

COMMUNITY

NDCF earns national standards accreditation

BY NEWS MONITOR STAFF

The North Dakota Community Foundation (NDCF) has earned accreditation through the Community Foundations National Standards program, a national benchmark administered by the Council on Foundations.

The accreditation recognizes community foundations that demonstrate transparency, financial responsibility, sound governance and accountable practices that exceed federal and state requirements. NDCF was the first community foundation in North Dakota to receive the designation and has maintained accreditation since 2006.

“When people make a charitable donation to one of our funds, they trust us to manage their investment wisely and honor their charitable wishes,” said Steve Lipp, NDCF president and CEO. “This accreditation proves we are worthy of that trust.”

To achieve accreditation, NDCF submitted

extensive documentation outlining its operations, including board meeting minutes, its most recent strategic plan, examples of donor outreach and community leadership, and policies governing gift acceptance, investments and grantmaking. Only foundations that meet all 26 national standards of excellence are awarded the accreditation seal.

Founded in 1976, NDCF manages more than 1,000 charitable funds benefiting communities, nonprofit organizations and students across the state. The foundation’s mission is to improve quality of life for North Dakotans through charitable giving and the promotion of philanthropy. Since its inception, NDCF has awarded more than \$130 million in grants and charitable disbursements.

NDCF maintains offices in Bismarck, Dickinson, Larimore and Wahpeton.

More information is available by calling 701-222-8349 or visiting www.ndcf.net.



FILE PHOTO

The North Dakota Community Foundation recently earned national accreditation through the Community Foundations National Standards program.



PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Large front-facing windows line the cardio area at Red Iron Fitness.

Red Iron Fitness opens in Hankinson

BY SHOBA DASARI

Assistant Managing Editor

A new gym has opened in Hankinson, restoring a local fitness option after the community’s previous gym was lost to a fire.

Red Iron Fitness officially opened on Dec. 17, 2025, though planning for the project began in mid-May. Owner Logan Loll said the idea took shape after recognizing the community’s need for a replacement fitness facility. With a building already available in town, Loll said the opportunity felt like the right fit.

“I saw the need and opportunity in the community,” Loll said.

“Since I had the building available, I just ran with it.”

The gym offers a full range of equipment, including cardio machines, cable machines and free weights and is designed for all fitness levels. Members have 24/7 access with a paid membership, allowing flexibility for a wide range of schedules. While group classes are not currently offered, the gym works with International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA) — certified personal trainer Maddy Sweep, who provides a variety of personal training packages.

Loll said the response from the community has been strong, with

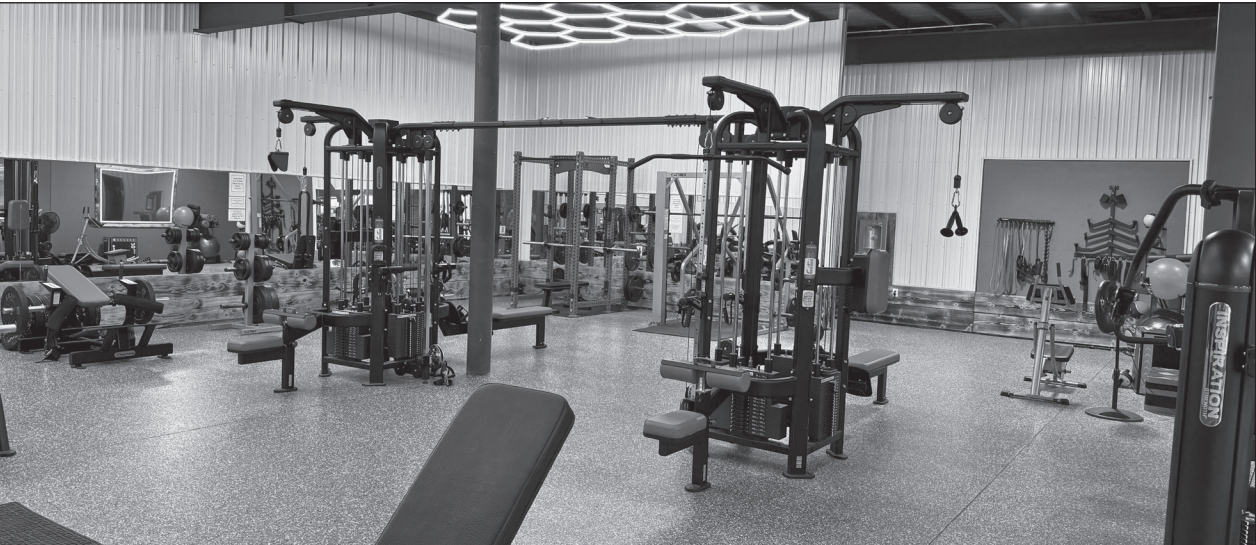
many residents signing up and offering positive feedback about the facility. Unique features include large front-facing windows overlooking the cardio area, custom concrete-coated flooring and hexagon-style lighting designed to brighten the space.

Membership options include daily passes, monthly and yearly individual plans for those 16 and older and an unlimited family monthly plan. Family memberships offer discounted rates for additional members and Red Iron Fitness also participates in an insurance reimbursement program that works with most insurance providers.

Loll said having a local gym is important for a small community like Hankinson, providing a convenient place for residents to stay active and focus on overall health and wellness.

Looking ahead, Loll said the goal for the gym’s first year is continued improvement based on community feedback, ensuring members have what they need to reach their fitness goals.

“I hope when people walk through the doors they see opportunity,” Loll said. “The opportunity to make the best version of themselves with all of the great equipment and the friendly environment we have provided.”



Custom concrete-coated flooring and hexagon-style lighting brighten the workout space inside Red Iron Fitness.

DAKOTA GARDENER: Winter insulation

Snow cover provides an important protective layer over vulnerable plants

BY CARRIE KNUTSON

Horticulture agent, NDSU Extension

Winter so far has been a rollercoaster of weather, with snowy and cold conditions in early December, followed by 40-degree Fahrenheit temperatures, the loss of snow cover, a return of snow, strong winds and then a repeat of the cycle. As a gardener, I’ve learned to appreciate snow cover during the winter, even when it

means extra shoveling, because it plays an important role in protecting our plants.

How does snow protect plants during the winter? The answer lies below ground, in the roots and soil, and in the steps that we can take to help plants survive cold conditions.

Plants with shallow root systems are more susceptible to winter injury than those with deeper roots. Much of this damage occurs during cycles of thawing and freezing known as frost heaving. These cycles cause cracks to form in the soil, allowing cold air to penetrate and lower the soil’s temperature. In some cases,

roots are pushed closer to the soil surface, where they are exposed to extreme cold. Roots can be injured or killed when soil temperatures drop below 10 degrees.

Snow cover acts as an excellent insulator. It traps heat, helps the soil retain moisture and limits how deeply the frost penetrates the ground. Early snow cover is especially beneficial because it helps the soil hold warmth and moisture before the coldest temperatures arrive.

Even in winter, soil temperatures are typically warmer than the air above ground. For example, according to the Grand Forks NDAWN site, the soil

temperature at the 12-inch depth today is 31 degrees, while the air temperature is just 4 degrees. This difference highlights the importance of insulation from the soil and snow in protecting plant roots.

Root injury is more likely during winters with little snow cover and extended cold, particularly when soils are dry. Moist soil retains heat more effectively than dry soil. So, when snow is absent, the cold can penetrate deeper into the soil profile, increasing the risk of damage.

Gardeners can take several steps to help plants survive the winter. One of the most important things is choos-

ing plants that are suited to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone for our area. The USDA Hardiness Zone Map was updated in 2023, and most of North Dakota falls within zones 3b to 4b. If you enjoy experimenting with plants outside their recommended zone, be prepared to give them extra protection, and keep in mind that one especially cold winter might be their last.

Mulching around plants is another effective strategy. Mulch helps insulate the soil, keeps

temperatures more consistent and conserves soil moisture. Even something as simple as moving snow around your landscape to cover exposed plants during the winter can provide added protection.

I have mulch around several of my plants, and thanks to the blizzard a couple of weeks ago, I’ve accumulated enough snow in my backyard to help protect them this winter. Here’s hoping your gardens are well insulated, too. Happy gardening!

WALDO TOWNSHIP
NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026
At
J Starr Station, Hankinson, ND
@ 3 p.m.
The purpose of this meeting is to consider the vacating of 170th avenue Between Sections 16, 17, 20, & 21
Waldo Township Board

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The Lidgerwood Rural Fire Districts Annual Meeting
will be held Monday, January 19, 2026 at 8:00 pm at the Lidgerwood Fire Hall.
Members up for re-election are:
Phillip Freeman: Marboe Township
Richard Lugert: Moran Township
Domonic Buehre: Grant Township
Nate Helmer: City of Lidgerwood
Randy Heley: Liberty Grove Township
Jerry Spellerberg: At Large