

# NOTES FROM THE TRAIL

A Publication of the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation



WINTER 2025



**Theodore Roosevelt**  
MEDORA FOUNDATION

**Medora**  
EXPLORE IT. ADORE IT.

**Medora Musical** **BullyPulpit**  
GOLF COURSE

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## FROM THE DESK OF RANDY HATZENBUHLER



### 60 – We are going to celebrate that number all summer long.

The *Medora Musical*'s 60th Anniversary season opens on June 4. We will celebrate its anniversary on July 1st with a special 60 for 60 promotion and more (watch for details in the coming months).

The show is the primary reason the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation exists. It has become a North Dakota tradition. It inspires pride for our little town, our state, and our country—too few places do that. Our vision statement says, “*We connect people to historic Medora for positive, life-changing experiences.*” It is at the Burning Hills Amphitheatre where family and friends connect for those incredible experiences.

The show is reason enough for me to be energized for this year, but there is so much more. When you visit this summer, you should see an unprecedented surge of investment in Medora. The **Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library** is now fully enclosed – it has seemingly grown out of the landscape in the most natural, perfect way. You should see significant infrastructure improvements in town, a new hotel under construction, site work for the new rodeo facility, and south of the city, construction of an event/wedding “barn” will be underway.

The hotel, rodeo facility, and event/wedding barn have been planned for the past several years. Together, they represent over \$45 million in community investments. We are grateful for generous donations to these

projects and those yet to be made (yes, we invite you to help!).

I previously wrote that my retirement is coming near the end of 2025. Each day that I work, I appreciate even more that I have worked in Medora for most of my career. How lucky I am that I can look forward to working during the 60th Anniversary season as much as I did my first year and every year since.

**I say and write it often – THANK YOU, HAROLD AND SHEILA SCHAFER AND THE WHOLE SCHAFER FAMILY, for giving so much of your resources to ensure Medora's future.**

I can't wait to see you in Medora,

Randy Hatzenbuhler  
President & CEO



### A RETROSPECTIVE MINI-SERIES

BY: DESTINY MEYER

*As part of his retirement plan, I asked Randy to sit down with me to remember some of his fondest memories of Harold Schafer, Rod Tjaden, and his time at the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation. I wanted to make a mini-series for the quarterly newsletters for 2025.*

Randy started at the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation in its infancy as an accountant. He remembers one night when he first started:

“I think I was working for three weeks, and every night, I would read a couple of files in my office. I told my wife I am going to work late because I have to get caught up. I was doing an internal audit of this new organization that was just a year old. So, I am reading through the files. It's about 11:30 at night, and I think I am the only one in the office. I wasn't. Around the corner came Harold Schafer, and he sees me, and he said, “Man, we're cranking it out tonight!” He scared the daylights out of me, and I lifted out of my chair maybe 10 or 12 inches. But what he was doing that night made a forever impact on me. He was signing 5x7 thank you cards and attaching an ivory lapel pin with Theodore Roosevelt's image to every person who had made a \$5 or more donation to this new organization. A personal handwritten note from Harold Schafer.”

“ If ever I wonder why ‘Always be Grateful’ is part of our values statement, I think of that night.”  
–Randy Hatzenbuhler



Harold Schafer was a one-of-a-kind man and certainly had a sense of humor. This year, Harold will be on many of our minds as we reach not only the 60th Anniversary of the *Medora Musical* but also bid farewell to Randy Hatzenbuhler.

More stories to come in the spring edition of Notes from the Trail!



## MEDORA GIRLS GOLF CAMP

Calling all girl golfers! Returning for the third year in a row, the Medora Girls Golf Camp will be hosted at the Bully Pulpit Golf Course from May 31-June 2, 2025.



The past two years have been filled with lots of girls making unforgettable memories on the beautiful Bully Pulpit Golf Course in the Badlands. Last fall saw the completion of the cart path revitalization on the course, meaning the girls will be some of the first golfers to enjoy the new and improved course!



