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# KEM Electric celebrates 80 years of service



*Adam Vetter and Melvin Wohl, past KEM Electric Cooperative directors, visit in front of KEM Electric's office in Linton.*

## POWERING RURAL NORTH DAKOTA: **KEM Electric celebrates 80 years**

In April 1949, a typical day unfolded for a hardworking family as they tended to their chores and went about their daily routine. However, that day turned out to be not so ordinary. That day, something extraordinary happened, marking a significant moment – the dawn of a new era as the first member of KEM Electric Cooperative received power.

Incorporated April 4, 1944, KEM Electric was bringing electric services five years later to rural residents in Kidder, Emmons and McIntosh counties. Soon after KEM Electric was formed, Logan County joined, but the co-op's name remained the same.

Rural electrification had been highly anticipated, as KEM Electric's founding members had the long and tiresome job of gathering member application fees prior to receiving electricity.

Adam Vetter remembers his father and one of KEM Electric's charter board members, Joseph Vetter, going around and seeing who would spend \$5 to become a member.

"I remember my mother wondering if it would be worth all of the time spent to collect the membership applications," he says.

At the time, residents had reservations about when or if they would ever receive electric service. Adam notes it was often the sentiment "the lights" were only for the people who lived in town. But the foresight of the founding members paid off, and the lives of many rural farmers and ranchers would forever be changed.

For Adam, and many others, the memory of the day KEM Electric lineworkers came into their yards remains as vivid today as it was several decades ago, etched into their minds as a pivotal moment in their lives.

"We went to school that day and didn't know if we would have power when we can home or not. And, sure enough, we got home and Mom was cooking on the electric stove," says Adam, who served as a KEM Electric director from 1970 to 1979.

Melvin Wohl, a KEM Electric director from 1991 to 2000, recalls receiving power shortly after the Vettters.

"Our house was wired for electrical, but rather than receiving the power, we would charge a battery that would be used for a light. I remember that night, I didn't have to charge the battery for the light upstairs. I was able to use an installed light," Wohl says.

### **Technology efficiencies**

Adam and Wohl, both raised on farms near Linton, reminisced about their childhood chores, which were done without the aid of electricity.

## **"Everything got better."**

**–KEM Electric member and former director Melvin Wohl, on how electricity improved members' quality of life**

When their homes and farms received electricity, "everything got better," Wohl remarks. He reflects on the array of equipment that made their lives easier on the farm once they received electricity – a list that seemed endless in possibilities. Wohl describes the electric calf warmer, which helps keep newborn calves warm, so they don't get sick during cold spells. He also recalls watching his father use the automated equipment to sharpen sickle blades.

Adam remembers how thankful they were to electrify the water pump for the windmill, which was used to water the livestock. The efficiencies didn't just stop on the farm, but carried into the shop and the house, as they reflected on the installation of indoor fans making the hot days a bit easier, especially sleeping at night.

"Wherever you walked, it was all better," Wohl recalls.

During the first years of power, members weren't strangers to outages during bad weather and while the cooperative worked out glitches in the system. Members were patient and willing to help the cooperative and others when the time arose, much like today.

"For many of us who had dairies, power outages caused a lot of issues for our milking," Adam says.

Generators were a rarity during that era, but Adam and Wohl were fortunate to possess a generator for backup power. Just as cooperative members supported each other, the Wohl, Vetter and other local families rose to the occasion, aiding many in need during power outages. Their actions epitomized the cooperative spirit.

### **Serving the rural community**

Despite the vast number of changes that have unfolded over the past 80 years of KEM Electric's service to its members, one constant endures: the timeless significance of qualities embodied by a director.

"Directors who are effective and passionate about the rural area are important to represent members of a cooperative," Adam says.

Adam and Wohl both gave their time and

## "I remember my father reminding me how important it was to serve the people in your community."

**-KEM Electric member and former director Adam Vetter, on the importance of being a devoted board member**

served nine years on the KEM Electric board. Their commitment stemmed from a shared desire to serve the community and support rural areas.

"I remember my father reminding me how important it was to serve the people in your community," Adam notes, as he recalls his father urging him to run for a position on the board.

While Adam was on the board, members were still getting familiar with having electricity at the flip of a switch. During the same time, he also recalls the vital work the North Dakota state and federal delegation was doing to ensure electric cooperatives could continue to purchase equipment and material at a fair interest rate.

"That was one of the most important things we

were able to accomplish as a board," Adam says.

Like Adam, Wohl was also encouraged to run for a board position by a fellow KEM Electric director, Eddy Nagel.

