63rd Annual NDRTA Convention

By Jeri Grant, Convention Chair

Life's a Journey, Enjoy the Ride was the theme of the 2026 NDRTA Convention hosted by the Minot Area RTA. Journeys was such a fun theme to focus on, and lent itself to a great variety of programs and speakers.

Based on unanimous attendee evaluations, the Tuesday night banquet was the highlight of the convention with Marcie Woehl from the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, ND as the keynote. She shared a plethora of information and photos about our 26th president and his life and time in the Badlands of Dakota Territory. Humorously, she also shared that her high school speech teacher was in the front row as a NDRTA member and convention attendee! Ms. Woehl's presentation was followed by a delightful presentation of song and dance from Delta Kappa Gamma's NuNotes. They regalled us with songs ranging from "Take Me Home Country Roads" and "New York, New York" to a medley from the movie *Sister Act* (minus Whoopi Goldberg's hip action!*)*.

Members were impressed by the Department of Public Instruction Superintendent, Levi Bachmeier. People remarked they were impressed not only by his comments, but by the fact he asked us questions and took notes of our responses!

It was reassuring to hear Chase Kauffeld, TFFR Chief Retirement Officer, assure us our retirement fund is in good hands and managed by capable people. Nick Archuleta, ND United President, based most of his time with us offering support of Measure 2 regarding free school lunch stressing that hungry students don't learn well or reach their full potential. He also was pleased to mention that when the governor asked him about recommendations for Superintendent of Public Instruction, the governor met all his recommendations in his appointment of Levi Bachmeier. Mr. Archuleta had recommended someone with 1. Classroom experience, 2. Someone who understands school finance, and 3. Someone who knows how to interact with the ND Legislature. Josh Askvig, AARP ND State Director, drilled down on the status of Social Security, feeling strongly that in spite of its financial status, he believes the U.S. House and Senate will take action to keep it solvent.

Several breakout sessions tailored their presentations to our "Life's a Journey" theme. They included:

1. Happiness by Design: Lessons from Finland, by Fulbright Scholar Sara Medalen
2. Move Better, Feel Better: Gain Strength and Energy, presented by our own Sherry Heilmann

3. Financial Fraud Panel, by Marla Gasmann (First Western Bank), Brenda Munson (Medicare), and Josh Askvig (AARP)
4. Ukraine: History, Humanity, Hope by Micah Bloom, Minot State University
5. Expedition Antarctica by Linda Christianson, retired teacher and MARTA member
6. Curiosity Never Retires: How AI Tools Can Help You, by Tonya Hunskor, Executive Director of the North Central Educational Cooperative.

The Convention ended with a humorous skit "How to Pack for Your Travels." However, they may need to refine their packing tips! We look forward to seeing you next year in Fargo.