## MEDORA COWGIRL CAMP



Know a young lady aged 8-14 in your life interested in the way of Western Heritage? Have a cowgirl who wants to learn more? Back again in 2025, the Medora Cowgirl Camp returns this summer! Cowgirl Camp participants will get to know the way of Western Heritage by learning the ABCs of horses: basic care, tack, groundwork, riding, and more. Saddle up for laughter, learning, and cowgirl magic. All riders are welcome; no riding experience is required.

Last year was quite a hit, and spots filled up fast! We encourage interested cowgirls and their families to head over to [Medora.com/CowgirlCamp](http://Medora.com/CowgirlCamp) to learn about registration, dates, and other details.



# BILLY RASE

## *A Hidden Hero of Medora*

There are quite a few heroes of Medora. Some are more famous than others, but there are quite a few underdogs that you may not have heard of. One of those heroes was a cowboy by the name of Billie Rase.

Randy Hatzenbuhler recently advocated for Billie to be inducted into the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame. Below is an excerpt from that nomination:

“Around 2005, the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation sought sponsors to help fund the tickets for children attending the *Medora Musical* on Sunday nights. All kids would receive free admission on that night during the summer. I had no idea Billie was a philanthropist when a mutual friend of Billie’s and mine suggested I ask Billie to sponsor “Kids Day”. I responded, “Billie Rase....?, are we talking about the same person?” The sponsorship was \$25,000 for a year.

When I asked Billie if he would consider being the first “Kids Day Sponsor” and told him the price, he responded, “Could I pay the pledge over time?” Naturally, I said yes. Over the next four weeks, he handed me a check for \$25,000 weekly, saying, “This should be more than a one-year thing.”

I will never forget the first summer we had a Kids Free night. I was selling popcorn, and the theatre was sold out, with about 1,000 kids in attendance. When I was making a welcome announcement, I noticed Billie was on the mid-level plaza; he was easy to pick out in his cowboy hat and plaid shirt. I spontaneously asked the audience how many were in attendance that night because the kids’ tickets were free, and it seemed nearly all the hands went up. I told the audience to look to the mid-level where Billie was standing. I asked Billie to give a wave. I told the audience that the kind cowboy had bought the tickets for the kids.

We always try to start the show on time. That night, we had to delay for nearly 20 minutes because hundreds of kids and their moms and dads paraded to the mid-level plaza to give Billie Rase a thank-you hug. Seeing the smiles on those kids and the permanent grin on Billie’s face was amazing. It was notable that Billie made it to the show nearly every Sunday from that point on, too.”

Billie passed away on March 22, 2013. He left behind a legacy, helping families across North Dakota and the country by starting Kids Free nights at the *Medora Musical*. Don & Pat Clement and Michael & Vicki Zaul later created and initially funded the Medora WISH Endowment with support from our WISH Wranglers. Kids Free nights have continued the legacy of our friend, Billie Rase. Please consider contributing to this legacy and giving to our Medora WISH endowment to ensure Billie’s dream lives on.

# BRINGING THE TRMF VISION TO LIFE POSITIVE, LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES

## *Norene and Roger Sandberg*

### THEIR MANY YEARS OF THE MEDORA MUSICAL

**“It’s a hidden gem; we try to tell everyone we know about it.”**

Norene and Roger Sandberg are some of the biggest supporters of Medora. They have volunteered every summer for the last eleven years, and they bring friends and family from across the country to enjoy Medora. The Sandbergs have been enjoying the *Medora Musical* every summer since 1973, the year of their marriage. That’s 51 years of the *Medora Musical*.

In an interview with the Sandbergs, they reminisced about the first years of the *Medora Musical*:

“The first memory was the wooden benches, and the tickets were \$6 a piece, but that was before the many improvements and the escalator.” Norene joked.



“And before the new toilets, there used to be just one up on the top of the hill!” Roger added.

The Sandbergs had many fond memories of the musical, past and present.

Since the Sandbergs have been coming for so long, they feel that they can’t miss it. The Sandbergs are already planning their trip for this upcoming summer to celebrate the 52nd year of enjoying the *Medora Musical* and volunteering for a 12th year.

If you have been coming to the *Medora Musical* for as long as the Sandbergs or even longer, we would love to hear from you! Please reach out to the TRMF marketing team at [Email@Medora.com](mailto:Email@Medora.com).

# *A Holiday Season FILLED WITH GRATITUDE AND MERRIMENT*

Medora was jam-packed with activities and festivities this past holiday season! Old Town Hall Theater saw special Christmas shows such as Bill Sorenson’s “A Magical Medora Christmas” and Old Fashioned Cowboy Christmas with the Waddington Brothers. The Christmas spirit was felt all around town as the streets were alive with guests bustling around the shops, picking up special gifts for their loved ones.

Another winter event was the New Year’s Eve Bash. Held at the Rough Riders Hotel, guests and locals alike enjoyed an evening of merriment and delicious food. There was truly no better way to ring in the New Year than in Medora this year.

The holiday season may be over, but Medora is just getting started. The fun keeps going as spring warms up at the Old Town Hall Theater with our Concert Series. Check our “More to Explore” page for more information on dates, and check [Medora.com](http://Medora.com) for how to book tickets!



Left Photo: Old Fashioned Cowboy Christmas  
Right Photo: New Year’s Eve Bash





# SPRING INTO CONCERTS

## MEDORA'S 2025 CONCERT SERIES

The fun doesn't just happen in the summer! Come to Medora this spring, and watch the town come alive with these concerts at the Old Town Hall Theater:

**A Night of Patsy Cline:** Join us on February 21 & 22 for "A Night of Patsy Cline". Get ready to go Back in Baby's Arms. "A Night of Patsy Cline" with Juliette Angelo is a solo performance with Angelo and her guitar. Patsy Cline's intimate melodies are stripped down to their very core, which allows her music's storytelling, heartbreak, and soulfulness to shine through.

**FEB. 21 & 22**



**MAR. 14 & 15**



**APR. 10-12**



**The Outlaws Live:** Waylon and Willie are back and visiting Medora on March 14 & 15 at the Old Town Hall Theater. "The Outlaws Live" is a tribute show that is packed with some of the best honky-tonk hits from Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson. Join us for a country music spectacular with two of the best outlaw country performers of all time.

**The Suits:** Motown, doo-wop, pop, and rock with us on April 10-12 with "The Suits"! "The Suits" are composed of four dynamic gentlemen performing the hit music from the '50s, '60s, '70s, and '80s. This show is full of smooth choreography and harmonies that will make for a fun and exciting show that you do not want to miss.

If you have been to Medora in the summertime, you know how busy and bustling the town can get! Thousands of guests flock to Medora to immerse themselves in the Badlands and Theodore Roosevelt National Park and enjoy the *Medora Musical*.

Recently, the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation board saw a need for a new lodging and event center in Medora. A location near the Bully Pulpit Golf Course was obtained. The Wedding & Event Center is becoming a reality as a place to host weddings, reunions, and corporate getaways!

Thanks to many generous donations, the project has been started, but it is far from over! This spring, spring into action in Medora!

► **BE A PART OF THE CHARGE TO ADD THE NEW WEDDING & EVENT CENTER TO THE TRMF'S CHARTER!**

Interested in becoming part of the project in a personal way? The cabins that will surround the Wedding & Event Center will have the unique capability of being timeshares with TRMF. More exciting information to come.

If you are interested in being a part of this new historic undertaking, please contact our development team at (701) 223-4800.

# ..... Wedding & Event CENTER



Above Photo: Event Space

Right Photo: Outdoor Ceremony

# MORE TO EXPLORE IN MEDORA!

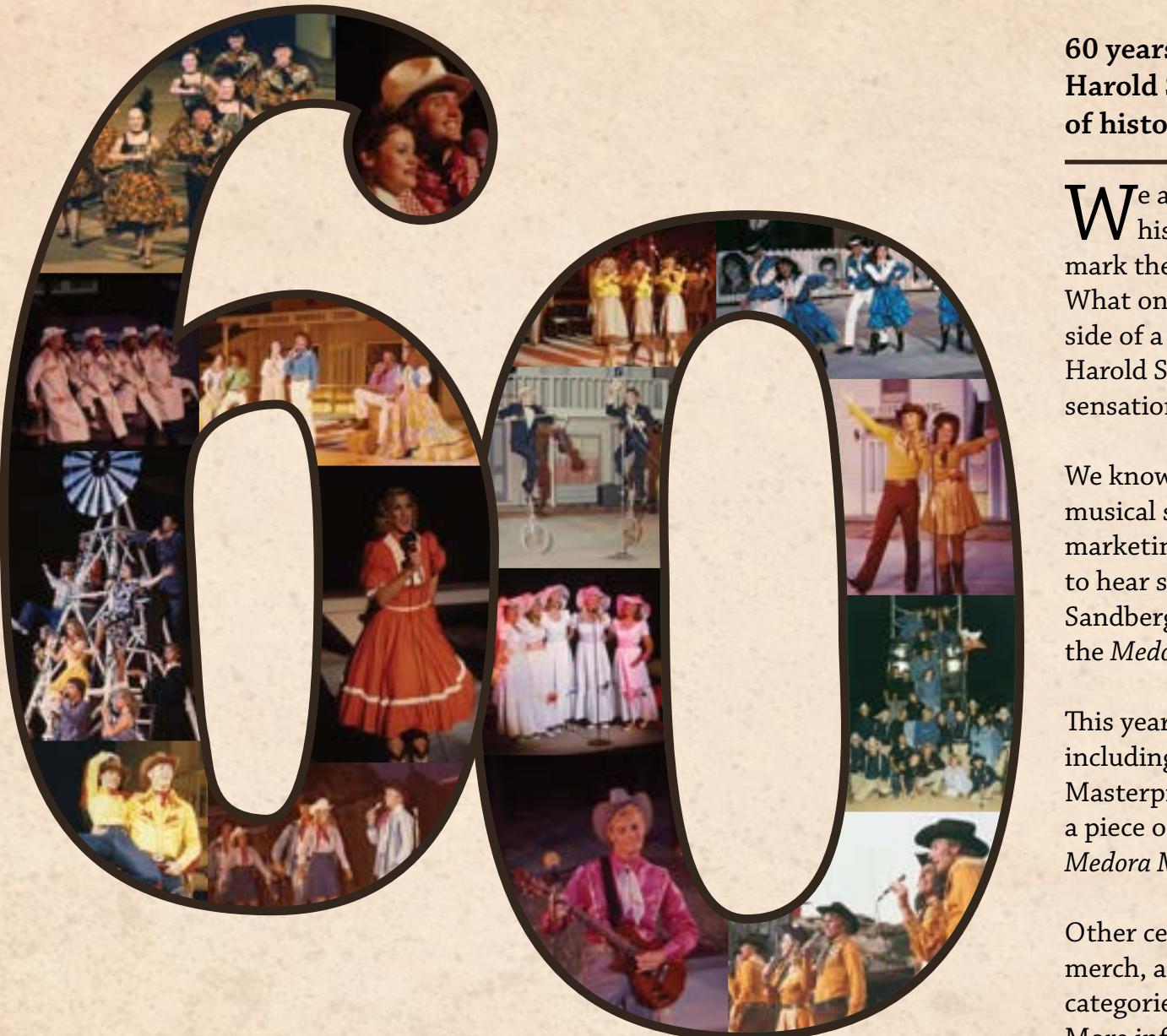


## GOLD STAR RECIPIENT

In 2024, the Bully Pulpit Golf Course completed the 4-year project of updating and repaving the cart paths. This project was extensive, not only in the length of the cart paths, 30,000 lineal feet, but also in the amount of concrete used, 4,000 cubic yards.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication put into their construction, the Bully Pulpit cart paths received the 2024 Gold Star Award from the North Dakota Ready Mix & Concrete Products Association.

A big shout-out to **Dickinson Ready Mix**, **Winn Construction**, and **Cordova Construction** for their support throughout the project. Not only have they supported us with this project, but they also support greater Medora with many other construction products, such as providing sand for the golf course, concrete for the Elkhorn Quarters, and more.



years

60 years of the *Medora Musical*. 60 years of Harold Schafer's dream for Medora. 60 years of historic change and preservation.

We are so thrilled and excited to share this historic moment with you! This summer will mark the 60th Anniversary of the *Medora Musical*. What once started with a dream, benches on the side of a butte, and the grit and determination of Harold Schafer has now grown into an international sensation and a North Dakota tradition.

We know that some of you have been to every musical since 1965. If you have, please contact our marketing team at [Email@Medora.com](mailto:Email@Medora.com). We want to hear stories from you, like Norene & Roger Sandberg, of your favorite memories of Medora and the *Medora Musical*.

This year, there will be quite a few celebrations, including the first installation of Medora Masterpiece, where a North Dakota artist will install a piece of art that reflects their experience at the *Medora Musical*.

Other celebrations may include reunions, specialty merch, and more! We hope that if you fall into these categories, you will attend these special events. More information is coming soon!

We are so excited to share all of this and more with you as we honor the 60 years that have made Medora the premier tourist destination in North Dakota. We hope you will join us.

## WHY BECOME A ROUGH RIDER MEMBER?

Rough Rider Members of the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation get perks that are NOT offered anywhere else! With your donation, you have the choice of 2 *Medora Musical* season passes, 2 rounds of golf at the beautiful Bully Pulpit Golf Course, a \$150 shopping spree at TRMF stores, OR make it a full charitable donation for the most impact.

With this membership and the selection of 2 season passes, you can see the *Medora Musical* every single night of the summer! This year will be historic, so if you plan to come more than twice, it is worth the cost of the membership.

Ready to wrangle and ride as a Rough Rider Member? Scan the QR code or give us a call at (701) 223-4800.

*Your gift helps us carry out our vision*



### Our Executive Team

Randy Hatzenbuhler, President & CEO  
Emily Klym, Chief Financial Officer  
Robin Laurino, Chief Marketing & Sales Officer  
Clarence Sitter, Chief Operating Officer  
Daniel Gannarelli, Development Director  
Lyubomyr Shkandriy, Hospitality Director  
Kinley Slauter, Properties & Attraction Director  
Sheila Strommen, Human Resources Director

### Our Development Team

Morgan Bruhn, Development Assistant  
Jacky Emanuel, Development Officer  
Katrina Hellman, Development Graphic Designer  
Micky Huntington, Executive Assistant  
Destiny Meyer, Communications Specialist  
Barbara Shockley, Group Event Services Coordinator  
Jennifer Sykora, Salesforce Product Manager  
Darla Tescher, Development Accountant  
Joe Wiegand, TR Reproir & TRMF Ambassador

### Our Vision

We connect people to historic Medora for Positive, Life-Changing Experiences.

### Our Mission

**PRESERVE** the experience of the Badlands, the historic character of Medora and the values and heritage of Theodore Roosevelt and Harold Schafer.

**PRESENT** opportunities for our guests to be educated and inspired through interpretive programs, museums and attractions that focus on the Old West, our patriotic heritage, and the life of Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands.

**SERVE** the traveling public, providing for their comfort while visiting historic Medora, the Badlands, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

### Our Values

Have fun.  
Show respect for people and place.  
Live life with an ownership mentality.  
Always be grateful.  
Promote sales.



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