KEM
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

NOVEMBER 2026

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*After spending 22 years overseas serving in the U.S. military, **Ed Nieuwsma** moved back to Strasburg and soon joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars, where he served as commander for the past 25 years.*

Commitment to country and community

During the Vietnam War era, Ed Nieuwsma enlisted in the U.S. Navy, which would shape the course of his life. His time in the Navy, including serving with the river boats in the Mekong River Delta, became more than a chapter in his past. It established a lifelong commitment to veterans, neighbors and the community he calls home.

Nieuwsma graduated from North Dakota State University in the spring of 1969, and facing the draft he decided to join the Navy in November 1969. He spent 22 years on active duty. During this time, he served one year and four months in Vietnam, over six years on sea duty and visited or served on every continent except Antarctica. Ed retired from the Navy

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***Ed** and his, wife **Anne**, gather with their grandchildren for the holiday.*

in November 1991 as a Navy Commander (05).

From combat in Vietnam, the evacuation of Saigon, the Iran hostage crisis and two deployments on the USS Enterprise (CVN-65) and two deployment on USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70), Nieuwsma answered the call to serve his country. At the same time, he began building a life beyond the uniform, meeting his wife, Anne while stationed in Germany. Together they began building a family. He shares during his last deployment on USS Carl Vinson, Anne held everything down at home with two kids under five and was pregnant with another. That balance of service and family continued to shape the decades that followed.

While serving abroad, Ed did what his country asked of him, demonstrating a deep commitment to both his country and his fellow service members. He is proud to have taken part in a period that shaped the nation. Today, he works to ensure those who fought are not forgotten and patriotism remains an American value.

New chapter of service

In 1991, Ed, Anne and their children returned home from Italy to Strasburg. After moving back to Strasburg, they bought a little farm and began to raise black Angus cattle which has grown into a highly successful ranching operation. Ed and Anne continue to operate the ranch. Soon after moving and getting settled, Ed joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 6264 and found a new way to serve, especially his fellow veterans.

"That's one thing about people that serve, you don't really ever retire. You don't get out. You continue to serve. That's why I got involved in the VFW shortly after I came home," Ed says.

That mindset has guided Ed's service at home through the VFW. He has been active in the VFW for 33 years and has served as a VFW commander for more than 25 years and continues to.

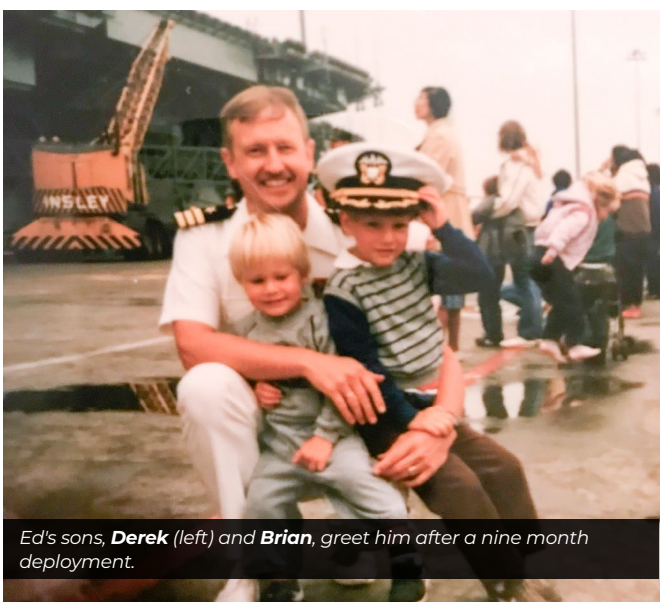
The VFW is the nation's oldest and largest major organization for combat veterans. Its mission includes fostering camaraderie and serving veterans and their communities. In rural communities, that work becomes visible in several ways throughout the year.

"Honoring deceased veterans with short programs on Memorial Day by visiting local cemetery and presenting the flag on Independence Day observances keeps it visible for the younger generation to see that freedom isn't free," Ed says. "That's kind of a cliche, but it's true."

This also includes military funerals, Veterans Day services and youth presentations.

However, declining membership has made it difficult for the local VFW and other military organizations to provide the services they once did.

"It's getting harder and harder to do what we need to do, because so many of our members are gone," Ed says. "When I joined, we had a lot of World War II veterans left. We had a lot of Korean War veterans, and we had a pretty dynamic little



*Ed's sons, **Derek** (left) and **Brian**, greet him after a nine month deployment.*

group here. Now, we're struggling to survive. To do a military funeral correctly, you need 13 people, but it's almost impossible to put that many people together anymore. We ask members from the Strasburg VFW, the Linton American Legion, Hazelton American Legion and the Hague AMVETS and then maybe we'll get eight or nine people."

Military organizations such as the VFW do more than honor service members who have died and provide services to their communities. They also offer veterans camaraderie, connection and support.

"It's good to get together with people that have been there and done that who understand. And sometimes people need to vent and discuss a little bit, get things off their chest that they couldn't talk about with anybody else," Ed says.

The VFW offers service members something equally valuable – a sense of understanding and belonging.

Passing on the meaning of service

To engage youth, VFW members have visited schools to help younger generations understand sacrifice, service and patriotism. Through personal stories, uniforms and medals, they bring history to life for students.

"A few years ago, we went to the school and asked different members to bring their uniforms. We had the Navy, Army, Marine Corps, to show their uniforms and show what the different medals meant or how they were earned," Ed says. "One of our members had a Purple Heart, so we told the kids that he got that because he was wounded in action. We also shared that Army veterans received a Combat Infantryman Badge for serving in combat."

The presentations help students understand freedom is not free and service members accept profound risks to protect it.

"We don't do it for the recognition or the support of the VFW. It's just to remember that people, some people pay the ultimate price," Ed says. "Whether they went overseas and were in a huge fire-fight or not, they were willing to go and if called, they would have gone. So they deserve our respect."

Strengthening communities

Reflecting on his community, volunteerism and the importance of being a good neighbor, Ed says, "Life is more than just making money."

He urges others to get involved, whether by serving on a community board or joining a service organization.

"Volunteering is a feeling of accomplishment and being part of something," Ed says. "I'm proud of our black Angus cattle, I'm proud of our kids and grandkids and I'm a proud that I had the opportunity to serve and can continue to serve."

For Ed, giving back is not simply something a person does, but it is a way of belonging to something larger than oneself. From his years in uniform to his decades of service at home, he has carried the same commitment of honoring those who served, strengthening his community and reminding the next generation service does not end when the uniform comes off.



***Ed** getting sworn in, Minneapolis 1969.*

"A veteran is someone who wrote a blank check for payment up to and including his life. He was willing to do so. Not that he did, but he's willing."

– Unknown

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

The season of giving



Jason Bentz
Co-General Manager/CEO

As the holiday season approaches, we're reminded this truly is the season of giving. It's a time for gratitude, generosity and looking out for one another. At KEM Electric Cooperative, that's something we take to heart year-round.

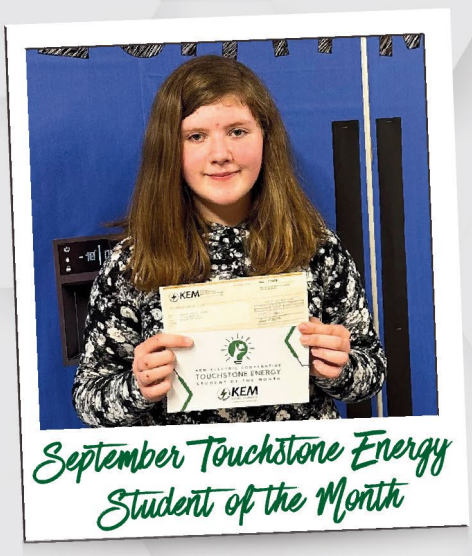
You've probably heard us talk about our concern for community. It's not just a nice phrase. It's one of the core principles that makes electric cooperatives like ours different from other utilities. We're not just here to keep the lights on, although we're always working hard to keep power flowing. We're also here to make life better for the people we serve – our members, our neighbors and our friends.

Over the years, we've faced challenges together, and our co-op family has stepped up every time. We've come together to support those in need, to keep our community strong and to build something better for the future. That spirit of generosity is never more evident than during the holiday season.

Our Operation Round Up program is one example. Thanks to the generosity of members like you who round up their electric bills to the nearest dollar, we're able to provide real help to local organizations who are helping our communities. Every little bit adds up and it makes a big difference.

We're also proud to support local students through the Youth Tour program, where we send some of our community's brightest young people to Washington, D.C., to see democracy in action and dream big about their futures. The most meaningful giving is investing in tomorrow's leaders.

At KEM Electric, we believe concern for community is more than a value. It's the heart of who we are. And during this season of giving, we're especially grateful to be part of such a caring, generous community. From all of us at KEM Electric, we wish you and your loved ones a joyful, safe and bright holiday season.



TOUCHSTONE ENERGY
Student of the MONTH

Olivia Cole

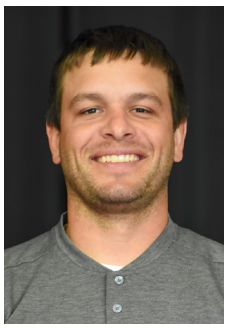
A sixth grader at Ashley Public School

"Olivia strives to do her best every day. She is someone who shows kindness to others, is trustworthy, and respectful to staff and students," says Olivia's nominator.

Olivia plans to put the funds towards the Ashley Public School's band department!

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH OPERATIONS

Ways to improve system reliability



Dale Nagel
Chief of Staff/ Line Superintendent

KEM Electric Cooperative is committed to providing reliable electric services to our members. To ensure our electrical infrastructure is performing properly, the cooperative conducts pole testing and vegetation control across the system.

Pole testing

Utility poles, like any infrastructure exposed to extreme weather conditions, can begin to deteriorate over time, both externally and internally. To ensure the safety and reliability of the utility poles, KEM Electric tests poles on a rotation. Testing also allows us to find poles that are an issue and replace them before they begin to fail.

This spring, KEM Electric tested around 4,000 utility poles, with a little more than 1% failure rate. This is a lower rate than past years. Once utility poles are flagged for replacement, the operations and engineering department creates a plan for upgrades or replacement. The cooperative will continue to test utility poles as the weather allows and plans to test an additional 3,000 before the end of the year.

Tree trimming

KEM Electric continues to work with contractors for vegetation management as the weather allows. Trimming trees around overhead lines helps improve service reliability and keeps members safe. Overgrown trees and branches are a leading cause of power outages. By routinely conducting vegetative management, KEM Electric can reduce related outages.

Pole testing and tree trimming are just a few of the ways KEM Electric is committed to maintaining reliable electric services for you, our members. If you notice anything that doesn't look quite right on electrical infrastructure near you, such as trees growing too close to the power line or a leaning pole, give us a call at the office, so we can have a crew assess the potential issue.



Tyler Jacobs *upgrades infrastructure on a utility pole.*

A NOTE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS

Youth opportunities now available



Marcy Sanders
Manager of Member Relations

High school students! Are you ready for a bright year ahead? As a proud member of our community, KEM Electric Cooperative is committed to supporting our local schools and empowering the next generation. As the school year progresses, we want to remind you of what KEM Electric offers to students.

Youth Tour

Applications are now being accepted for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. The Youth Tour is more than a trip. It's a leadership experience that can shape the future.

Selected high school students, including one student from KEM Electric, spend a week in Washington, D.C., gaining firsthand insight into government, cooperative history and civic engagement. Students gain a personal understanding of American history and their role as a citizen by meeting their representative and senators.

While student groups are organized at the state level, they all come together for Youth Day, when they get to meet each other and hear featured speakers who provide insight into the important roles of electric cooperatives in their communities.

This isn't just a trip. Many alumni credit the Youth Tour as a turning point in their academic and professional journeys, developing confidence, networking skills and a deeper understanding of their role as citizens. The application deadline is Jan. 19, 2027.

High school scholarships

KEM Electric is proud to invest in the future of our communities by supporting the next generation of rural leaders. Through our scholarship program, we help eligible high school seniors pursue their educational and career goals while strengthening the communities we serve.

We are excited to continue our expanded scholarship program, offering even more opportunities for graduating seniors to receive financial assistance as they take the next step in their journey. Available scholarships include:

- Multiple $1,000 scholarships for students attending high schools within KEM Electric's service area.
- One $1,000 scholarship for a student attending high school outside the service area.
- One $2,500 scholarship sponsored by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.
- One $500 scholarship for students pursuing a lineworker career path, provided by 3C Construction.
- One $500 scholarship for students pursuing a mechanic career path, provided by West Dakota Diesel and Hydraulics.
- Two $500 luck-of-the-draw scholarships awarded through a drawing held at KEM Electric's Annual Meeting in June.

The application deadline for scholarships is Feb. 5, 2027.

For more information on these opportunities, visit our website. We are excited to continue to support and grow members of our communities.

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN!

Nominate a deserving Kidder County Public School student for the November KEM Electric Touchstone Energy Student of the Month!

The nomination deadline is Nov. 15.

Scan the QR code for more information.

KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
TOUCHSTONE ENERGY
STUDENT OF THE MONTH

SAFETY STARTS WITH ME

Aim for hunting safely



Kevin Horner
Linton Area Foreman

As hunting season begins, KEM Electric Cooperative reminds you to be aware of overhead power lines, utility poles and other electrical equipment while hunting.

Here are some safety tips to keep in mind as you enjoy the outdoors:

- Keep clear of electrical equipment, including pad-mounted transformers (the large green boxes), substations and meter boxes. Never hang signs or place hunting decoys on electrical equipment, including utility poles.
- Never shoot at or near power lines or insulators. Damaging this equipment can cause an outage, disrupt electric service and create a serious safety hazard.
- Do not place deer stands on poles or climb utility poles. Energized lines and equipment can conduct electricity to anyone who has contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.
- Do not attach signs, trail cameras, ropes, straps or other objects to utility poles or equipment. These items can obstruct line crews and create serious hazards during maintenance or emergency repairs.

Safety is everyone's responsibility during hunting season. If you notice damaged cooperative equipment or a hazardous condition, stay clear and call our office immediately. We wish everyone a safe and memorable season.



KEM ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: Aug. 25

The meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on Aug. 25 in Linton. The meeting was called to order at 9:33 a.m. by Vice President John R. Beck. A quorum was present. Also present were co-General Managers/CEOs Jason Bentz and Travis Kupper, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Chief of Staff/Line Superintendent Dale Nagel, Manager of Member Relations Marcy Sanders, Legal Counsel Jennifer Grosz and Board Liaison Connie Hill. West Dakota Diesel and Hydraulics President Pam Geiger attended a portion of the meeting.

Consent agenda: The consent agenda was approved as presented.

Strategic items: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on a N.D. Public Service Commission meeting, cooperative operation updates, power supplier meetings, grant opportunities and other meeting updates. Several additional Basin Electric Power Cooperative reports and board documents were available for review.

Department reports: Craigmile provided a financial report that included a review of July financials, key ratios and the budget. Nagel provided an operations report, including technology updates on substations, storm payments and material updates. Sanders provided a member relations department report on upcoming member events, scholarships, and youth and community programs. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report for the board, which included technology updates. Grosz provided an update on the easement process and policy.

Action items: The board reviewed and approved a National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation's district meeting ballots and delegates, Form 990 and various policies.

Discussion/general information: No other business was discussed.

Executive session: The board entered an executive session during the 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 12:30 p.m. on Nov. 17 in Linton.



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
Brent Stroh, Director, District 5.....Tappen
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

Hazelton, 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

FIND US ON: