

**EMMONS  
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***NDSU history students give back by painting buildings at Welk Homestead***

A North Dakota State University history professor and seven of his students got involved with hands-on history by painting two buildings at the Welk Homestead State Historic Site at Strasburg the weekend of Oct. 5-6, 2019.

Dr. Tom Isern is Professor of History, University Distinguished Professor and Director of the Center for Heritage Renewal at NDSU. In recent years, his students restored the barn at the Welk Homestead and have done other work there, and they painted the Zeeland Hall which Dr. Isern helped Zeeland leaders get placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Students from Dr. Isern's History 431 class who participated in the service learning expedition are Whitney Gronvold, Arlene Nowak, Madeline Wright, Ben Haney, Walter Karlins, Oliver Sime and Stefanie Aulner.

The group stayed in Larry and Terri Kuss's hunting lodge in Strasburg, and Tri-County Tourism Alliance members John and Bonnie Wiskus of Lehr brought over and served lunch on Saturday.

Assisting the volunteers were Rob Hanna, Historic Sites Manager, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck, and Strasburg High School teacher and Welk Homestead Site Manager Brian Grove.

The crew stripped paint off the wood-siding-covered sod house and summer kitchen and then primed and painted the structures.

Hanna said a special long-lasting primer was used.

"It's a big step forward. You have to see them to see how beautiful they are," Hanna said, "They are radiant."

He said the trim on the buildings was painted the following week by SHSND staff.

Hanna thanked Dr. Isern and his students and praised the local hospitality.

"People in the community have been very helpful," Hanna said.



**NDSU students spent the weekend of Oct. 5 and 6 painting the house and summer kitchen at the Welk Homestead State Historic Site.**



**Dr. Tom Isern joined his students in painting the buildings.**

Hanna said there were some educational components in the weekend, in addition to helping preserve historic buildings, that included public history, Germans from Russia history and culture and tours of Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church and its cemetery that includes iron crosses.

The students also played games that would have been popular in the homestead era, such as hoop trundling and graces hoops.

"Some of the students had not been this far west in North Dakota," Hanna noted.

Encouraging future volunteer efforts, Hanna said, "There's more painting to do."



**Tri-County Tourism Alliance members Bonnie and John Wiskus of Lehr served the Saturday noon meal.**



**Larry Kuss, who hosted the students at his hunting lodge, stands next to the marker on the graves of Ludwig and Christina Welk, parents of the late Champagne Musicmaker Lawrence Welk.**



**The history students pose on the outside stairway to the attic where Lawrence Welk and his siblings slept during their growing up years on the Ludwig and Christina Welk homestead near Strasburg. They are, from top to bottom, Whitney Gronvold, Arlene Nowak, Madeline Wright, Ben Haney, Walter Karlins, Oliver Sime and Stefanie Aulner. Standing in front of the stairway are, left to right, Dr. Tom Isern, Brian Grove and Rob Hanna.**