

- Power restoration
- Watch for utility scams
- North Dakota Career Tour
- Interested in serving?



The 2024-25 North Dakota FFA state officer team and staff.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TEAGAN ERBELE

**Teagan Erbele** from Lehr serves on the North Dakota FFA state officer team as secretary.

## LIVING TO SERVE:

# FFA continues to impact youth

BY SAMANTHA VANGSNESS

As a freshman at North Dakota State University (NDSU) and a dedicated North Dakota FFA state officer, Teagan Erbele's journey is a testament to the power of leadership, hard work and the values instilled through FFA.

### Early years in FFA

Erbele's journey into agriculture and leadership began long before she was elected to her most recent state office. Growing up with a passion for livestock and the agricultural community, Erbele first honed her skills as a 4-H member, where she learned the

values of responsibility, hard work and dedication.

Erbele grew up on a registered cattle ranch near Lehr. Her love for livestock judging sparked her interest in the industry and through this experience, she discovered the broader opportunities joining FFA could offer.

"I joined FFA in seventh grade to continue livestock judging," Erbele says.

Joining FFA allowed Erbele to take her passion to the next level. She recalls being as involved as she could in FFA through high school by attending various competitions and workshops across North Dakota and

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competing at the National FFA Convention.

The skills instilled and experiences throughout those years are irreplaceable, she says.

“FFA helps prepare future leaders, and so many valuable skills are taught within the contests and experiences that are offered,” Erbele says.

Her preparation for future leadership wouldn’t be possible without the guidance and support of those who believed in her potential. Erbele was fortunate to have mentors, including her Napoleon High School FFA chapter advisor, Brian Schneider, who encouraged her and taught her not only valuable skills in livestock judging, but instilled in her the importance of leadership, community service and so much more.

“He is an advisor that has so much passion for FFA, and it really stands out to the students and community. He helps break FFA skills down into life lessons for students to learn from,” Erbele says.

Some of the skills she has carried with her are practical life skills taught early in her FFA involvement. A few of these skills include learning how to utilize parliamentary procedure to run a meeting, general speaking skills, confidence, the importance of serving others and leading through influence.

### **Living to serve**

Throughout her time in FFA, Erbele participated in various contests, including livestock judging, farm business management, floriculture and various speaking contests, to name a few. From there, Erbele attended her first state competition as a seventh-grader, competing in the food science and technology contest and floriculture.

Within the walls of the Bentson Bunker Fieldhouse at NDSU, a seed was planted within her to become more active in FFA and ultimately become an FFA state officer.

“I was so inspired by the way the state officers delivered their retiring addresses,” Erbele says.

In June 2024, Erbele was elected to the North Dakota FFA state officer team by her fellow FFA members as the state secretary. She is now a full-time college student and representative of North Dakota FFA.

As a state officer, she’s taking her passion for agriculture and leadership to new heights, inspiring others to follow in her footsteps. As an FFA state officer, Erbele travels across North Dakota, conducting workshops with FFA chapters and visiting with students about the organization. State officers also attend winter contests, FFA banquets and assist in any other place they can during their year of office.

“Being a state officer is a year of giving back to the members and the association,” Erbele says.



**Teagan Erbele** used her experiences from her local FFA chapter in Napoleon to become a state FFA officer.

Erbele says being a state officer brings a whole new experience to FFA, as she is able to see the organization from a new perspective. Serving as a state officer has given her a new love and appreciation for the organization and the people who selflessly devote their time and talents to making sure the blue jacket is an impactful experience for each member. Erbele notes she would love to go back to being a member and experience FFA in high school with the newfound love and appreciation she’s developed since being a state officer.

Her goal during her year of service as a state officer is to share her genuine love for the organization and its members, help members gain a deeper understanding of agriculture, build their confidence, find their place within the organization and embrace the value of living to serve.

### **National FFA Week**

National FFA Week is celebrated Feb. 15-22. During this time, FFA chapters host various events and activities to showcase what the organization is about. ⚡



MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

# Protecting yourself from utility scams



**Jason Bentz**  
Co-General Manager/CEO

Consumers with a water, gas or electricity connection have long been targets for utility scams. As consumers became more reliant on technology for work, school and commerce, scammers 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, attempts in today's connected world are more

likely to come through an electronic device, via email, a 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 or 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](http://www.kemelectric.com).

If the scam is by email or text, delete it before taking any action. If you're unsure, contact us at 701-254-4666, [info@kemelectric.com](mailto:info@kemelectric.com) or use SmartHub to check the status of your account. Remember, KEM Electric Cooperative 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. The scammers make it sound easy by stating 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, 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 or by text, do not click any links. Instead, delete it and block the sender if possible. If you do overpay on

your energy bill, KEM Electric will automatically apply the credit to your next billing cycle. When in doubt, contact us.

## Defend yourself

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




**Congratulations to our chief of staff/line superintendent, Dale Nagel, on graduating from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Management Internship Program!**

MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS:

## Seeking youth to apply for the North Dakota Career Tour



**Marcy Sanders**

*Manager of  
Member Relations*

As a member services manager, 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

electric 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:** Aug. 5-6

**Who can attend:**

- 2025-26 high school seniors, juniors and sophomores who are interested in exploring careers in energy.
- Students who are curious about the wide range of opportunities in North Dakota's energy sector.

### How to register:

We have a limited number of spots available. Our cooperative is joining forces with our sister cooperatives within the Innovative Energy Alliance Cooperative, 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 [www.kemelectric.com](http://www.kemelectric.com) or get in touch with us at 800-472-2673 or 701-254-4666.

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



# JOIN KEM ELECTRIC FOR THE CAREER TOUR

AUGUST 5-6, 2025

## FROM COAL MINES TO POWER PLANTS AND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES DIVE INTO THE HEART OF NORTH DAKOTA'S ENERGY SECTOR.

Limited spots available. Learn more by visiting: [www.kemelectric.com](http://www.kemelectric.com).

**Application deadline is April 25.**

INTERESTED IN SERVING?

## Nomination petition now open

Are you passionate about your community and making a difference? We invite you to join the KEM Electric Cooperative board of directors. KEM Electric currently has a district-at-large vacant seat that needs to be filled, along with the District 3 position up for election.

If you would like to place your name on the ballot,

pick up a petition at the KEM Electric office or download a petition from the cooperative website at [www.kemelectric.com](http://www.kemelectric.com). Petitions became available on Jan. 11. Petitions must be returned to the cooperative office no later than March 12. As a reminder, director nominations from the floor at the annual meeting will not be accepted.

### 404. Member petition form information

(a) Each petition shall contain the following:

1. The name of the member nominee.
2. The director position for which the member nominee shall run.
3. The printed names, addresses and telephone numbers, date of signature and original signatures of each member signing the petition.
4. At least 10 signatures of the members of the respective district, or members at large, as the case may be.

(b) In the case of joint members, the signature of one or more than one joint member shall constitute one joint member.

(c) Firms, associations, corporations or body politics shall have the right to place one signature on

a petition, the same as other members, by the signature of a duly appointed representative.

(d) Petitions may not be circulated or signed more than 60 days before the date when petitions must be filed pursuant to this bylaw. Any signatures to a nominating petition obtained more than 60 days before that date may not be counted.

(e) All petitions must be filed at the principal offices of the cooperative not less than 90 days prior to the date of the meeting of the members, as fixed by the board of directors.

(f) After verifying that a petition complies with this bylaw, the secretary of the board of directors shall post a list of nominations for directors at the principal office of the cooperative at least 60 days before the meeting of the members. ⚡

*Congratulations*

**JACE WALD,  
LINTON PUBLIC SCHOOL!**

### DECEMBER TOUCHSTONE ENERGY® STUDENT OF THE MONTH

Throughout the school year, KEM Electric is choosing one student at random who has been nominated from the schools in KEM Electric's service area to receive a \$125 sponsorship in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperative. The funds can be utilized to the student's choosing for school activities.

In **February**, KEM Electric will be accepting nominations of students from **Strasburg Public School**.

The deadline for nominations is Feb. 15.

This sponsorship is open to any K-12 student.

*"Jace is always going above and beyond"*

*"He leads his classmates to be the best versions of themselves"*



Scan the QR code to nominate a student or for more information, or visit [www.kemelectric.com/touchstone-energy-student-month](http://www.kemelectric.com/touchstone-energy-student-month).



MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS:

# What to know about power restoration



**Dale Nagel**

Chief of Staff/  
Line Superintendent

We often get questions from members about power outages and why it can take time to restore power. Given our reliance on electricity, there's simply never a good time to be without it. As we continue through the cold winter, we thought it would be a good time to shed light on our restoration process to help our members understand what may be happening behind the scenes.

What you may not know about power restoration:

- **We need you.** When your power goes out, it might be just at your home or a smaller section of our service area. There is a chance we may not know about it, and no one has reported it. We rely on you to let us know if your power is out. Report outages by calling our office at 800-472-2673 or 701-254-4666.
- **It's a team effort.** Every one of KEM Electric Cooperative's employees is working to restore power as soon as possible. Our member services representatives are taking your calls, operations staff are surveying damage and organizing crews, and communicators are keeping everyone informed of progress or potential dangers. When your power goes out, we all work together as quickly and safely as possible to get you back to normal.
- **We assess the situation first.** Every outage is different, and we don't know how dangerous it is or what equipment might need to be replaced. When responding to outages, we first need to see what happened, then figure out what materials we need

and develop a plan for how to fix the problem(s) without compromising electric flow for the rest of our members.

- **How restoration is normally prioritized.** Our crews focus on responding first to public safety issues and critical services such as a member who depends on oxygen assistance. Then we complete work that impacts the largest number of people first, followed by members who have been out of power the longest.
- **Flickering lights.** Some folks mistake flickering lights for outages, but these "blinks" can indicate our equipment has worked properly and prevented a possible outage likely caused by weather, an animal or stray tree limbs on the lines. If the line continues to blink, it could indicate issues on the line, such as a "floaters" where the wire has come out of the insulator and is hanging alongside the pole. If you are experiencing blinks, please call the office so we can isolate the section of line to address the impacted members. Line crews may be dispatched to patrol that section of line to look for any issues that may be causing the disruption.
- **Sometimes, it's a waiting game.** Our portion of the power grid is connected to other electric utilities, and we maintain positive relationships with power providers interconnected to our system. If our outage is due to an issue from their feed into our system, we must let them do their repairs and be mindful of what they're going through to fix it. We do our best to avoid power disruptions, but they are inevitable from time to time. If the lights go out, know our team at KEM Electric is working as quickly and safely as possible to restore power. If you experience an outage, please call the office at 800-472-2673 or 701-254-4666. ⚡

## DON'T MISS A BEAT WITH SMARTHUB!

WITH SMARTHUB YOU CAN

- ENROLL IN OUTAGE AND BILL NOTIFICATIONS
- SIGN UP FOR AUTO PAYMENTS
- MAKE ONE TIME BILL PAYMENTS
- MANAGE NOTIFICATIONS AND MORE!

**SIGN UP FOR SMARTHUB TODAY AT**  
**WWW.KEMELECTRIC.COM** 

SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

## Snow removal around electrical equipment

It is that time of year when we break out our shovels and snowblowers a bit more than we would like. KEM Electric Cooperative may have electrical equipment, such as pad-mounted transformers or even overhead lines, near areas where you have to clear snow, so we remind members to proceed with caution.

“We want members to be aware of where pad-mounted transformers – also known as the green box – or other electrical equipment is located on their property,” says Marty Messer, Steele area foreman. “Ensuring members know where equipment is helps alleviate accidents and keeps everyone safe and informed.”

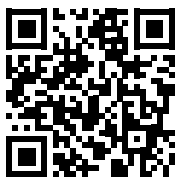
Here are a few tips to keep in mind this winter as you are removing snow.

- **Know where electrical equipment is located:** Before a heavy snowfall, mark the location of electrical equipment with flags to easily see it when removing snow.
- **Be gentle when clearing snow:** Always use a shovel to clear snow around electrical equipment. Never use a snowblower or plow directly against it.
- **Maintain clearance:** Ensure a safe distance is maintained around electrical equipment, typically at least 10 feet in front and 3 feet on the sides.
- **Be aware of overhead lines:** Be mindful of overhead power lines, especially when removing snow from roofs.
- **Report damage:** If you notice any damage to electrical equipment due to snow removal, contact our office as soon as possible. Do not try and fix the damage yourself.



Keeping the following tips in mind will help KEM Electric ensure safe and reliable electrical services continue to power your homes and local businesses. If you notice any damage to electrical equipment, contact our office as soon as possible at 800-472-2673 or 701-254-4666. ⚡

Students, the cooperative scholarship application deadline is quickly approaching.



Applications are due Feb. 10!

Scan the QR code or call our office at 800-472-2673 or 701-254-4666 for more information.



## KEM ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: **NOV. 19, 2024**

The meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on Nov. 19, 2024, in Linton. The meeting was called to order at 12:35 p.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, Chief of Staff/Line Superintendent Dale Nagel, Member Relations Manager Marcy Sanders and Executive Assistant Connie Hill.

**Consent agenda:** The consent agenda was approved as presented.

**Strategic/action:** Bentz and Kupper provided the co-general managers' report, which included updates on a statewide Safety Committee meeting, employee meeting and more. Basin Electric Power Cooperative, West Dakota Utility Services and 3C Construction reports were also provided.

**Action items:** Action items were discussed and resolved.

**Discussion/general information:** The board discussed 2025 budgets as well as other items.

**Department reports:** Craigmile provided the financial report. Nagel provided a department report on projects. Sanders provided a department report, which included upcoming programs and events. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report for the board. Bair provided a legal counsel report.

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

**Next meeting date:** The next meeting is 9:30 a.m. Feb. 25 in Linton. If you wish to be placed on the agenda, please call the office. ⚡



### KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

#### DIRECTORS:

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

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](http://kemelectric.com)

Email address: [info@kemelectric.com](mailto:info@kemelectric.com)

FIND US ON:

