



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

GREATER GRAND FORKS YOUNG PROFESSIONALS' YEAR IN REVIEW.



GREATER GRAND FORKS
Young Professionals





WHO ARE THE GREATER GRAND FORKS YOUNG PROFESSIONALS?

Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals (GGFYYP) is a non-profit group, created by Young Professionals for Young Professionals. GGFYP is dedicated to the growth, learning, and development of Young Professionals within the region.

OUR CORE PILLARS

ENHANCE OUR COMMUNITY.

GGFYYP enhances our community by giving back through Community Involvement – focusing on ways to engage Young Professionals to become active and involved leaders in their communities.

CREATE CONNECTIONS.

GGFYYP is here to help create connections through Social Events – helping Young Professionals make meaningful connections and grow their network through formal and informal events.

INVEST IN EACH OTHER.

GGFYYP invests in each other through Professional Development – Informing Young Professionals about the great potential and possibility of our region and creating opportunities for Young Professionals to gain career enhancement skills

GGFYYP STAFF

The GGFYP's day-to-day operations are led by the executive director and part-time marketing and events coordinator



GON CARLSON
Executive Director



MADI LEE
Marketing & Events
Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The GGFYP Board of Directors is made up of eleven voting members: an executive team, three committee chairpersons, an internal advisor, and two members at large. They determine the organizational and fiscal direction of the organization.



MOLLY HANE

President



DANIEL BRYANT

Vice President



TESS WALL

Reporter



KAELAN REEDY

Treasurer



ZACHARY TOMCZIK

Internal Advisor



MATTHEW TERNUS

Past President



BRENNA MATHIASON

Member-at-Large



KRISTY COLEMAN

Member-at-Large

PILLAR COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Our committee chairs lead their committees to create events in line with GGFYP's mission: *"To enhance our community, create connections, and invest in each other."*



CALEB EILTS

Professional Development
Committee Chair



LINH LE

Social Events
Committee Chair



DANIELLE PIEKARSKI

Community Involvement
Committee Chair



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I reflect on the past year, the word that best describes the state of GGFYP is **leadership**. This has been a year of rebuilding and growth with many people stepping up in meaningful ways, and we have so much to be grateful for. Young professionals continue to step forward and lead meaningful change across the Greater Grand Forks region.

Leadership was especially evident within our Board of Directors. This year brought significant internal transition, and our board rose to the challenge. In the fall of 2024, we welcomed Gon Carlson as our Executive Director. In just a few short months, Gon made an immediate impact, helping move the organization forward in 2025 with focus and momentum. Alongside the day-to-day work of running the organization, the board also took on two major initiatives: reviving the Young Professionals Regional Summit and developing a new three-year strategic plan as our previous plan concluded at the end of 2025. The many hours spent in meetings, discussion, and planning were substantial, and that commitment will have a lasting impact on GGFYP's future. I am deeply thankful to our 2025 Board Members, Executive Director Gon Carlson, and Marketing & Events Coordinator Madilyn Lee for their dedication and leadership.

Leadership also showed up throughout our community. Community leaders generously shared their insight and feedback to help shape both the strategic plan and the Regional Summit. Additionally, we have over 15 non-board GGFYP members serving on Regional Summit committees, demonstrating the strength of engagement and ownership within our membership. I would also like to thank our 20 Advisory Board Members. These community leaders are some of our strongest supporters, and their guidance, advocacy, and commitment to our mission have been invaluable.

As we look ahead to 2026, I am excited about what's to come. By continuing to create connections, enhance our community, implement a new strategic plan, and host a Regional Summit, we are well positioned for another impactful year. With the continued support of our board, members, and community partners, we will keep growing, leading, and strengthening Greater Grand Forks together.

Molly Hane
GGFYP President





LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year has truly been a year of connection. As the new executive director, I took this opportunity to reconnect and introduce myself to all of our amazing corporate sponsors. With over 55 sponsors, this meant meetings every week and meeting new faces and names. Each meeting gave me more insight into the Greater Grand Forks community and the history of GGFYP. But the Legacy of GGFYP isn't only in Grand Forks. In March, I joined our GGFYP Board President, Molly Hane, and 70 other leaders from Grand Forks at the Capitol in Bismarck, ND. I quickly learned that being a YP meant you are a leader in your community. A highlight of the trip was learning that Governor Armstrong was one of the founders of GGFYP back in 2004. He briefly reminisced about his time hanging out in Pete Haga's backyard and talking about all things Young Professionals.

2025 started strong and went by fast. Our Annual Launch was one of the most highly attended in the history of GGFYP, with over 160 people filling the Cloud 9 space. The Orange Bag Event followed closely after, with over 50 volunteers helping us staple, deliver, and collect so many orange bag-wrapped donations from the Riverside neighborhood. Soon after, ArtSee boasted 12 featured artists in May and over 150 attendees on a Memorial Day weekend. I quickly learned the strength of my board of directors. These are the largest GGFYP events hosted annually, and all in 3 months. Without the board and our amazing committee chairs, none of this would have been possible. Our committees will have a chance in this report to go over their proudest achievements in 2025, but might not give themselves enough credit for how much time and effort they put into their events to make sure that YPs feel welcomed and connected with our organization.

The success of GGFYP is not the work of one person. At its core, GGFYP is and will always be about connecting professionals and giving them a space to grow and lead in their community. Our success only exists because of our professionals, young AND seasoned, our sponsors, and our community's dedication and commitment to the growth and development of the Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals. **We are here to enhance our community, create connections, and invest in each other.** And it truly takes a village to accomplish it.

Gon Carlson

GGFYP Executive Director



ANNUAL LAUNCH



LONGEST TABLE



ORANGE BAG EVENT



ARTSEE



ANNUAL PICNIC

BY THE NUMBERS

730+ Professionals Attended GGFYP Events

256 Registered Members

60+ Mentorship Pairings to Date

57 Corporate Sponsors

36+ Pillar Events Organized Annually

1 Really Long Table

MARQUEE EVENTS

Every year GGFYP hosts 4 marquee events throughout the year: **Annual Launch**, **ArtSee**, **Orange Bag Event**, and **Annual Picnic**.

This year, GGFYP collaborated with the Community Foundation and helped organize the 4th biannual **Longest Table**. On Sept. 25th, 541 residents gathered to exchange stories and share ideas about what we can do as a community to ensure that educational programs prepare individuals for meaningful careers, the economy supports local livelihoods, and industries are responsive to community needs.



COMMITTEE REPORT

SOCIAL EVENTS

GGFYP's Social Events Committee is dedicated to helping Young Professionals make new connections by hosting social events around the Greater Grand Forks community. Each of our monthly events is a chance for Young Professionals to make new connections and experience something new in Greater Grand Forks and have fun!

We started the year off with a bang with a well-attended bowling event at Red Ray lanes with more than 40 attendees. In February, we had our annual Curling and Chili event at Grand Forks Curling Club, where attendees learned to curl and competed in a chili cook off to be crowned the best cook. Bingo night at the Tap Room in March was another great success, with around 38 attendees.

Summer was a great time to connect with one another over coffee at our coffee social in April, Yoga in the Park collaboration with Lotus Yoga in June, Annual Picnic in July, and Grand Forks downtown walking tour collaboration with Grand Forks Downtown Development Association in August. GGFYP also celebrated the organization becoming a BZP certified organization at the Annual Picnic!

Fall was full of excitement as we cheered for our home team at the UND Homecoming football game in September, and competed in a pinball tournament at Half Brothers Brewing in October. We filled our hearts with gratitude and conversed over good food at our Friendsgiving dinner in November. A cozy night decorating your own Christmas wreath and making Christmas cards for CVIC at the North Dakota Roastery was a wonderful way to celebrate our friendship and wrapped up the year.

As we approach the new year, we look forward to more fun events in the near future: Gaming night in January and Sweep and Simmer (an extended version of Curling and Chili) in February, just to name a few. We also look forward to celebrating **ArtSee's** 20th year in May 2026 and host the social portion of the **Live. Grow. Lead. Young Professionals Regional Summit** in July 2026. So many opportunities for Young Professionals to have fun in the Greater Grand Forks!

