

## CenDak Cooperative: Committed to community

BY NATHAN PRICE

CenDak Cooperative has long been a reliable supporter of their local communities, and this Co-op Month is a perfect time to celebrate the work they and many other cooperatives do to support local projects and opportunities.

Recently, the CenDak Cooperative board voted to donate \$10,000 toward the rebuild of the Rockford Theatre, helping fund a popular project to return the theater to downtown New Rockford.

Tony Gratton, the General Manager of CenDak Cooperative, said the board often considers donation requests and allocates tens of thousands to local projects every year.

In the case of the Rockford Theatre, he said community input helped board members understand just how important the project was to local residents.

“There’s a limit to dollars we can spend of course, because it is our patrons’ money,” he said. “But we look at important things and what we feel is good for our communities and where it’s important to invest these funds.”

“The Rockford Theatre was one where we had a lot of community input,” he added. “There were a lot of community members making us aware of how important this project is, and when you get that extra push from several members of the community, it helped us realize how beneficial this project was.”

CenDak Cooperative is a grain, agronomy and energy company, a full-service cooperative. In addition to projects like the Rockford Theatre, they’ve also helped bring a new scoreboard to the Fessenden-Bowdon School and donated \$60,000 to the precision agriculture program at Lake Region State College in Devils Lake.

Gratton said it’s important that CenDak supports the communities their members reside in, particularly when it represents the future of their communities.

“When it comes to education and our patrons’ and our employees’ children and making sure those schools are around, that’s part of our future, so it’s very important to our business and our communities.”

Specifically about their decision to donate to the LRSC’s precision ag program, Gratton talked about



AJ Benz, manager of the CenDak Cooperative convenience store in New Rockford, presents a check to Glenda Collier, manager of the Rockford Theatre. The funds will be used to rebuild the town’s iconic movie theatre, on which the roof collapsed in 2022.

having such a beneficial education program within their service area.

“With having that talent source and that education source right down the road from our business, our patrons and our customers, we just felt it was very important to have students passing through those halls and seeing CenDak or Fessenden Co-op up on that wall and knowing that we’re a place to look for employment in the future.”

Gratton said they’ve also donated in the past to fire departments, ambulance services, daycares and many other important services.

Since merging with Fessenden Co-op early this year, Gratton says they’ve been hard at work coming together to continue serving their patrons effectively.

The merger hasn’t been perfect, he said, but overall, he believes it’s going well and that they’re working as a team to get through their first full year as a combined business.

Gratton encouraged anyone with information about needs in the communities they serve to come forward and let CenDak Cooperative know.

“If our communities need something, please make us aware of that need,” he said. “It’s maybe not going to be guaranteed, but at least we’ll know our community’s needs and we can look at where we can help. If not this year, maybe we



The new scoreboard in the Fessenden-Bowdon School gymnasium was installed last month.

could help next year or down the road, but at least we’re aware of the needs.”

CenDak’s service area includes the communities of New Rockford, Fessenden, Harlow, Carrington, Maddock, Sheyenne, Leeds, Harvey, Minnewaukan, Oberon, Niles, Hamberg, Esmond and Leeds.

“Without our communities we’re not going to survive, and we’re not going to succeed,” said Gratton. “Our communities are supporting us, and in turn we want to do our best to support our communities.”

To learn more about CenDak Cooperative and the services they provide, visit their website at [www.cendakcooperative.com](http://www.cendakcooperative.com).



THE FUTURE IS  
COOPERATIVE  
CO-OP MONTH 2024

### A LITTLE HISTORY

Minnesota was the first state to declare an official Co-op Month proclamation in 1948.

Co-op Month has been a nationally recognized celebration since 1964, when U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, a former Minnesota governor, proclaimed October Co-op Month.

The first national theme in 1964 was “Cooperatives: USDA Helps Build a Better America.”

The U.S. government sponsored Co-op Month from 1964-70.

Beginning in 1971, cooperatives, statewide associations and the National Cooperative Business Association fueled their own events and promotions.

In 2016, a national campaign was developed by a Cooperative Network-led committee of diverse communication professionals through the Cooperative Communicators Association.

### THIS YEAR’S THEME

Celebrated by cooperatives nationwide during the month of October, National Co-op Month is an annual opportunity to raise awareness of a trusted, proven way to do business and build resilient, inclusive communities.

Under the theme “The Future is Cooperative,” this year’s Co-op Month is also a chance to envision a cooperative future. With the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives on the horizon, now is the time to lift up the people-centered businesses at the heart of our communities and economies.

## Celebrate with these local cooperatives!

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