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Power for Generations: Members attend 2022 annual meeting

John Beck helps serve kuchen during the annual meeting.

Power for Generations: Members attend 2022 annual meeting

BY ANNE HANSEN

Members gathered with one another June 16 at the Linton High School for the 2022 annual meeting.

“We were founded when neighbors worked together to bring electricity to our rural and underserved areas. Back then, there were frequent meetings among neighbors to discuss the formation of the cooperative and once established, annual meetings were the must-attend event of the year,” Travis Kupper, co-general manager, noted in his address to the membership.

This year, more than 140 individuals attended the annual meeting. After enjoying a complementary meal, members attended the annual business meeting, during which directors were elected, bylaw changes were approved and prizes were won!



KEM Electric Cooperative members win a cooler during the annual meeting.

Board elections, reports

KEM Electric depends on the guidance and perspective of its members and board to help set priorities for the co-op and guide governance decisions. At the annual meeting, issues are raised for voting consideration by the general membership.

The board of directors is comprised of members who live and work in our service area, and they are in a position to know where community investments are most needed. The membership fulfilled cooperative principle No. 2, democratic member control, by voting to fill the board positions. Neil Meidinger from Zeeland was elected to serve as a director from District 3 and Dean Hummel from Hague was elected to serve as a director at-large.

The members also approved a bylaw amendment that allows members to vote in-person or by mail. The proposed amendment added voting by electronic means as an option, which will allow members to vote via special website, email or other electronic communications. The membership also approved a new bylaw that will allow the board to set a date to determine the voting membership of the cooperative. Prior to adoption of this bylaw, voting has always been conducted in-person. This bylaw is now necessary for the cooperative to provide proper notice to its voting members and make proper use of mail and electronic voting.

Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile presented the financial report to the membership. He said Brady, Martz & Associates audited the 2021 financial statements of KEM Electric, and presented its report to the board of directors.

“As we look to the future, we are confident in our ability to serve our members. As we continue to see our world become more electrified, we are prepared to power future generations as our overall energy consumption grows,” Kupper said.

Kupper also announced the launch of a new KEM Electric logo.

“The annual meeting theme, Power for

Generations, got us thinking about who we are, and what we want to be for our members. KEM Electric has grown and evolved over the past 78 years, and felt it was time for a change to better reflect who we are today, and to symbolize our future,” Kupper said.

Giving back to the membership

Sue Wald shared what Operation Round Up accomplished in 2021. Through the cooperative program, KEM Electric members can voluntarily choose to round up their monthly utility bills to the next dollar and donate their pennies. The Operation Round Up board members, who are also KEM Electric members, meet and disburse funds in the form of grants. Wald noted Operation Round Up has awarded grants to worthy nonprofit corporations, organizations and agencies in the KEM Electric service area. Wald encouraged members to apply or let other nonprofits know about the opportunity.

In addition to Operation Round Up, KEM also gives back to local high school seniors with scholarships.

“KEM Electric is dedicated to the development of young leaders. KEM Electric annually awards one \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior from each of the high schools within its service area, and one \$500.00 scholarship to a graduating senior from a homeschool setting, GED setting, or a school outside of KEM’s service area, whose parents are members of KEM Electric,” said Marcy Sanders, manager of member relations. Sanders also recognized the following scholarship winners, who were chosen by faculty members from each respective school:

- Ashley Public School chose **Jackson Meidinger**, son of Marisa and Eric Meidinger.
- Kidder County High School chose **Danny Keily**, son of Michelle and Mike Keily.
- Linton Public School chose **Erin Kelsch**, daughter of Jodi and Mike Kelsch.
- Strasburg Public School chose **Kylie Ternes**, daughter of Lisa and Aaron Ternes.
- Napoleon Public School chose **Payton Feist**, daughter of Michelle and Scott Vetter.
- Wishek Public School chose **Seth Wolf**, son of Melissa Kaseman-Wolf and Nathan Wolf.
- Zeeland Public School chose **Abigail Rossow**, daughter of Dawn and Joshua Rossow.

- KEM Electric chose **Josie Dallman**, daughter of Lori and Harlan Dallman, of Kulm.

In addition, the winner of the \$1,000 scholarship from Basin Electric Power Cooperative was awarded to Mary Huber from Strasburg Public School.

At the end of the meeting, KEM Electric awarded three “luck-of-the-draw” scholarships to students who had registered for the meeting and attended with a parent. The goal of these scholarships is to encourage the younger generation to attend and learn about the cooperative business model of one member, one vote – and to show how their voices and votes will count. Recipients included Brock Kelsch of Linton who will attend Bismarck State College (BSC), Kathleen Vetter of Linton who will attend Valley City State University, and Jayce Rivinius of Gackle-Streeter High School, who will attend BSC.

The board of directors, co-general managers and staff at KEM Electric Cooperative thank our members for participating in the annual meeting of the membership and look forward to meeting your electrical needs in the future. ⚡



KEM Electric Cooperative members enter for safety door prizes.

Teagan Erbele experiences Washington, D.C., on Youth Tour

BY RACHEL NEFF

When Teagan Erbele, a junior at Napoleon High School, read about the 2022 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, she decided to apply for the opportunity as it would be a great time to meet new people and experience Washington, D.C. Little did she know that a simple essay would lead to a trip of a lifetime.



Teagan Erbele

Getting to Washington, D.C.

Her knowledge, research and time spent writing an essay won Erbele an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to see our nation's capital through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour June 19 to 24. In her essay, Erbele touched on the topic of increasing youth attendance at the cooperative's annual meeting.

Each year, KEM Electric Cooperative holds a contest to select one local sophomore or junior to attend the NRECA Youth Tour. The winner travels with other North Dakota teens and joins 1,400 students from across the nation during the Youth Tour. Participants learn about cooperatives, visit with legislators at the Capitol, see the national monuments and make memories to last a lifetime.

The trip of a lifetime

A group of 14 North Dakota teenagers from different North Dakota electric cooperatives set out on Sunday, June 19, to Washington, D.C., to learn about their co-ops and their country on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. The next five days were packed full of sightseeing, educational sessions and experiencing history in a way they have never experienced before.

Once arriving in the nation's capital, the North Dakota Youth Tour winners loaded a bus and headed straight to the first stop of the day – the Holocaust Museum.

The following day, the group ventured all over Washington, D.C., to visit a variety of monuments and museums. For Erbele, the U.S. Naval Academy was especially eye-opening to witness.

"It was amazing to see," Erbele said. "The tour was really educational, and they explained what it was like to be in the Navy so well. Their day-to-day routine is like no other."

Along with the rich history Washington, D.C., has to offer, Erbele especially cherished the friendships she made with fellow members on the Youth Tour.

"I got to meet a lot of new people and make some really good friends," she said. "Meeting these people that have different backgrounds from me brought a whole new perspective and it was so awesome."

The Youth Tour participants were also able to meet Rep. Kelly Armstrong, who touched on a variety of different topics, including the importance of smaller governments, North Dakota's role in energy production and community involvement. Armstrong's message





“Meeting these people that have different backgrounds from me brought a whole new perspective and it was so awesome.”

reminded her of going to North Dakota’s legislative sessions to listen to her grandfather, North Dakota Sen. Robert Erbele.

Other sites Erbele and her fellow Youth Tour participants saw included the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, Fort McHenry and the White House.

This year’s annual Youth Tour was the first one since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and surely was not one to forget.

“If anyone has this opportunity, 100% go for it,” Erbele said. “It exceeded all of my expectations and I really just want to thank KEM for sponsoring this opportunity.”

Stay tuned for the 2023 Youth Tour application in an upcoming issue of *North Dakota Living*. ⚡



MANAGER'S MESSAGE: Know the signs of a scam



Travis Kupper

It's no secret that consumers with a water, gas or electricity connection have long been targets for utility scams, but fraudsters have changed their tactics, as consumers have become more reliant on technology for work, school and commerce. Scammers have noted these shifts and adapted

their tactics to this changed environment.

Imposter scams are the No. 1 type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission. While scam artists may come to your door posing as a utility worker for the "power company," in today's more connected world, attempts are more likely to come through an electronic device, via email, phone call or text.

Common types of scams

A scammer may claim you are overdue on your electric bill and threaten to disconnect your service if you don't pay immediately. Whether this is done in-person, by phone, text or email, the scammers want to scare you into immediate payment, so you don't have time to think clearly.

If this happens over the phone, simply hang up. If you're concerned about your bill, call us at 701-254-4666. Our phone number can also be found on your monthly bill and on our website, www.kemelectric.com. If the scam is by email or text, delete it before taking any action. If you're unsure, you can always contact us or use SmartHub to check the status of your account. Remember, KEM Electric will never demand immediate payment after just one notice.

Some scammers may falsely claim you have been overcharged on your bill and say they want to give a refund. It sounds easy. All you have to do is click or press a button to initiate the process. If you proceed, you will be prompted to provide banking or other personal information. Instead of money going into your bank account,

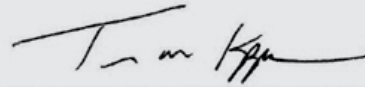
the scammers can drain your account and use personal information, such as a Social Security number, for identity theft.

If this "refund" scam happens over the phone, just hang up and block the phone number to prevent future robocalls. If this scam attempt occurs via email (known as a "phishing" attempt) or by text ("smishing"), do not click any links. Instead, delete it and, if possible, block the sender. If you do overpay on your energy bill, KEM Electric Cooperative will automatically apply the overpayment to your next billing cycle. When in doubt, contact us.