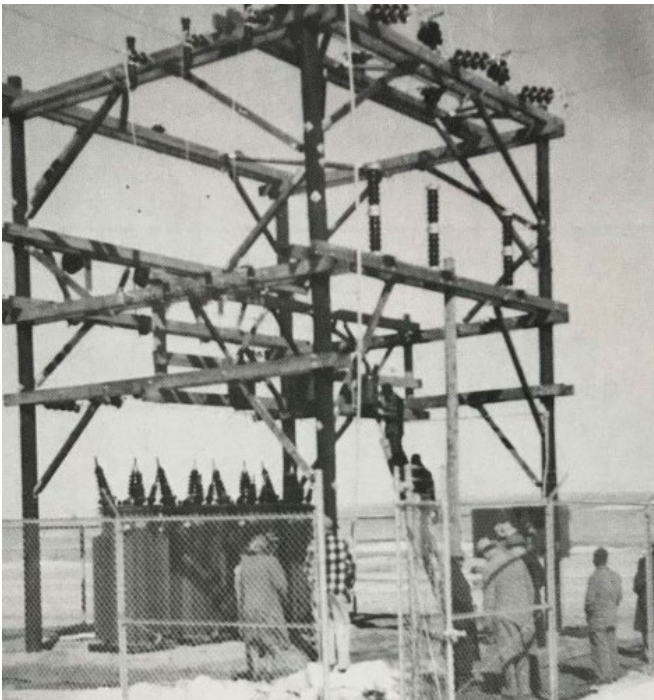
"I remember thinking how busy life was at that time, between ranching and serving on other boards, but the more Eddy encouraged me, I decided to run," Wohl says. During that election year, three other candidates were running for the position to represent their membership. As Wohl reflects on his time as a KEM Electric director, he emphasizes the importance of being committed.

"You are representing your membership," he says.

### Continuing to serve rural North Dakota

As KEM Electric reflects on the last 80 years of service, members remain the top priority. Without the charter board and the founding members, KEM Electric would not be serving the four counties. KEM Electric continues to meet members by taking part in community events and supporting the community in various ways, such as through sponsorships and grant programs.

Earlier this year, a member satisfaction survey was mailed to collect members' insight, which will be used as a tool to help the cooperative evaluate how KEM Electric can best serve you, our valued members. Thanks for supporting KEM Electric for the last 80 years and we look forward to the next 80. ⚡



On April 2, 1949 KEM Electric's board of directors looked on as the Danzig substation became energized, electrifying the cooperative's first power lines.



Lineworkers electrify KEM Electric's power lines in 1962.

## MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

# EPA ruling can impact reliability



**Jason Bentz**

As an electric cooperative, our primary concern is the reliability of the service we provide to our valued members. It is with this commitment in mind we share with our members the deep concern regarding recent developments that threaten our local power supply and, consequently, our way of life. Our cooperative, along with the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives,

stands firmly against the new power plant rules released by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on April 25.

These rules, while purportedly aiming to cut emissions from power plants, pose a dire risk to the reliability of our electric grid. They would force the premature retirement of reliable, dispatchable, baseload electric generation assets, putting the security of our power supply in jeopardy.

The timelines set forth by the EPA are unrealistic, and the technologies required are not yet deployable. For instance, existing coal-fired power plants would be required to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by a staggering 90% by 2032, necessitating the use of carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) technologies. While CCS shows promise and is actively being pursued by organizations like Minnkota Power Cooperative, it is not yet proven or commercially available.

Furthermore, while existing natural gas plants are exempt from immediate compliance, new natural gas units must adhere to strict greenhouse gas

standards outlined in the new rule. This regulatory environment threatens the very foundation of our energy infrastructure.

Looking ahead to 2032, the prospect of a future without coal is deeply troubling. As demand for electricity continues to rise, these EPA rules threaten to exacerbate reliability challenges, as highlighted by the North American Reliability Corporation. The North American Reliability Corporation, a not-for-profit international regulatory authority whose mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the electric grid, estimates the demand for electricity will grow 10% through 2032, while the electric generation to meet that demand is projected to grow only 4% in that time.

As a community, we pride ourselves on innovation and progress. Our electric cooperatives have diversified and made strides forward, but we cannot compromise on reliability. The implications of these regulations are dire: more blackouts, higher costs and increased uncertainty for families and businesses.

