

EMPOWERING RURAL YOUTH:
**Rivinius travels
to Washington, D.C., for Youth Tour**



Bridger Rivinius, right, represented KEM Electric Cooperative on the Youth Tour this summer.

YOUTH TOUR:

Rivinius embarks on inspiring experience

Each June, hundreds of high school students gather in Washington, D.C., for an opportunity to learn more about electric cooperatives and cultivate lifelong friendships and memories.

KEM Electric Cooperative holds an annual contest for high school sophomores or juniors to be chosen to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. Students enter the contest by writing an essay in response to a question posed by the cooperative.

Bridger Rivinius from Streeter joined other North Dakota youth sponsored by their local electric cooperatives, along with students from around the nation, in Washington, D.C., for a week of learning and networking.

An inspiring experience

Sixteen North Dakota youth gathered before the trip at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives headquarters in Mandan for some team building before taking off to Washington, D.C. The group was able to review the itinerary and gather T-shirts for the week. The group left on Saturday and returned late Friday night. Each day included new learning experiences and sights to see.

Once the plane landed, the students were off to their first stop: Ford's Theatre. Later in the week, students partook in a Co-op 101 and youth advocacy course. The group was able to see much of Washington, D.C., by touring museums, national monuments, memorials and more. They also attended other activities, such as a riverboat cruise, a Medieval Times tournament and a Washington Nationals baseball game.

Although this was Rivinius's second trip to Washington, D.C., he said the itinerary – along with the group and chaperones – made the trip like no other. Rivinius says he enjoys politics and history, so this trip was surreal for him in many ways, from getting to sit in the U.S. Senate chambers for the floor proceedings to visiting with North Dakota congressional delegation staff about energy policy. The North Dakota group traveled together most of the trip, but the students were able to interact with other state delegates at the hotel by trading pins, which acted as a steppingstone to spark conversation.

"This trip changed my view on leadership and how broad the spectrum is," says Rivinius, as he reflects on the memorials dedicated to the founding fathers and others who built America.

Rivinius will be a junior in high school this year and is a student body representative, FFA officer and is active in archery, band, golf and speech. He notes

his experience with the Youth Tour has inspired him to assume more leadership roles within his school, community and state.

Rivinius says he would strongly urge others to apply for the Youth Tour.

"Just go for it," he says. "Get involved in community activities prior to applying. I feel that way you will be able to appreciate D.C. in a whole new way in all it has to offer."

More information regarding the 2025 Youth Tour will be shared in the coming months. Watch for future issues of *North Dakota Living* and visit our social media. ⚡



The North Dakota Youth Tour delegation of 16 students toured several sites in Washington, D.C.

MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

Beyond kilowatts



Jason Bentz

Today, I want to take a moment to discuss an essential aspect of our cooperative's operations: base rates. A few members expressed concern about these rates in our recent member satisfaction survey, and I wanted to take the time to explain them a little more.

Base rates, which are the foundation of our rate structure, play a pivotal role in ensuring the financial sustainability and operational integrity of our cooperative. These rates represent the fixed costs associated with maintaining and operating the infrastructure necessary to deliver electricity to your doorstep, regardless of the amount of energy consumed.

It's important to understand base rates encompass more than just the cost of electricity generation. They also cover a myriad of other expenses, including transmission and distribution infrastructure, equipment maintenance, grid modernization initiatives and compliance with regulatory requirements. These investments are essential for maintaining a reliable and resilient electric system that meets the evolving needs of our members.

KEM Electric Cooperative takes great care in setting our base rates to balance the needs of our members with the financial obligations of our cooperative. Our goal is to ensure rates remain fair, transparent and reflective of the true cost of service, while also promoting affordability and accessibility for all members, regardless of their energy usage.

However, it's essential to recognize our cooperative is more than just a utility provider of kilowatt-hours.

We are stewards of an essential service that powers the homes, farms and businesses that form the backbone of our communities.

We are a community partner dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for our members and fostering economic prosperity in our service area. From supporting local initiatives and charitable causes to providing energy efficiency programs and educational opportunities, we strive to make a positive impact on the communities we serve.

