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You are never too old to set another goal
or dream a new dream
~ C.S. Lewis

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Kalkaska Citizen and Business of the Year

By Tina Norris Fields

Kalkaska – It’s not every day that the good things in our community get acknowledged and celebrated. So, when the opportunity comes along to attend the annual celebration of Kalkaska’s Citizen of the Year and Business of the Year, I jump at it. Hosted since 2019 by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, and housed in Kalkaska’s Railroad Square Pavilion, this luncheon event is a refreshing change from the gloom and doom that so often seems to cloud our mental skies.

This year’s festivities were on Tuesday, April 21. The luncheon was prepared by the Twin Birch Golf Club Restaurant and served smoothly and seamlessly. The program was neatly organized and stayed on schedule. The sponsors were all properly thanked for their support. But, what made it wonderful was why we all were there.

We came to hear about the ways the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation is working to lift up the people of the five counties it serves (Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau), and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.

We came to learn how our hospital, Kalkaska Memorial Health Center, has matured into a top-notch facility, providing the lifesaving and affirming care needed every day. The nearest other hospital is about 35 miles away. So, we are absolutely blessed to have KMHC right here to take the immediate action needed to provide the best outcomes, especially when time is of the essence. Three of my family members have been well cared for by KMHC in the past couple of years, and I am deeply grateful.

We came to thank Kim Cotton for being the kind of science teacher everybody wishes they had when they were in high school.

We came to cheer on Leah Cox whose inspiration led to the delightful Sunday Morning Flowers shop that has grown into a true community treasure.

And we came to hear how the young people of our high school are serving in the Youth Advisor Council, helping to decide on grants to benefit our community.

When it was over, I know I wasn’t the only one who left feeling lighter, prouder, and more ready to take on whatever the challenges of the day might be.



L-R: 2026 Kalkaska Citizen of the Year, Kimberly Cotton, Miss Kalkaska 2026 Caylee Carr, and the 2026 Kalkaska Business of the Year owner, Leah Cox.



L-R: Rob Carson (AICP Community Development Regional Director of Networks Northwest), Alison Metiva (President & CEO of the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation), and Andrew Raymond (CEO of Kalkaska Memorial Health Center)



The Kalkaska YAC members.

L-R: Jaylea Erickson, Dixon Guggemos, Anna Martin, Coltrane Paryani (also a Community Foundation Board Director), Abigail Minion, Tré Bromley, Caylee Carr (also Miss Kalkaska 2026), Xavier Simpson, and Marissa Manchester.



The Kitchen Crew from Twin Birch Golf Club and Restaurant