We urge our policymakers to consider the practical implications of these rules and prioritize the reliability of our power supply. It is essential we work together to ensure a sustainable energy future without sacrificing the reliability and security of our local grid. ⚡



# JOIN US AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

*Join us for an evening filled with camaraderie, delicious food, exciting prize giveaways, Luck-of-the-Draw Scholarships and much more!*

 Tuesday, June 11

 5 p.m. (CT) Registration & Meal | 6 p.m. Business Meeting

 Our Club Hall, 601 E Cedar Ave, Linton



JOIN US:

## KEM Electric annual meeting June 11

Join us at our annual meeting for an exciting evening celebrating 80 years of service! As valued members of KEM Electric Cooperative, we invite you to be a part of our community gathering on Tuesday, June 11, at Our Club Hall in Linton.

Explore our operations and safety booth to learn about our latest projects and work plans. Meet our dedicated team, including engineers, lineworkers and safety coordinator, who work tirelessly to keep our community powered and safe.

Don't miss your chance to register for the leaf blower door prize and participate in our drawing for bill credits, Medora Musical tickets and more! Plus, enjoy dinner and visit with fellow members, our dedicated CEOs, directors and staff starting at 5 p.m., with the business meeting kicking off at 6 p.m. Your presence and participation are invaluable as we continue to serve and strengthen our cooperative together. See you there! ⚡

SPARK YOUR FUTURE:

## Luck-of-the-draw scholarships

High school seniors, you still have an opportunity to be awarded a \$500 scholarship from KEM Electric Cooperative! At the 2024 annual meeting June 11 in Linton, KEM Electric will award two \$500 luck-of-the-draw scholarships. If your parents are members, you're already in the running. Just make sure to RSVP and join us at our annual meeting with at least one of your guardians to claim your spot in the draw!

Don't let this chance pass you by! This scholarship could be the boost you need to pursue your dreams. Whether it's covering textbooks, offsetting tuition costs or investing in extracurricular activities, every dollar counts. Take advantage of this opportunity to not only alleviate some financial burden, but

also to connect with your community and the resources it offers. Remember, your future is bright and seizing opportunities like this one can help illuminate the path ahead. So, mark your calendars, RSVP and join us for an evening of celebration and possibility at the KEM Electric annual meeting.

Students can RSVP by scanning the QR code, visiting our website at [www.kemelectric.com](http://www.kemelectric.com) or calling the office at 701-254-4666 or 800-472-2673. ⚡



## SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

# Watch for crews

When the power goes out, so do KEM Electric Cooperative's line crews. Lineworkers are the first to respond after an outage occurs, and they work tirelessly to restore power to the communities served.

When widespread outages occur, multiple crews will be out in the field simultaneously working to repair damage at multiple locations. Even routine work has the potential to be dangerous, and it takes the full attention of the lineworkers and their colleagues, who are also responsible for the team's safety. Distractions can have deadly consequences.

### Here is what YOU can do:

- If lineworkers are on or near your property during a power outage, for vegetation management or for routine maintenance, please allow them ample room to work. These small accommodations help protect our crews – and you.
- If you're traveling and see one of our crews on the side of the road, we kindly ask you to move over if possible and give them a little extra space to work. We deeply care about the safety of all, and this extra precaution ensures just that.
- If you approach a crew while traveling on a two-lane road, moving over to the next lane might not be an option. In this case, we simply ask you to slow down when approaching roadside crews. If you approach a crew while traveling on a four-lane road, and safety and traffic conditions allow, we ask you to move over into the far lane.



"Summer is busy for us," says Tyler Schummer, journeyman lineworker. "We are working on construction projects across our service territory and that may be near the roadway at times. I urge everyone to please be mindful and move over when they see a crew working roadside. This ensure safety for all."

As a member of KEM Electric, you can feel confident knowing we're standing by, ready to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. ⚡

## EMPOWERING KEM ELECTRIC'S SERVICE AREA:

# Operation Round Up deadline approaching

Operation Round Up stands as a beacon of goodwill in the KEM Electric Cooperative service area. As part of this voluntary program, members can make a significant impact by simply rounding up their utility bills. Through this program, the KEM Electric Operation Round Up board receives vital support to enhance and uplift our local communities.

The board members, who are also KEM Electric members, meet and disburse funds in the form of grants to nonprofit corporations, organizations or agencies. All the money raised by members stays in our local area.

The next Operation Round Up deadline is June 30.

To complete an application or for more information, visit our website, <https://kemelectric.com/operation-round>. ⚡



## STUDENT OF THE MONTH:

# Joseph Keller, Zeeland Public School

Joseph Keller, son of KEM Electric Cooperative members Kenny and Tiffany Keller, was named the April Touchstone Energy® Student of the Month from Zeeland Public School. A sophomore, Joseph was recognized for working well with others, from teachers to peers and his teammates.