Moreover, cooperatives like ours are uniquely positioned to serve areas for-profit utilities may overlook due to economic considerations, such as the challenges associated with fewer members per mile of line. Unlike investor-owned utilities, which prioritize profitability, cooperatives are driven by a commitment to serving all members of our community, regardless of geographic location or population density.

As we navigate the complexities of setting rates and financial management, it's crucial to remember our cooperative is rooted in the principles of cooperation, democracy and member ownership. Your input and participation are invaluable as we work together to shape the future of our cooperative and ensure it remains a beacon of service and integrity for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued support and trust in KEM Electric. Together, we are more than just selling kilowatts. We are providing an essential service that powers the vitality and resilience of our communities. ⚡



**"WE ARE PROVIDING AN
ESSENTIAL SERVICE THAT
POWERS THE VITALITY
AND RESILIENCE OF OUR
COMMUNITIES."**

CO-GENERAL MANAGER/CEO, JASON BENTZ



INVESTING IN YOUTH:

Touchstone Energy® Student of the Month

As we start the 2024-25 school year, we would like to recognize our May Touchstone Energy® Student of the Month, Abby Rivinius. Rivinius recently graduated from Gackle-Streeter Public School and was active in the school. She continues to be active around the community, too.

“She is very involved in her community. She has been volunteering for numerous years and still does with the Gackle ambulance and fire department, the Streeter Fire Department as well as many other programs,” Rivinius's nominator says.

Rivinius plans to put the money toward first-aid training at the school for the students provided by the Gackle Ambulance Service. Students will be given first-aid kits upon completion of the training.

2024-25 Touchstone Energy Student of the Month

Last year, KEM Electric Cooperative launched our first year of the Touchstone Energy Student of the Month program, in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperative. It was an outstanding success, as we were able to reward various well-deserving youth in our service area! The program will be returning for the 2024-25 school year, and we look forward to recognizing deserving youth once again.

This program aims to recognize outstanding students in grades K-12 and provide a monetary donation to their school for a project or initiative chosen by the winning student.

KEM Electric firmly believes in supporting education and fostering the development of young individuals in our community. The Touchstone Energy Student of the Month program presents an excellent opportunity for us to celebrate and recognize students who excel in everything ranging from academics to leadership to community involvement or personal growth.

Application process

Students can be nominated by teachers, parents/guardians, school administrators or community members. Nomination forms can be accessed online



Abby Rivinius

through our website. The deadline is the 15th of each month. Students are eligible to be nominated and chosen September through April. Students who are members and are homeschooled or live outside of the service area are also eligible to apply and will be chosen in April.

The winning recipient will receive a monetary donation to his or her school. The student will have the opportunity to choose a project within his or her school for which the donation will be utilized. Winners from the 2023-24 school year will not be eligible for the donation in the 2024-25 school year. ⚡



CALL THE OFFICE OR SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION.



Journeyman Lineworker **Jake Zink** demonstrates the operation of a TripSaver to members.

TripSaver technology installed

KEM Electric Cooperative is dedicated to ensuring safe, reliable energy for its members. One avenue to ensure reliability and efficiency has been upgrading technology. KEM Electric continues to upgrade its sectionalizing technology across its service area with TripSavers. You may see TripSavers mounted on power poles across the area.

A TripSaver acts like a breaker in your home. When an outage occurs, it takes out the faulted area versus taking out the whole system. If the TripSaver is unsuccessful in the reclosure, it drops open and is an easy identifier of which line has the fault. This alleviates unnecessary line patrol for the line crew and helps shorten restoration time.

Switching a system to different technology is not an easy task and one in which KEM Electric took time and deliberation. TripSavers are an affordable option when it comes to sectionalizing equipment for the electric grid.

“Unlike our current oil circuit recloser, TripSavers do not have oil and do not require scheduled maintenance, saving the cooperative thousands of dollars every year,” says Dale Nagel, line superintendent/chief of staff.

By implementing this technology, KEM Electric aims to meet the changing needs of the communities it serves.