Thank you to our sponsors, business owners and community members for helping us make the events possible, and thank you to Young Professionals for attending our events and continuing to build connections and extend the GGFYP's network.



Linh Le
Social Events Chair



COMMITTEE REPORT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GGFYP's Professional Development Committee is focused on creating opportunities for Young Professionals to grow, learn, and connect through accessible and engaging professional development experiences. By hosting a number of Lunch & Learns and Business Tours, the committee provides members with practical insights, meaningful networking opportunities, and exposure to local organizations and leaders shaping the Greater Grand Forks community.

The year began with strong engagement at the January Lunch & Learn on the “Fear of Failure” with Tom Ford, which encouraged members to reflect on resilience, mindset, and professional growth. In February, the committee hosted a tour at the Grand Forks Public Library, along with a Lunch & Learn highlighting the wide range of professional and personal resources available to young professionals in the community.

Momentum continued through the summer with a personal finance Lunch & Learn in July, hosted by Ryan Bartel at Thrivent, where members gained practical tools for financial well-being and long-term planning. In August, the committee explored emerging trends during an “AI in the Workplace” Lunch & Learn with former NDUS Chancellor Mark Hagerott, sparking thoughtful discussion on emerging technology and how it affects the workplace.

The fall wrapped up with a Business Tour of the Alerus Center in October, giving members a behind-the-scenes look at one of the region’s most prominent venues and insight into its operations, impact, and leadership.

As the year comes to a close, the Professional Development Committee looks forward to our Spring Mentorship Program that aims to connect young professionals with mentors that can help them grow and connect with our community.

Thank you to everyone who attended, presented, and helped make these professional development opportunities possible!

Caleb Eilts

Professional Development Chair





COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

GGFYP's Community Involvement Committee is dedicated to bringing Young Professionals together to make a positive impact across Greater Grand Forks. Whether we are volunteering at local events, supporting area organizations, or coordinating our own initiatives, the committee works to create meaningful connections, support our neighbors, and strengthen service-minded leadership among our members.

We started the year with great momentum at our January volunteer event for the United Way Kids Closet. Fourteen members gathered to sort clothing, and we packed a dozen industrial-sized totes that were later distributed to local youth. This enthusiasm carried into spring with another successful year of the Orange Bag Event initiative.

Throughout the year, committee members also supported a variety of local events, including Pork & Brew, Grand Forks Comic Con, Taste of Belgium French Fry Feed, and the Full STEAM Ahead Children's Museum celebration. These efforts help strengthen our relationships with community partners while serving with purpose.

A major highlight was GGFYP's involvement in planning the 4th biannual **Longest Table**, a community-development initiative that brought over 500 residents together for a shared meal and guided conversation. Twenty YP volunteers served as table captains, facilitating thoughtful discussions and gathering community feedback aimed at building a healthier and more connected Grand Forks.

As the year comes to a close, the committee looks forward to finishing strong with a competitive food drive and s'mores kit packing for the HollyDazzle event. In collaboration with Jersey Mike's and local PTOs, the committee is also coordinating a Movie Night Toy Drive featuring a screening of Frosty the Snowman. Families will be encouraged to donate a new toy in lieu of admission, with all donations supporting the Jersey Mike's with Frosty event in mid-December. The committee is also exploring opportunities to assist with the Taste of Grand Forks Kwanzaa celebration as a final engagement for the year.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and energy throughout the year!



Danielle Piekarski
Community Involvement Chair



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

ANNUAL LAUNCH

Every year GGFYP gathers to honor and recognize the hard work that has been put in to continue our mission of enhancing our community, creating connections, and investing in each other. In 2025, we awarded four amazing young professionals and one company with YP awards at our Annual Launch:

- **YP of the Year** - Eric McCoy
- **Legacy YPs of the Year** - Becca Cruger & Lisa Martinez
- **Student YP of the Year** - Madi Lee
- **Grow Grand Awardee** - Good Samaritan Society - Heritage Grove

ORANGE BAG

In March, 22 volunteers met at Half Brothers to staple 1,000 bags, which were later distributed throughout the Riverside neighborhood in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. In May, the Orange Bag sorting day drew 30 volunteers who sorted and donated 55 bags to eight nonprofits across the region.

ARTSEE

GGFYP hosted our annual ArtSee event in May. The annual ArtSee features the work of up-and-coming artists in the community and region as well as established local artists who have laid the groundwork for a growing arts landscape in the Grand Forks region. This year, we featured 12 local artists with their individual art styles and techniques. The event is free and open to the entire community, and welcomed more than 150 attendees this year. This event has been hosted every year by GGFYP in collaboration with Happy Harry's and the North Dakota Museum of Art for over a decade. ArtSee is the GGFYP's opportunity to provide support for the arts in our community and engage the citizens of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.

BLUE ZONE PROJECT CERTIFICATION

GGFYP became Blue Zone Project (BZP) certified in July 2025! BZP is a world-wide community-led initiative that promotes a healthy lifestyle and well-being. In 2025, GGFYP implemented well-being best practices and committed ourselves to cultivating a healthy environment in the Greater Grand Forks with our active social events and volleyball league throughout the year. We celebrated becoming BZP-certified at our Annual Picnic in July, awarded by Nicole Benson, BZP Grand Forks' Executive Director.

PHILANTHROPY 101

GGFYP hosted a Philanthropy 101 panel event designed to introduce members to the local nonprofit landscape and the many ways Young Professionals can engage in meaningful giving. Participants learned about philanthropy basics, volunteer pathways, and how individual time, talent, and resources can make a collective impact in the Greater Grand Forks community. The event encouraged thoughtful conversation around purpose-driven involvement and empowered members to take their next steps in community engagement.



ERIC MCCOY
YP OF THE YEAR



GOOD SAMARITAN SOCIETY
GROW GRAND AWARD



MADI LEE
STUDENT YP OF THE YEAR



**BECCA CRUGER &
LISA MARTINEZ**
LEGACY YPs OF THE YEAR



THE ORANGE BAG EVENT



ANNUAL PICNIC - BLUE ZONE PROJECT CERTIFICATION



PHILANTHROPY 101



FINANCIAL REPORT

In 2025, Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals has maintained a stable financial position while continuing to invest in the programming that fuels member engagement and community impact. The organization’s financial health remains closely tied to the strength of our corporate sponsor network, whose support makes it possible to host accessible events and keep participation barriers low for young professionals across the region.

Following a review of 2022’s 3-year Strategic Plan, the Board embarked on a new strategic planning process to clarify priorities, strengthen metrics, and support long-term sustainability. This effort positions the GGFYP to align future budgets more directly to critical outcomes like increased member engagement, retention, and leadership development, so that our financial decisions consistently reinforce our mission and long-term impact.

With these priorities in mind, GGFYP is intentionally reallocating budget capacity toward a major regional investment: hosting the 2026 Regional Summit. This shift reflects a significant increase in our Event expenses, while maintaining the operational support needed to deliver our year-round mission.

Looking ahead to 2026, we will continue prioritizing strong financial stewardship, maintaining adequate operating reserves, and investing in the programs that best advance our “Belong, Grow, Lead” member journey while honoring the trust of our sponsors and stakeholders.

2026 BUDGET

55% **General Operating**
Day-to-day operational expenses to run the organization, including things such as office rent, supplies, insurance, and salaries.

34% **2026 Regional Summit**
Spending allocated to the Regional Summit, a key investment aimed at expanding regional impact and member engagement.

6% **Committee Events & Involvement**
Events and activities planned by the GGFYP committees (community involvement, professional development, and social events). Activities and Ideas generated by member-led initiatives.

2% **Marketing**
Marketing expenses related to GGFYP’s social media management and other advertising expenditures.

2% **Miscellaneous**
Mainly allocation for charitable contributions & and in-kind expenditures.

1% **Staff Professional Development**
Allocated funds for staff professional development and networking.



