



MARCH 2022
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Erbele earns trip to Washington, D.C.

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Local government has always been an interest for Teagan Erbele, a sophomore at Napoleon High School.

“My grandpa is a senator, and I have gotten to travel to Bismarck with him and spend days at the Capitol, and I always enjoy it,” Teagan said.

Her knowledge, research and time spent writing an essay won her 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.

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

“I know that going to D.C for the Youth Tour is going to be a memorable experience, and I am very excited to get to travel and take part in this opportunity,” she said.

Meet Teagan

Teagan, her parents, Gabriel and Shanon Erbele, and her five siblings live on a cattle ranch near Lehr, which is served by KEM Electric Cooperative.

“The farm gets busy, but having six kids also means having built-in help! Our family spends a lot of time together on the farm and we all enjoy it,” Teagan said.

Teagan stays involved in her community and in many extracurricular activities, including: Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Future Business Leaders of America, FFA, Student Council, 4-H, basketball, volleyball and the trapshooting team.

“Outside of school, I enjoy playing the piano, playing basketball and being outside. Between sports and farm responsibilities, I stay busy with all of the activities,” Teagan noted. “In my spare time, I like to spend time leading worship at church, spending time with my family, playing basketball and being outside. I also enjoy hunting, fishing, being with my friends and babysitting.”

Winning essay

Teagan wrote the winning essay, centered around the question: If you were asked to help promote your cooperative’s annual meeting, what ideas do you have for increasing attendance among member-owners and students?

See what Teagan wrote:

“The meeting room will come to order.” I’ve heard those words echo through my agriculture education classroom countless numbers of times, as I sat and attended the monthly FFA meetings. Almost late to the meeting, I would quickly walk through those doors, trying not to disturb the other members, as I grabbed a chair and set down my basketball shoes. I watched as a few of my teammates did the same.

With our sweaty faces, we attentively sat and participated in the FFA meeting. It didn’t matter how busy we were, we always made time to come to the monthly meetings. Why? Because we knew there was something in it for us. We knew that we would walk out of that classroom with new information in our minds, a permission slip for a future event, a door prize in our hands or a new project to start. So, how can we make sure our local KEM Electric Cooperative meetings have the same results?

Social media is making its point in this world, especially when it comes to the younger generations. According to Pew Research Center, 72% of the population uses social media. This leads me to believe that if KEM started advertising its meetings, more people would know about them and there would be a higher chance that more people would attend.

The first thing I would do to get more people to come to the meetings would be to post an advertisement on social media that notifies when and where the meetings will be. Social media is a great way to spread the word about events and convince more people to come. It is important to make sure that a large amount of people know about the meetings, and social media is a wonderful way to spread the word.

I personally am not overly educated on the electric world, so if I were to sit in a conference and listen to a speaker talk about those topics, it would be hard for me to follow along. This leads me to my second point: bring in diversity. When meetings are being advertised, mention that there will be a variety of activities to participate in. I would encourage KEM to make its meetings friendly and welcoming to a wide-range audience.

There are speakers who can engage younger members and students and allow them to be interested in their subject. If there are speakers who entice their audience into the discussion, they will stay engaged and might become hooked on the meetings solely for the information they are able to obtain. There could also be more activities for younger members or students that involve handouts or follow-alongs that would help keep them engaged and

active with the environment of the meeting. If members can get engaged in the meeting, whether that is through a small competition or an activity, they are more likely to return.

The first step in getting people to start regularly coming to meetings is to get them there in the first place, followed by giving them a better reason to come back. I believe that a simple way to do this is to have an appealing incentive that entices the audience to keep coming back.

One thing that our FFA chapter does at our meetings is draw names afterward and give away door prizes, and I believe this would be a wonderful way for KEM Electric Cooperative to rack up members at its meetings. It can be something as simple as a \$10 gift card, or a small gift that

is given to an attendee. This will not only be a kind “thank you” to the member for showing up, but it will also give them, and fellow members, a reason to return.

Almost every person has meetings of some sort that they have to attend. While attending KEM Electric Cooperative meetings isn't a required action, members should be striving to participate amongst their busy schedules. The key to achieving this is to make it appealing and enjoyable enough so the members look forward to it and want to attend.

Members can't attend unless they know about the meeting in the first place, and small alterations like advertisements, incentives for all ages, engaging activities and friendly contests are a great way to start. ■



Dillon Steinolfson receives a certificate as a journeyman lineworker.



Tyler Schummer receives a certificate as a journeyman lineworker.

Lineworkers attend AT&S Conference

The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) hosted its 58th annual REC Apprenticeship Training and Safety (AT&S) Conference Jan. 12-14 in Bismarck. The conference is sponsored by the NDAREC AT&S program, with cooperation from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship.

The conference drew representatives of NDAREC member-cooperatives, Bismarck State College lineworker students and electric industry personnel for classroom sessions, equipment evaluations and award ceremonies. Training topics included N.D. Department of Transportation updates, protective grounding, lineworker

safety and tool training, transformers connections, conducting a thorough accident investigation and more.

“Participants increase their knowledge and skills of the trade by attending the AT&S Conference and, in turn, improve the safety, resilience and reliability of the electrical system, which directly impacts the quality of life for our members,” said Christina Roemmich, director of safety services for NDAREC.

During the awards banquet, two KEM Electric Cooperative employees, Dillon Steinolfson and Tyler Schummer, received their journeyman lineworker certificates. ■

Napoleon Wildlife Club receives RDFC grant

For over 45 years, the Napoleon Wildlife Club has promoted wildlife conservation and safe hunting and fishing practices in the local community.

The organization makes improvements within the community to help accomplish its mission.

“A few years ago, the club created a trapshoot ground and rifle range – something that is highly used in our community,” said Bob Humann, a volunteer for the Napoleon Wildlife Club.

Most recently, the Napoleon Wildlife Club received a \$700 Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC) grant to help with its newest improvement project – the replacement of the boat ramp at West Lake.

“Currently, the boat ramp is not very user-friendly, and the improvement project will allow for a turnaround area and a better slope to get into the water, as well as a parking area,” Humann said. The boat dock is used by fishermen, hunters and water recreationalists.

The boat ramp is scheduled to be completed in early spring, allowing for its use this summer.

KEM Electric Cooperative is a member of RDFC. As



Bob Humann, left, a volunteer for the Napoleon Wildlife Club, receives the RDFC grant from **Chuck Wald**, chairman of KEM Electric Cooperative's board of directors.

a result, communities in our service area were eligible to apply for a grant of up to \$2,000 for community-based projects. RDFC is making these funds available so more people become aware of its larger loan program that funds community-based projects and nonprofit entities with low-interest loans. ■

Safety Starts with ME

Electricity is a powerful resource and is the backbone of our daily lives. Although it powers our lives, it has become so commonplace that people sometimes forget the importance of using it safely. But no one makes electrical safety more of a priority than your local Touchstone Energy® cooperative, KEM Electric Cooperative.

“Safety is embraced as a core value at KEM Electric,” said Dale Nagel, chief of staff and line superintendent. KEM Electric Cooperative's actions and decisions reflect a commitment to safety at all levels of the cooperative and our employees help our members create a safe work environment and system.

KEM Electric Cooperative's employees are the experts who practice safety and rely on it every day.

“It is important to tap into their knowledge with these tools and tips to reduce preventable accidents and help keep every co-op member safe in and around their homes,” Nagel said.

That is why KEM Electric Cooperative is launching a new safety campaign – Safety Starts with ME – which will highlight what each of our employees does to help keep our members safe.

And how can you help? If you see something that you

think is unsafe, say something and let us know.

Keep informed on safety measures by reading about them in *North Dakota Living*, on Facebook, Instagram or our website. ■



MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

Are you ready to serve?



Travis Kupper

In a notable inaugural speech, John F. Kennedy spoke his famous words, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” His words urged Americans to take actions that benefited the greater good. In essence, Kennedy was saying our country thrives when we all contribute our talents to the common good.

On a smaller scale, I think the same can be said about our co-op, specifically with regard to our board members. KEM Electric Cooperative’s board members are community-minded individuals with a variety of skillsets. Our board is made up of farmers, ranchers, business owners and much more. We rely on their many talents to help us make informed decisions on long-term priorities and investments. Our directors live right here in the co-op’s service area, and we consider them the eyes and ears of the community, because they provide their perspective on important community issues.

What does it mean to serve on the board?

Serving on KEM Electric Cooperative’s board means you’re making a difference locally, using your individual talents and perspective to guide big decisions about the co-op that, in turn, benefit the larger community. While day-to-day decisions are made by co-op staff, major decisions are made by the board, whose mission is to look out for the vitality of the co-op and the community it serves. KEM Electric Cooperative board members typically provide input and guidance on:

- Budgets
- Co-op goals and direction
- Co-op’s community/charitable contributions
- Capital investments and upgrades in equipment and technology
- Renewable investments and energy mix
- Co-op’s role and involvement in economic development

Opportunity to serve

KEM Electric Cooperative’s board elections will be held in June. If you are interested in running for a director position, you can learn more below.

While you don’t need to be an expert in electricity or business to be a director, you do need to have a passion for the community and a willingness to actively serve and learn. We continue to look for individuals who can represent the full gamut of the members we serve. Our board meets on a regular basis, and we offer specialized training opportunities to help board members make informed decisions. Board members gain a deeper understanding of the electric utility industry, the cooperative business model and local economic development efforts.

Ultimately, our board is the community pulse for the co-op and helps keep us on the right track. We love our community and want to help it thrive. If you share the same commitment and want to contribute to the greater good in a tangible way, I hope you learning more about our board and how you can contribute.

To learn more about KEM Electric Cooperative’s director election process and 2022 details, please visit www.KEMelectric.com.

Interested in becoming a director?

KEM Electric Cooperative’s 2022 annual meeting will be held Thursday, June 16. This year, the director seats up for election are those of Dean Hummel, director at-large, and Neil Meidinger, District 3.

KEM Electric Cooperative is governed by a seven-member board of directors that is elected by you, the members and directors of the electric cooperative. The current board of directors includes District 1, John Beck;

District 2, Carter Vander Wal; District 3, Neil Meidinger; District 4, Victor (Chuck) Wald; District 5, Dean Dewald; at-large directors, Carmen Essig and Dean Hummel.

If you would like to place your name on the ballot, pick up a petition at the KEM Electric Cooperative office. Petitions must be returned to the cooperative office no later than May 2. For more information, call the KEM Electric Cooperative office. ■

Members receive NDSU Harvest Bowl Award

BY ANNE HANSEN

March is National Agriculture Month, and during the month, KEM Electric Cooperative salutes our farmers and ranchers who make agriculture one of North Dakota's top industries.

North Dakota State University (NDSU) also acknowledges the agricultural impact on the state and recognizes leading agriculturalists through the NDSU Harvest Bowl.

"The Harvest Bowl is a weekend event, where we are able to recognize agriculture and athletics, and the connection between," said Duane Hauck, NDSU Harvest Bowl chair. The Harvest Bowl recognizes dedicated

agriculturalists in all of North Dakota's 53 counties and 10 counties in western Minnesota annually with the naming of County Agriculturalist Honorees.

The County Agriculturalist Honorees are selected through the local NDSU Extension offices.

"Each county agent nominates an individual or couple based on active community leaders, people who are innovative and active in promoting the ag industry, and are highly respected individuals," Hauck said.

During this event, three KEM Electric Cooperative members were recognized.

Spotlight: James and Janel Silvernagel

James and Janel Silvernagel farm and ranch near Braddock on a third-generation farm, raising spring wheat, corn, sunflowers, soybeans, rye, sorghum and alfalfa, in addition to managing a 180-head cow-calf operation.

"To receive this award was a big honor. When we began farming, our backs were against a wall, and today, we are continually making changes to improve our farm operation," said James, the Emmons County award winner.

