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Locally grown, locally made: JML Soaps

BY SAMANTHA VANGSNESS

North Dakota is known for its strong, diverse agriculture industry. Agriculture runs through our local communities where many of us live, work and call home. During National Agriculture Month in March, we highlight a local maker who uses North Dakota resources to create safe, nourishing and effective body and home care products for the whole family.

JML Soaps

Lori and Justin Miller, along with their five children, live on their farm near Streeter. Lori started JML Soaps in 2018, when she began researching ingredients in common, everyday products. She quickly became passionate about mitigating toxins in these products.

Lori started working with homegrown products, such as beef tallow and goat milk from their farm. One of the first products she created was soap.

“I first made soap, because I knew I could,” Lori says. “I had tallow and goat milk, so I made some.”

When she found success, she knew she could turn making homemade products into a business. But this was more than a business to the Millers. It was about making products the whole family can use and feel good about.

Lori says she doesn't create anything she doesn't use for her family, ensuring every product she creates is safe and nourishing.



Magnesium lotion is a popular item produced by JML Soaps. JML Soaps recently received a rebrand of their logo and product labels.

Using locally grown products

Ingredient quality has a substantial impact on any final product, and having locally produced ingredients was one of the selling points of JML Soaps when the business began. Lori still values locally grown products, but as her inventory offering has expanded, she can't get everything from North Dakota growers. So, as she buys ingredients for her products, she still ensures the producers share her values.

Lori is proud to buy local honey and beeswax from Miller's Honey Company, which has beehives on Lori and Justin's land, cold-pressed hemp seed oil from

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JML Soaps uses local agriculture products such as hemp seed oil, beef tallow, raw honey and goat milk.

Healthy Oilseed in Carrington and others.

“Once I research the science of a formulation for a product, then I try to find ingredients locally, like the hemp seed oil, which I can drive two hours to get and save money on shipping costs,” Lori says.

The power of social media

When the Millers created JML Soaps, they thought it would be a small business shipping orders here and there, but it has been quite the blessing.

Lori is active on social media platforms, such as TikTok, sharing customer reviews and how the products she makes have made a difference in her family’s life. One video Lori made about JML Soaps remineralizing tooth powder went viral multiple times and has had customers rushing to her site to purchase.

“I posted a video about how the tooth powder helped remineralize one our kid’s cavities,” Lori says.

When she first thought about making the tooth powder, her plan was to make it for her family and only buy enough to make a one-year supply, but it surpassed that.

Orders for JML Soaps keep Lori busy, but they also keep the local post office open.

“One day, I went in with orders to ship and apologized, and they said that I had been shipping enough to keep the post office open more,” Lori says.

Living in rural communities, we value everything we

make and do, and that goes for Lori as well. She works four to five hours in the morning before her mom duties for the day. This time is used to make products, pack orders and formulate new products.

Lori puts a lot of time and passion into each product produced at JML Soaps. She values customer feedback, which helps ensure her formulas are consistent and effective.

“That’s what makes waking up at 4 a.m. worth it,” Lori says. “If I knew it wasn’t helping people, I wouldn’t be doing it.”

JML Soaps offers a variety of products, such as hair care products, kitchen essentials, body care and much more. To view the JML Soaps full inventory, visit JMLSoaps.com.



JML Soaps offers a wide variety of soap options. Soaps were the first product Lori worked with when beginning the business.

MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

Growth on the electric grid

**Travis Kupper***Co-General Manager/CEO*

Electricity usage within the United States is reaching record levels and the demand is expected to continue to rise. Artificial intelligence (AI), crypto mining and data center technology play a role in increased demand. It's understandable why our members would question whether the increase in technology and load will result in increased rates and higher electric bills.

For KEM Electric Cooperative, the answer is no.

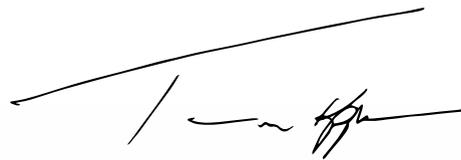
KEM Electric is a member of Basin Electric Power Cooperative. As our wholesale electric provider, Basin Electric developed a Large Load Program designed to insulate our existing members from the costs and risks associated with serving new large electric loads.