“We look forward to continuing this technology across our service territory to help ensure reliability to our members’ homes and businesses,” Nagel says.

As KEM Electric continues to work on installing TripSavers and other projects around the area, please don’t hesitate to call the office if you come across electrical equipment that looks unsafe. ⚡

SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

Safe harvest

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops produced by North Dakota farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous – even deadly – when farming near electrical equipment.

“Every year, farm-related accidents happen when combines and other farming equipment collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages,” Journeyman Lineworker Tyler Jacob says.

Here is what YOU can do

These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery. If you're preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.
- Use a spotter and deployed flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- If your equipment contacts an energized or downed power line, call 911 immediately. Stay inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. If there is smoke or fire, exit by jumping clear of the



cab without touching the equipment and hop away to safety. We also urge you to contact your electric cooperative for additional assistance.

- Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but we hope you'll remember these safety tips. If you see something while out in the field that needs our attention, please call the office as soon as possible. ⚡

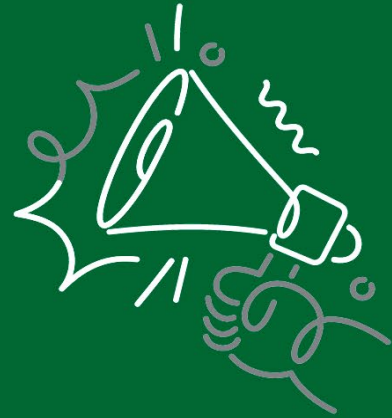
TIPS FOR SAFE HARVEST

- Keep all equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- Never try to raise or move a power line to clear a path
- Power line sagging? Don't move it. Call us immediately.



COOPERATIVE GRANTS AVAILABLE!

Operation Round Up &
RDFC grants applications
now being accepted!



OPERATION ROUND UP GRANTS

Do you know of an individual or organization in our community that could benefit from grant funding? They may be eligible to apply for grant money from our Operation Round Up grant funds.



DEADLINE

September 30

APPLICATION

Scan here for
more information:



RURAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION GRANTS

Do you know a community owned business, facility, project or workforce development that benefits rural areas?

They may be eligible to apply for grant funds from the Rural Development Finance Corporation.



DEADLINE

August 31

APPLICATION

Scan here for
more information:



KEM ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHT: May 28

The meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on May 28 at the KEM Electric office in Linton. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman Victor Wald. A quorum was present. Also present were co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Legal Counsel Tom Bair, Line Superintendent/Chief of Staff Dale Nagel and Member Relations Manager Marcy Sanders.

Consent agenda: An agenda addition was proposed. The consent agenda was approved as amended.

Strategic agenda: Bentz and Kupper provided the co-general managers' report, which included updates on Basin Electric Power Cooperative, the Western Area Power Administration and a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ruling. Updates on Basin Electric's CEO report, West Dakota Utility Services and 3C Construction were also provided.

Action items: Action items were resolved.

Department reports: Craigmile provided the financial report. Nagel included a department report on outage information and safety statistics. Sanders included a department report, with an annual meeting update. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report for the board. Bair provided a legal counsel report.

Discussion/general information: Information was provided on upcoming CEO evaluations.

Executive session: The board entered an executive session.

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

Next meeting date: The next meeting is at 9:30 a.m. Aug. 27 in Linton.

If you are interested in being placed on the agenda please call the office at 701-254-4666. ⚡

**KEM ELECTRIC'S
OFFICE WILL BE
CLOSED ON SEPT. 2
IN OBSERVANCE OF
LABOR DAY.**



KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

DIRECTORS:

Victor Wald, Chairman.....Napoleon
John R. Beck, Vice Chairman.....Linton
Carter Vander Wal, Sec.-Treas.Pollock
Dean Dewald, Director.....Dawson
Carmen Essig, Director.....Lehr
Neil Meidinger, Director.....Zeeland
Anton J. Schaffner, Director.....Zeeland

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

MANAGEMENT:

Travis Kupper.....Co-GM/CEO
Jason Bentz.....Co-GM/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

FIND US ON:

