Tracy. Nor do any of the town's Victorian-era wood-frame houses qualify.

The railroad bed running through town was originally put down by the Winona & St. Peter Railroad in the early 1870s. But even the railroad can't top age of the historic log cabin at the Wheels Across the Prairie Heritage Center.

The vintage cabin—which originally stood in the “Great Oasis” of lakes that once existed in Lowville Township, Murray County—was built by pioneer farmer Bart Low in the late 1860s. The two-story cabin was moved to the Wheels grounds in 1999.

Efforts are underway to preserve the cabin in as close to its original state as possible.

Several years ago, the oak logs that make up the cabin walls were treated with an insecticide to control the bugs that bored into the walls. In 2024, a new cedar-shake roof was installed by the Duluth restoration firm of Northern Bedrock.

A Northern Bedrock crew is slated to return June 10-18, to install new chinking between the logs and stain the cedar shakes that went onto the roof last summer.



A crew from Northern Bedrock installed a new cedar shakes roof over the Wheels Across the Prairie's two-story log cabin last summer.

Wheels 40th:

Continued from page one

And at the Wheels Across the Prairie Museum, 500 people turned out to applaud the opening that scores of Tracyites had strived for years to achieve.

Mayor Dale Johnson Sr. presided over the ribbon-cutting. Other dignitaries included state Sen. Gary DeCramer, state Rep. Jim Boerboom, Henry Herran of Minnesota Historical Society, and Lyon County Commissioner Paul Knoblauch.

Wheels leaders who reveled in the grand opening included: Arnie & Everal McDaniel, Dorthy & Bill Pamp, Elizabeth Hook, Mary Lou and Sander Ludeman, Marlo & Martha Triplett, Merrill & Alice Firebaugh, Gordon & Inez Holland, Lefty & Verone Holland, Ron and Patti Holmbeck, Ted Drackley, and Fae Hatch.

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Monday night, speakers at Wheels Across the Prairie's 2025 annual meeting noted the 40th anniversary, and marveled at the vision and dedication shown by the museum's founders.

Jon Wendorff, Wheels executive director, said that the museum never would have grown into what it is today, without the foundation left by the museum's founders.

Today, Wheels Across the Prairie has

grown from its single building in 1985 into a sprawling village with 15 buildings, a military veterans' memorial, and a signature four-unit freight train.

Monday night's attendees noted the heritage center's accomplishments over the past year, including:

- Adding an array of more the 20 American flags and poles, each a memorial to a local military veterans.
- A new cedar roof for the museum's historic log cabin.
- Dedication of the Jack Miller barbershop.
- Opening of a new military exhibit building.
- Exterior improvements to the Section Foreman's House.
- New siding on blacksmith shop.
- Extensive electrical and water improvements, and a new septic tank.

New board president

New Wheels Board President Dorothy Radermacher saluted current board members for the museum's progress, and especially Wendorff, for his 15 years as president.

“The board of directors, through those

years, say without his countless hours of volunteering, commitment and passion for history, this would not exist today. Would Bill Bolin give Jon an “A” for his work in history class? I think so! Thank you, Jon.”

However, she said board members realized that the Wheels' rapid growth had made it impossible for one person to fulfill the responsibilities of both board president and museum director.

“Who in the world could possibly fill Jon's shoes? Absolutely no one. It was time to take the next step in our growth and reorganization.”

Changes in the Wheels bylaws, her election as board president, and Wendorff's designation as executive director, Radermacher explained, will allow some responsibilities to be taken from Wendorff's shoulders, and allow him to concentrate on museum operations, and better position the Wheels for the future.

Wendorff said he is proud of all that the Wheels has accomplished, and is excited by what is ahead.

“We really are a little gem on the prairie.”

Treasures turn up in Wheels donations

Wheels Across the Prairie welcomes donations of old memorabilia with links to Tracy history. Scrapbooks, photos, and vintage artifacts often offer invaluable insights into local heritage.

Recent items from the estate of 1952 THS graduate Dick Kelley, a long-time Tracy businessman, farmer, and funeral director, are one example.

Six boxes of color slides from Kelley offer snapshots of Tracy life over several decades. Old scrapbooks have turned up treasures that include THS school newspapers from 70 years ago. A yellowed photograph brings to life the cast of a Tracy High School play from circa 1911. (Three names are listed on the back of the photograph: "Bud" Seiter, Lester Webb, and Eloise Jame, who were all 1911 THS graduates).

Another picture from the Kelley estate shows a pioneer farm family in Lac qui Parle County, with a yoke of four oxen, a draft horse and the family dog. The farmer, identified as Andrew Anderson, stands behind a one-bottom plow. A young boy and woman, likely his son and wife,

stand nearby in what might have been their "Sunday Best" clothing with the family dog. The photo is dated July 4, 1892.

What link could the Lac qui Parle family could have with Dick Kelley's parents, Frank and Marjorie (Fatre) Kelley? Mrs. Kelley was originally from Lac qui Parle County.

"Even if families think that no one else would be interested in their old things, we'd like people to bring them to the museum instead of throwing away," explains Wheels Director Jon Wendorff. "Many times those old boxes contain really interesting pieces of our history."



Wheels Across the Prairie worker Noreen Hanson sifts through a scrapbook from the Dick Kelley estate.



This 1892 picture of a farm family and its oxen in Lac qui Parle Township has a Tracy connection.



A gathering of Tracy High School students 12 decades ago is frozen in time, thanks to this photograph from the Dick Kelley estate.



The P-51 Mustang, which provided long-distance fighter escorts for Allied bombing missions over Europe during WW II, is among the aircraft displayed at the Fagen Fighters museum near Granite Falls.

Illustration & photo courtesy Fagen Fighters World War II Museum.

Fagen Fighters bus trip planned

Wheels Across the Prairie is sponsoring a bus trip to the Fagen Fighters World War II Museum near Granite Falls.

Those taking in the Saturday, August 16, trip will get a look at 15 restored World War II-era aircraft, including a P-51 Mustang, a P-38 Lockheed Lightning, a P-47 Thunderbolt, and a B-25 Mitchell bomber. All of the rare aircraft are flightworthy.

The Granite Falls museum also has a collection of serviceable WW II military vehicles, and a “Voices of Valor” theatre. Food stands are available on the grounds.

A \$50 ticket includes round-trip bus ride and admission. The bus will leave the Wheels Across the Prairie parking lot at 8 a.m., and return at 1 p.m. Upon returning to Tracy, participants will be invited to check out exhibits at the Wheels.

Fifty-six seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Email wheelsacrosstheprairie@gmail.com or call 507-626-1949 for more information.



KKK's 1920s legacy is Wheels program topic

The KKK has an infamous place in American history. But you would be mistaken if you think the violent, racist group dedicated to maintaining white supremacy existed only in the Deep South.

History professor Anita Talisman Gaul will discuss the Klan's presence in rural Minnesota a century ago in a 2 p.m., Saturday, June 14 program at the Wheels.

"The (Not-So) Invisible Empire: The KKK in Southwest Minnesota in the 1920s" will illustrate the Klan's surprising existence and acceptance in the region. There is no charge for the program and the public is invited.

Dr. Gaul, the author of articles and books about Minnesota and regional history, teaches at Minnesota West Community and Technical College.



Flag array grows

More flag poles and American flags are joining the array that was flown for the first time last summer. The Stars & Stripes was raised on 20 poles in 2024, with each flag flying in memory of a Tracy-area military veteran (left) The first of 10 additional flag poles started going up in May (right). The latest array of flags are being put up along the pathway that extends eastward from the depot. When complete, the Wheels will have 30 American flags flying in memory of Tracy military veterans.



"Where are we now?" and "Where are we going?" were the themes of the keynote address given by Dorothy Rademacher, Wheels board president, at the Wheels Across the Prairie Heritage Center's annual meeting May 19. Rick Anderson, Lyon County Commissioner, also spoke, expressing what a great asset the museum is for county people. Heavy rains sidelined plans for tours of the Wheels campus, but attendees did enjoy a free hot-dog & chips lunch.

Wheels is open five days a week

Thanks to expanded hours, it's easier than ever to find a convenient time to visit Wheels Across the Prairie.

The heritage center is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 4 p.m. Sundays.

The hours are in effect through Labor Day.

Admission is \$8 for adults and teens, and \$4 for children ages 5-12. There is no charge for preschoolers.

Active American military personnel are entitled to free admission, through the Wheels' Blue Star Museum designation.

Wheels Across the Prairie also participates in the federal government's "Museums for All" program, which offers free admission to families that qualify for SNAP food benefits.

Blacksmith shop getting roof, lean-to

The Wheels Heritage Center's blacksmith shop will undergo a second phase of improvements this year.

In 2024, new cedar siding was installed. This year, the blacksmith shop will be enhanced with a new roof and a 17x30-foot lean-to and concrete pad along its east side.

The lean-to, open on three-sides, will be used for demonstrations and programs about forge-fired tool-making. The blacksmith shop's interior had only limited space for programs, and was difficult to rope off hazardous areas from spectators. The new lean-to will also be available for other outdoor Wheels programs.

BT Construction of Tracy will be the project's general contractor. A gift from Ron Bendixon is funding the improvements.

The project will involve the removal of some old concrete, as well as the relocation of a wooden granary donated by the late Alvin Hoffbeck.



An open-sided lean-to will be built on the east side of the blacksmith shop. A wood grainery will need to be relocated to a new spot on the Wheels campus. A new roof for the blacksmith shop is also planned.

Model train rolling in the main barn at Wheels

A model railroad is chugging around Wheels Across the Prairie's Main Barn this summer, with Russell Ebnet at the throttle.

"I put this up for the kids to enjoy," explains Ebnet, of the HO-scale train set-up.

The Wheels display is a small sample of Ebnet's model railroad collection.

"I have over 600 cars," he says. His sprawling basement railroad layout has had trains with as many as 100 cars. A fan of model railroads since he was 13, Ebnet belongs to the Roundhouse Club in St. James, and a similar club in Albany. He's displayed model railroad layouts with both clubs.

In May, Ebnet had set up a track winding around a plywood platform, and had just begun arranging accessories, which will include store fronts, grain elevators, homes, and farms. The layout will run through the summer. And yes, visitors will be able to run the train.

Ebnet moved to Tracy from Minneapolis five years ago, attracted by its low crime rate and affordable rents. Before moving to Tracy, Ebnet was employed by Rainbow Foods for over 30 years.

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Model railroading isn't Ebnet's only passion.

He has played stadium organs at prep and collegiate hockey

games for 37 years. Drake Arena in St. Paul is among his venues.

Ebnet also enjoys singing, and has often performed "The Star Spangled Banner" prior to athletic contests. He has a knack for karaoke singing, once taking part in a Tracy Box Car Days competition.



A HO-scale model railroad train rounds a curve at Wheels Across the Prairie, under the watchful gaze of Russell Ebnet.



Whirling collection

Wheels Across the Prairie is home to numerous collections. One that aptly reflects the Wheels name is the hub-cap collection assembled by Sander Ludeman Sr. Many familiar automobile monikers—Buick, Chevrolet, Ford, Pontiac, and Oldsmobile—are displayed, along with some long-forgotten brands, like Overland, Essex, and Durant. Sander Ludeman's son, Cal, gifted the collection to the museum.

Tractor show will return

Gentlemen, start those engines!

It is not too early to plan on bringing a machine to the annual Tracy Box Car Days classic tractor show.

Dates are Friday, August 29, through Monday, Sept. 1 (Labor Day). Several tractor drives for participants are scheduled through and around Tracy.



Tractors of all colors are displayed at the annual Box Car Days Tractor Show.

2025 Wheels Across the Prairie Heritage Center Members

Buzzell, Donald
Hicks, David and Jean
Jackson, Robert & Mev
Ludeman, Sander & Peggy
Brock, Wayne & Dorine
Ziemke, Joan
Henkel, Lois
Jessen, Laverne
Johnston, Alan & Judy
Wixon, Ron & Barb
Carlson, Mike & Darcy
Klatt, Carl & Judy
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Christensen, Dennis & Marilyn

Meyer, Sharon
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Unger, Vickie & Richard
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Peterson, Gary & Patty
Keul, Jim and Sue
Wixon, Curt & Beverly
Rykhous, Loren
Boerboom, Robert & Bonnie
Wichmann, James
Drackley, Doris
Greeley, Joyce
Rykhous, David & Linda
Averill, Becky

Tikkala, Linda
Laleman, Virgil and Deanna
Richardson, Cleone & Allan
Wendorff, Jon
Rademacher, Dorothy
Dreckman, Bonita
Dobson, Tom and Kathy
Lundell, Norma
Schmidt, Seth and Betsy
Wendorff, Darrell & Linda
Meyer, Marlene
Meyer, Jeff and Carrie
Hippe, Garry
Fischer, Larry & Margie
Schramm, Fred and Marcy

Hanson, Norine & Kami
Syverson, Annie & Bob
Ankrum, Robert & Marianne
Ebnet, Russell
Blegen, Jeff & Shari
Sutton, Renata
Wixon, Curt and Bev
Foster, Amy
Strand, Carol
Julien, Jim
Miller, Jack
Sellman, Eleanor
Fischer, Elaine
Johnson, LeRoy
Hamilton, Steve

Become a member! Or renew for 2025.