When a data center or other large load connects to our system, it is required to pay for the infrastructure needed to serve the load. Those costs are not shifted to our existing membership.

In fact, data centers specifically can often strengthen our system. Because they consume power around the clock, they consume unused capacity on the grid that would otherwise not be used. That steady demand provides reliable revenue, which strengthens the financial health of our cooperative. Beyond our cooperative, data centers can also help contribute to the economic growth and health of our local communities.

So, what are the primary drivers behind the rate increase we have seen over the years? They include growth in traditional load, commodity price variability, increased planning reserve margins (regulations) as well as continued investments in reliability.

The bottom line is data centers are not driving your electric bill higher. When properly planned, they help us maintain stable rates and position our system to meet the growing needs for the future. ⚡



MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS:

Safety and dedication recognized



Dale Nagel

Chief of Staff/
Line Superintendent

Each year, operations personnel from electric cooperatives across North Dakota gather in Mandan for a three-day safety-focused conference known as the Apprenticeship, Training and Safety Conference.

Safety is the top priority for electric cooperatives as well as for the members and communities they serve. Cooperative employees took part in valuable training sessions, such as vehicle extraction, leadership and other workshops. Additionally, cooperatives are recognized for their dedication to safety.

This year, KEM Electric Cooperative was awarded the certificate of safety achievement.

The certificate of safety achievement is awarded to cooperatives for successfully participating in the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program, known as RESAP. Last fall, KEM Electric received favorable marks in a RESAP onsite safety assessment. This program helps optimize safety practices across the cooperative. KEM Electric continues to analyze and improve safety plans for the wellbeing of employees and communities.

KEM Electric continues to analyze and improve safety plans to protect their employees and the communities they serve.

We are proud of our employees' dedication to safety at KEM Electric. ⚡



KEM Electric Cooperative employees who accepted the certificate of safety achievement award include, left to right, **Jason Bentz, Marty Messer, Nick Nieuwsma, Kirk Praus, Dillion Steinolfson and Austin Ohlhauser.**

MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS: North Dakota Career Tour



Marcy Sanders
Manager
of Member Relations

Juniors, sophomores and freshmen, I'm excited to personally invite you to a unique opportunity that could ignite your future. Our two-day North Dakota Career Tour is set to offer a deep dive into the fascinating world of energy careers right here in our state.

Why should you join us?

If you've ever been curious about what powers your world, this is your chance to explore.

From coal mines and power plants to wind turbines and cooperatives, you'll get hands-on experiences and hear directly from the experts who drive North Dakota's energy sector. This tour is more than just an exploration. It's a gateway to understanding how diverse career paths and cutting-edge technologies shape our industry. You'll meet professionals who are passionate about their work and discover how you could be a part of this exciting field.

Event details:

When: June 24-25

Who can attend:

- 2025-26 high school juniors, sophomores and freshmen
- Students who are curious about the diverse opportunities within North Dakota's energy sector.
- Open to KEM Electric members and non-members!

How to register

We have a limited number of spots available. Our cooperative is joining forces with other cooperatives within the Innovative Energy Alliance, with each selecting 10 students, totaling 40 participants from across the state.

This is your chance to gain a new perspective and start envisioning your future in energy. To secure your spot and find out more, visit KEMelectric.com or call us at 701-254-4666. The application deadline is May 1.

I look forward to seeing you on this exciting journey and helping you light the way to your future career! ⚡

Congratulations

KENDALL SPERLE, NAPOLEON PUBLIC SCHOOL!

JANUARY TOUCHSTONE ENERGY® STUDENT OF THE MONTH

"Kendall is an outstanding student who works hard to pour time and energy into her community," says Kendall's nominator. "She is the type of student who leads by example and always does the right thing even when no one is watching."

In **March**, KEM Electric will be accepting nominations of students from **Wishek Public School**. The deadline for nominations is March 15. This sponsorship is open to any K-12 student. Visit kemelectric.com for more information.



SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

Cybersecurity starts with all of us



Kirk Praus

Journeyman Lineworker

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting other valuables, such as identity, banking and health records, and other sensitive information, from digital attacks and theft.

The energy sector continues to be a target of cyber attacks, and we will continue to face

threats that target our employees, our supply chains and partners. It is critical we stay vigilant, because our infrastructure is both critical and relied upon by others.

We want our members – and the world – to know we take our role in managing cybersecurity threats to our members' data and our operations seriously.

"We participate in monthly training to stay vigilant on cybersecurity threats and tips to keep the cooperative safe and secure," says Kirk Praus, a journeyman lineworker. "As a member of KEM Electric, there are steps you can take to help keep your information and ours safe as well."

Here are some simple things you can do to protect from cybersecurity threats.

- **Make sure all your computer software is updated with the latest version.** Keeping software, including your browser, up to date ensures crucial software updates take place.
- **Create a strong password and keep it private.** It can take five days to crack a nine-character password, but more than two centuries to crack a password consisting of 12 characters or more!
- **Treat all Wi-Fi networks as a potential security risk.** Never check financial or other sensitive accounts when using public Wi-Fi at a store, local coffeeshop or when you're on the road.
- **Be on the lookout for suspicious emails, phone calls and other messages.** Scammers will use various avenues to gain access to co-op and member information. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If something seems off, trust your instinct and convey your concerns to a manager or member of the security team.
- **Think before you click! Don't click links or attached files in emails or text messages from senders you don't know.** Even if you do know the sender, hover over the link before you click, as they may have been hacked or someone could be spoofing them!

While we can't stop a storm or predict every disruption, we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. ⚡

SAFETY STARTS WITH ME

Cybersecurity tips

- Keep computer software up-to-date
- Create strong passwords
- Use public Wi-Fi with caution
- Think before you click



Thank you to all who joined us at our member appreciation event in January. We look forward to seeing you at our annual meeting on June 9 in Napoleon.



KEM ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: **DEC. 16, 2025**

The meeting of the Board of Directors of KEM Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held on Dec. 16, 2025 in Linton. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by President Victor Wald. Quorum was present. Also, present were Co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief of Staff/Line Superintendent Dale Nagel, Manager of Member Relations Marcy Sanders, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Legal Counsel Jennifer Grosz and Board Liaison Connie Hill.

Consent agenda: The consent agenda was approved as presented.

Strategic items: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-managers' report, which included updates on an internal Cybersecurity Policy, the Midwest Annual Meeting, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Western Area Power Administration and other items. Several additional Basin Electric reports and board documents were available for review.

Department reports: Craigmile provided the

financial report which included a budget review. Nagel provided a department report which included projects line crews are working on and an outage report. Sanders provided a department report on member events, programs and community engagement. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report for the board. Grosz provided an update on the status on legal topics and projects including federal matters.

Action items: The board discussed and resolved action items including appointing delegates to various industry annual meetings.

Discussion/general information: The board discussed potential bylaw amendments in preparation for the annual meeting.

The meeting concluded with adjournment. Secretary-Treasurer Carter Vander Wal certified the accuracy of the minutes.

Next meeting date: The next meeting is at 9:30 a.m. on March 24 in Linton. ⚡

Members, if you have received a capital credit retirement check, please cash it as soon as possible.

Call our office with any questions at 701-254-4666.



KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

DIRECTORS:

- Victor Wald, Chairman, District 4..... Napoleon
- John R. Beck, Vice Chairman, District 1..... Linton
- Carter Vander Wal, Sec.-Treas., District 2..... Pollock
- Dean Dewald, Director, District 5..... Dawson
- Neil Meidinger, Director, District 3..... Zeeland
- Carmen Essig, Director-at-Large..... Lehr
- Todd Schnabel, Director-at-Large..... Lehr

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

MANAGEMENT:

- Travis Kupper Co-General Manager/CEO
- Jason Bentz..... Co-General Manager/CEO

Report outages to the following toll-free number: 800-472-2673

Hazleton, Linton and Strasburg exchanges' phone number: 701-254-4666

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday through Friday,
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Website: kemelectric.com
Email address: info@kemelectric.com

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