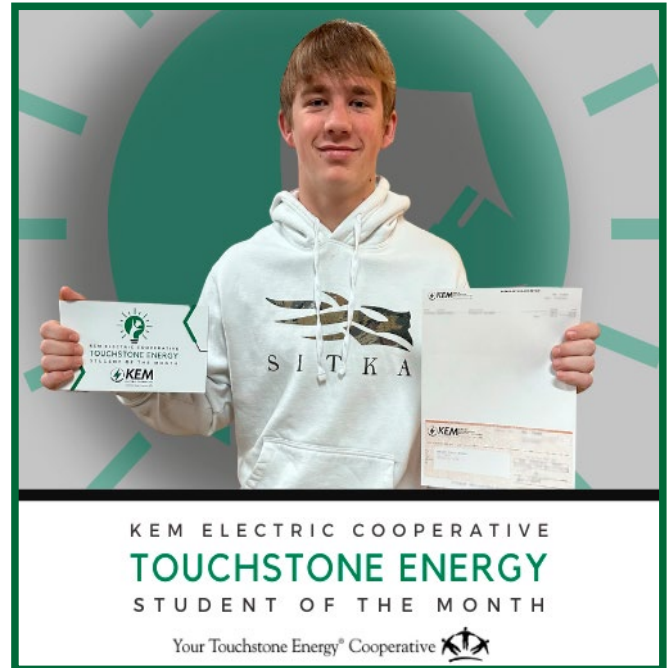
“He is respectful to his teachers and peers and also very friendly and fun to be around,” says Joseph’s nominator.

Joseph plans to utilize the funds toward an end-of-the-year celebration for the Zeeland students.

We would also like to recognize the other outstanding student who was nominated:

- **Dominic Meier** – Nominated for being active in a variety of activities, such as basketball, band and Future Business Leaders of America, and being respected by his teachers and peers.

Throughout the school year, KEM Electric Cooperative has been choosing one student at random nominated from the schools in KEM Electric’s service area to receive a \$100 sponsorship in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperative. The donation can be utilized to the student’s choosing for school activities. ⚡



Thank you to all who nominated outstanding students in the KEM Electric service area and congratulations to all the students who were nominated. There is a bright future for our communities. Follow us on social media to stay up to date on the Touchstone Energy Student of the Month program.



## EXPLORE IT, ADORE IT AND SAVE: Medora discounts

**KEM Electric Cooperative is excited to offer Medora discounts for some unforgettable family summer fun! KEM Electric is able to offer its members a discount by being a Touchstone Energy® member.**

**Simply call 1-800-MEDORA-1 and give the discount code “TOUCH2024” for a 15% discount on all of the following during any night of the season.**

### Discounts offered for a Medora vacation include:

- Medora Musical
- Pitchfork steak fondue
- Bully Pulpit Golf Course
- Gospel Brunch tickets
- Old Town Hall Theater shows

### Lodging at any of the following:

- Elkhorn Quarters
- Badlands Motel
- Rough Riders Hotel



# KEM Electric board meeting highlights

## March 26

The meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on March 26 at BEK Communications in Steele. The meeting was called to order at 9:40 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, Member Relations Manager Marcy Sanders and Executive Assistant Connie Hill.

**Consent agenda:** A few proposed amendments were made to the agenda. The consent agenda was approved as amended.

**Strategic/action:** Bentz and Kupper provided the co-general managers' report, which included updates on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's PowerXchange Conference, the District 9 meeting and North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives grant programs. A Director Gold Certificate was also awarded. Updates on Basin Electric Power Cooperative, West Dakota Utility Services and 3C Construction were

also provided.

**Action items:** Bentz reported on the grant program commitment in the managers' report. A motion was made, seconded and carried.

**Department reports:** Craigmile provided the financial report. Nagel included a department report on outage information, safety statistics and the March safety meeting minutes. Sanders included a department report, an annual meeting update and the April local pages. Bair provided a report on policy review.

**Discussion/general information:** The co-general managers led a discussion of the progress being made on the strategic planning session action items.

**Executive session:** The board entered an executive session.

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


**Next meeting date:** The next meeting is at 9:30 a.m. July 30 in Wishek. ⚡

# Congratulations, Linton,

## on 125 years!

Join the celebration July 3-7 in Linton.

For more information, visit [www.lintonnd125.com](http://www.lintonnd125.com).



### 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  
 Director- At-Large.....Vacant

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)

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