Your financial support helps the Wheels Across the Prairie continue our mission of preserving and sharing Tracy's heritage!

LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP (Dues annually on Jan. 1)

_____ Individual - \$30
_____ Business \$100
_____ Family - \$50
_____ Other \$ _____

RETURN TO:
WHEELS ACROSS THE PRAIRIE HERITAGE CENTER
PO BOX 1091 - TRACY MN 56175

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
email: _____



A sampling of Vi Knott's artistry adorns the exterior of Wheels Across the Prairie's Norwegian "hytte."

"Hytte" now air conditioned

Museum visitors looking at the rosemaling in the Norwegian "hytte" will have an extra cool experience this summer. Air conditioning has been added to the hytte, to eliminate the sweltering summer humidity that sometimes filled the structure in the past. The air conditioning will also help preserve the interior rosemaling created by Vi Knott. The charming Norwegian hut was originally located at Knott's rural Tracy home. The hytte is also newly outfitted with interior electricity and lighting, giving colors in the rosemaling art new brightness. The interior rosemaling includes depictions of the "old country" in Norway.



Summer employees

Learning interesting facts about local history is a side benefit of having a summer job at the Wheels Across the Prairie Heritage Center. Gabriel Torkelson and Evie Ourada will have a host of responsibilities, including greeting visitors, helping organize museum collections, conducting tours, cleaning, gardening, and perhaps serving as the conductor of the museum's miniature train. Both will be juniors at Tracy Area High School this coming fall.



Shelter for Speeder car

Wheels Across the Prairie's restored Chicago & Northwestern speeder car will soon have a roof over its head, if the 2025 construction season progresses as hoped. Plans call for a shed to be constructed on the cement slab (left) that is east of the caboose and south of the railroad Section Foreman's House. Speeder cars were once essential for railroad maintenance crews going out to check tracks.

THANK YOU TO THESE AREA BUSINESSES FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP



Tracy Store
611 S 4th St
Tracy, MN 56175
507-629-3485

Marshall Store
2705 County Road 6
Marshall, MN 56258
507-532-9430



212 3rd Street, Tracy, MN
507-212-0002



207 Hamden Street, Marshall MN
507-720-4864



900 Craig Ave., Tracy MN - 507-629-4740





**Wheels Across the Prairie
Heritage Center**
PO Box 1091 • 3297 Hwy 14
Tracy, Minnesota 56175
www.wheelsacrosstheprairie.org

It is easy to become a helper at Wheels

Volunteers continue to be the bedrock of Wheels Across the Prairie's existence.

One example can be seen in the heritage center's "adopt a building" program, that has helpers clean buildings each spring. Volunteers are asked to periodically check-up on their building throughout the summer.

This year's "adopt a building" volunteers include:

Post Office, Marj & Gene Short; Country School, Muriel Coulter & Betsy Schmidt; Summer Kitchen, Cindy Rignell; General Store, Sue Keul; Military Building, Jeanne Knott; Norwegian Hytta, JoAnn Knott; Cottage, Sis Beierman; Barbershop, Shari Blegen; St. Mark's Church, Rosemary Anderson & Laura Ducharme; Monroe Town Hall, Shari Blegen & Rosemary Anderson; Log Cabin, Kelli Kurth & Linda Wendorff; Helmberger-Johnston building, Colleen & Ken Schiller, Gwen Johnson, Sharon Hohler, Mary Sanow; Depot, Anita & Dennis Fultz; Car Barn, Norine Hanson; Blacksmith Shop, Ron Boje.

People can also "adopt" one of the Wheels' 18 planters around the campus.

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Volunteers contribute hundreds of hours of service each year keeping up with maintenance, repairs, and working on major improvements. The museum's facilities committee—made up



Garry Hippe (right) accepted the Chamber's Diamond Award from Joe Buyck (left), the 2024 award recipient.

of Ken Witt, Ron Boje, Jeff Meyer and Garry Hippe—has been especially active over the past several years, spearheading the relocation of buildings along new village "streets," constructing the new military building, renovating a section foreman's house, mapping utility and drainage improvements, and erecting an "avenue of flags" honoring local veterans. Joe Beierman refurbished the interior of the Jack Miller Barbershop. This past winter, the Tracy Area Chamber of Commerce presented Hippe with its "Diamond Award," in recognition of the volunteer efforts.

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"We are so grateful for every one of our volunteers," comments Wheels Executive Director Jon Wendorff. "They all bring different talents and interests".

New volunteers are always welcome, in any capacity. For more information stop out at the museum, or call 507-626-1949.