

Orphan Grain Train †

Relief for Human Need Worldwide

OGT Spotlight

North Dakota Branch

YEAR ESTABLISHED:

It all started in December of 1991 when the North Dakota District LLL President Bill Freymiller began organizing groups of volunteers to travel to Riga, Latvia (to help restore buildings in order to establish Christian ministries there). Simultaneously, several of these ND farmers joined together to raise money and arrange shipments of North Dakota flour to Latvia through an initiative named Dakota Cares Project. These volunteers traveled in the spring of 1992 and came back from their trip to Latvia with the intention of continuing their outreach efforts. The original members of this group included Don and Marlene Brandenburg, Myrlin and Shirley Hall, Avonne and Harold "Bud" Gessner, and the Mel Fenske's.

At the 1993 North Dakota LLL annual meeting, this group was established as the North Dakota Branch of Orphan Grain Train.



BRANCH MANAGER AND BACKGROUND:

My name is Andrea Eckstein.

My husband and I moved back to North Dakota with our family 18 years ago when he took a call to be the pastor at Concordia Lutheran Church in Jamestown. In addition to raising our family of three children, I worked as an Occupational Therapist at the Anne Carlsen Center for children with disabilities. When I retired last year from that position, I became the secretary for our church. Other activities I enjoy are gardening, knitting, tatting, reading, and traveling to see family.

I became involved in Orphan Grain Train in the fall of 2014 when the branch headquarters moved from Bottineau to Jamestown. Elissa Rosin took on the role of Branch Manager at that time. In the beginning, we packed clothing, quilts, and school supplies in the church basement one day a week. Within the first year of functioning, we were able to purchase a vacant lumbar store/warehouse and expand our operation. Over the years I took on more responsibility as the Mercy Meals president, the Warehouse Manager, and finally the Interim Branch Manager in January of 2022.

LOCATION AND HOURS OF OPERATION:

North Dakota Branch warehouse:
103 4th Ave SE in Jamestown, ND

Mondays and Saturdays from 9:00 am until noon.

The mailing address is PO Box 1546 Jamestown, ND 58402-1546

WHAT INTRIGUED YOU TO VOLUNTEER AT OGT:

I first heard about Orphan Grain Train about 31 years ago when we lived in rural North Dakota and the Brandenburg's came to our church to make a presentation. We heard about the conditions of the orphanages in the Baltic States (former Soviet Union) and it touched my heart. I supported their efforts, but never really was personally involved until the North Dakota branch moved to Jamestown where we now live.



WHAT MISSION TOUCHED YOUR HEART THE MOST:

My favorite area of involvement has been initiating and organizing the Mercy Meals events. We have a mobile operation that takes the Mercy Meals servant experience to churches, youth groups, schools, and civic groups all over the state. Most of our Mercy Meals are sent to the Liberian Children's Ministry to be

distributed to Christian schools, which really makes an impact with the school children that help us pack meals.

REWARDS:

My greatest satisfaction in working with Orphan Grain Train is in knowing that in packing up a box of clothes, or food, or other items I am able to share Christ's love with my neighbor in need. I think about how I'm the last person to touch these items before they are held in the hands of the new recipient. And I know our efforts are appreciated because we see the joy in their faces when the photos arrive!



SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR BRANCH:

Our North Dakota branch is able to do something special in our local community by providing donated items to individuals and families in need. Through networking agencies in our community (Social and Human Services, Housing Assistance, churches, Safe Shelter, ND State Prison, etc.) people are referred to our warehouse where they are able to select furniture, household items, medical equipment, bedding, small appliances, bikes, etc. to help them in a time of crisis. Over 200 items or boxes of supplies were given away last month to local residents.

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS:

We have 15 to 20 regular and faithful volunteers that come on a weekly basis. In addition, there are several groups that have come monthly from local schools and churches. Prior to COVID-19, we even had a group from the minimum-security unit of the prison coming on a regular basis.

This last year, our volunteer hours ranged from 400 to 615 a month.



Branch Manager

Andrea Eckstein

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North Dakota Branch

103 4th Ave SE

Jamestown, ND 58402

*Drop Off and Packing & Sorting Hours:
Saturdays & Mondays 9 - noon*

North Dakota Branch



Orphan Grain Train

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Contact us