Kaelan Reedy
Treasurer



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Revenue	2025 Actuals	2024 Actuals
Membership & Ticket Sales	\$3,977.44	\$3,435.51
Corporate Sponsorships	\$78,250.00	\$74,214.85
Grants	\$6,412.06	\$8,730.94
Other Income	\$6,610.21	\$4,170.05
Total Revenue	\$95,249.71	\$90,551.35
Other Assets (Investments)	\$151,770.97	\$140,070.96
Expenditures		
General Operating	\$79,263.56	\$100,058.31
Events & Activities	\$16,545.85	\$18,970.78
Marketing	\$746.75	\$4,745.88
Other Miscellaneous	\$3,655.00	\$5,967.54
Staff Professional Development	\$1,154.00	\$99.00
2026 Regional Summit	\$2,499.00	\$0.00
Total Expenditures	\$103,864.16	\$129,841.51
Net Assets		
Without Investments	\$(8,614.45)	\$(39,290.16)
With Investments	\$143,156.52	\$100,780.80



STRATEGIC PLANNING REVIEW

In 2025 GGFYP began focusing on a strategic planning effort in partnership with Tellwell to re-establish organizational clarity and strengthen member engagement. Early conversations centered on rediscovering GGFYP’s core identity and making sure the organization’s strategy moved beyond aspirational goals to actionable and measurable goals. Through this work, the Board aligned around a relationship-first, human-centered approach designed to guide young professionals from initial connection to meaningful leadership and long-term community impact.

As a result, GGFYP adopted a clear member journey framework, “Belong, Grow, Lead”, supported by defined targeted audiences, strategic objectives, and success metrics. This framework emphasizes early belonging and connection, skill and leadership development, and visible leadership placement within the community. The planning process also identified opportunities to clarify governance structures, strengthen employer and sponsor partnerships, and improve measurement of outcomes such as retention, engagement, and leadership placements. This strategic foundation positions GGFYP to enter 2026 with greater clarity, consistency, and momentum, while promising future programming and operations will remain aligned with the organization’s mission and long-term sustainability.



Dan Bryant
Vice President

VISIONARY

\$10,000+



GOLD

\$5,000+



SILVER

\$2,500+

Alerus Financial
AE2S
Choice Bank

Grand Forks Air Force Base
Grand Forks Public Schools
Happy Harry's

UND Alumni Association & Foundation

BRONZE

\$1,000+

322 Hospitality Group
Alerus Center
American Crystal Sugar
Bluepeak Fiber Internet
First National Bank
Cirrus Aircraft
Downtown Development Association
Empire Arts Center

Express Employment Professionals
First Community Credit Union
Gate City Bank
Grand Forks County
Grand Forks Region EDC
Houston Engineering
Koda Bank
Leighton Media

Midco
Northland Community & Technical College
Ralph Engelstad Arena
Retrax
Urban Stampede
Valley Senior Living

SMALL BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP

\$500+ OR IN-KIND

American Federal
Anchor Marketing
Bonzer's Sandwich Pub
Bully Brew
Community Contractors
PCL Construction
Crary Real Estate
CVIC
Dakota Commercial

Deeks Pizza
Development Homes Inc
Fenworks
Frandsen Bank & Trust
GF Park District
Grand Forks Subaru
iHeart Media
Jersey Mike's
Lunseth Trucking Company

Mark Maliskey Photography
Minnkota Power Cooperative
Northrop Grumman
Northern Plains Rail Services
River Cinema
Rosenquist Law Office
TruHome Property Solutions

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INVEST & POSITIVELY IMPACT GREATER GRAND FORKS

Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals is a 501(c)(6), member-based organization. It is completely funded by community organizations that believe in making a positive impact in the region. The consistent sponsorship of the organizations above

has directly contributed to the 24% increase in the number of people ages 25-39 from 2012-2022 in Grand Forks County. If you want to continue to attract and retain young professionals, contact GGFYP Executive Director Gon Carlson to invest.



Gon Carlson
Executive Director
701-320-8769
gon@ggfyp.com



2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



LONGEST TABLE



ARTSEE

GREATER GRAND FORKS
Young Professionals



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