Defend yourself against scams

Be wary of calls or texts from unknown numbers. Be suspicious of an unknown person claiming to be a utility worker who requests banking or other personal information.

We want to help protect our members against utility scams, and you can help create the first line of defense. Please report any potential scams to us, so we can spread the word to prevent others in the community from falling victim. ⚡



In observance of the Labor Day holiday, KEM Electric Cooperative will be closed on Monday, Sept. 5.

Line crews will be available to respond to emergencies and power outages by calling 800-472-2673. Please do not contact KEM on Facebook with outage information; it is not monitored 24/7. Call the toll-free number to log your specific information with dispatch, and you will receive assistance as quickly and safely as possible.

Safety Starts with ME: Kevin Horner

As rewarding as it may be, farming is an extremely difficult job. It ranks among the top 10 most dangerous professions in the United States. At KEM Electric Cooperative, safety is top priority for all – our employees and our members.

“Our farmers work hard to get the job done, and sometimes it’s easy to forget all the necessary steps to take when practicing safe operations,” said Kevin Horner, area foreman.

Grain bins play an integral role in the efficiency and profitability of farm and ranch operations, and safety regulations should always be considered when working around these structures.

“Whether you are purchasing new grain bins or remodeling areas that contain existing ones, proximity to overhead power lines must be a considered factor,” Horner said. It is very important that grain bins are a safe distance from power lines to help ensure the safety of all farm workers. We want to make sure they go home after a hard day’s work to be with their family!

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- **Safe clearance.** The National Electrical Safety Code requires an 18-foot minimum vertical clearance from the highest point of the filling port of the grain bin to nearby high-voltage wires, and an 18-foot minimum distance from the power line to the grain bin wall. Changes to landscaping and drainage work can affect clearance heights of power lines, so remember to check these measurements regularly and consult your electric cooperative.
- **Filling grain bins.** High-voltage power lines are not insulated, so it’s important to remember to maintain an adequate high-wire clearance when using a portable auger, conveyor or elevator to fill your grain bin.
- **Moving equipment near grain bins.** When moving equipment, such as a hopper or a scaffold, be aware of nearby power lines. Remember to maintain a 10-foot clearance to ensure safety.



Accidents can happen in a split-second, which is why KEM Electric Cooperative reminds you to always use caution when working near power lines. If you happen to contact an overhead line when moving a grain auger, please stay in your equipment if possible. Call KEM for assistance. Don’t assume the power is off, until someone from our line crew shows up to ground it out.

“If you are considering a plan for a new grain bin or reconstruction of an existing bin site, please contact KEM Electric and let us assist you in maintaining a safe environment for you and your family,” Horner said.

Please, LOOK UP. Thank you for being SAFE! ⚡



TAKE THE BRR OUT OF WINTER

DON'T SHIVER THROUGH ANOTHER WINTER. PREPARE YOUR HOME NOW BEFORE THE WINTER WINDS START BLOWING.



BUNDLE UP YOUR HOME

Weatherstripping and caulking are probably the least expensive, most effective ways to save energy in the winter. Take these steps:

- **Check around doors and windows for leaks and drafts.** Add weatherstripping and caulk any holes you see that allow heat to escape. Make sure doors seal properly.
- **If your windows leak badly, consider replacing them with newer, more efficient ones.** Keep in mind, however, that replacing windows can be expensive – it could take you quite awhile to recover your costs from the energy savings alone.
- **Every duct, wire or pipe that penetrates the wall, ceiling or floor has the potential to waste energy.** Seal them all with caulking or weatherstripping.
- **Electric wall plugs and switches can allow cold air to enter.** Purchase simple-to-install foam gaskets that fit behind the switch plate and effectively prevent leaks.
- **Don't forget to close the damper on your fireplace when the fireplace is not in use.** If the damper is open when you're not using the fireplace, your chimney functions as a large open window that draws warm air out of the room and creates a draft.
- **Reverse your fan.** In the summertime, a fan is a wonderful way to keep cool, but your fan can also help circulate warm air in the winter. When you reverse the direction of your fan (there's a little switch on the motor housing), the fan will push warm air downward and recirculate it through the room. To ensure your fan is spinning in the correct direction, set it so the blades are spinning clockwise when you look up.

TUNE UP YOUR FURNACE THIS FALL

Save energy this fall and winter by having your furnace tuned up. Furnaces can go approximately three to five years between service calls and longer, if you change the filters regularly.

Changing filters regularly is one of the key maintenance tasks to keep any type of furnace running efficiently. Make sure you know where your furnace's filter is located and what size it is. Inspect it periodically, and replace it when it is dirty. How frequently you need to change the filter depends on the amount of dirt in the house and around the furnace and also how much time the furnace operates. ⚡

KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

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

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

FIND US ON:



OFFICE HOURS:

Monday through Friday,
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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