James returned to the farm in 2005 after the tragic loss of his parents.

Today, the Silvernagels are implementing new practices, such as using rotational grazing practices with cross-fenced pastures. They have also been recognized for their impact in their communities, with James serving as a member of the soil conservation board and president of the CHS board for the local elevators in Sterling, Napoleon and Hazelton.

Janel, a pharmacist at Mayo Pharmacy in Bismarck, was



Janel and James Silvernagel attend the Harvest Bowl with their two children and employee, James Laird (far right), who has been with the couple since 2015.

proud of the award

"A lot of times, farmers work extremely hard and don't get the recognition," she said.

Spotlight: Gary and Cindy Jenner

Gary and Cindy Jenner raise livestock near Ashley, using a rotational grazing system. They also raise grain for earlage and cover crops, using no-till farming practices. They have been farming for 48 years and have received a Soil Conservation District Achievement Award.

Gary also has been a member of the McIntosh County Agricultural Improvement board. Cindy is the office manager at the Ashley Veterinary Clinic. She also has been a member of the Ashley school board, Women of Today and the Ashley hospital board.

Spotlight: Susan Eberl

The Kidder County honoree was Susan Eberl and her late husband, Gary. Together, the couple ran a farming operation for 47 years near Dawson.

Their life began on the farm after Susan and Gary were out of the service, and searching for a place to live.

“We found a place that would allow us to purchase 11 acres through contract-for-deed,” Susan said. “We didn’t have an easy start, as it was hard to purchase land. Although we didn’t have fancy machinery, or even took a break from working, we were able to purchase our family land.”

During their years farming and ranching, they raised hogs, sheep and small grains.

Susan is still actively farming with her two sons and their families and a managing partner in the family’s partnership. Currently, the farm is 100% organic small grains with a Sim-Angus cow herd.

Gary died in 2020. He was a veteran, a member of the Central Dakota Irrigation District, Tappen Oil Company and a Sibley Township supervisor.

“When we were notified of the award, Gary was so proud,” Susan remarked. “The best part of receiving the award was knowing how pleased Gary was.” ■



Susan Eberl attends the NDSU Harvest bowl with her son.

Ketterling joins KEM Electric

In January, Denise Ketterling joined KEM Electric Cooperative as a member services representative.

Ketterling had previously worked in agricultural sales and service as an administrator for 23 years. Her experience will assist the cooperative in maintaining a high level of member satisfaction, the development of member programs and policies that provide benefits to cooperative membership, and help provide member education and satisfactory member issue resolution, enhancing the member relationship with the cooperative.

“I’m most excited to make a positive contribution to my co-workers, KEM members and the communities in which we serve,” Ketterling said. ■



BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Jan. 25

- Approved Dec. 14, 2021, board meeting minutes
- Approved engagement letter from Brady Martz for audit
- Heard co-general manager/CEO reports
- Heard Basin Electric Power Cooperative update
- North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives Foundation is seeking nominations for a board vacancy
- Discussed Energy Transfer Partners update
- Heard revenue financial report
- Heard board meeting reports
- Member satisfaction surveys have been scheduled
- Discussed options for annual meeting voting and approved mail-in ballots
- Discussed the process of allowing electronic voting
- Held executive session

CO-OP 101:

What is a cooperative?

North Dakota's electric cooperatives are continually involved in the communities they serve, from delivering power to offering scholarships for college-bound students. But what is a cooperative?

Electric cooperatives are owned and democratically controlled by their members – the people who use the electricity.

They operate on the principle of “one member, one vote.” So, each member of a cooperative has the same voting power. As a member, you have a voice in how your co-op operates, by electing directors to represent you.

And, cooperatives are nonprofit entities, returning profits to members proportionate to their use of the cooperative's service.

Cooperatives are shaped by the specific needs of the

communities they serve. This local, member-driven structure is one reason why cooperatives enjoy the highest consumer-satisfaction scores within the electric industry. Electric cooperatives, on average, score higher than all other electric companies, according to the 2021 American Customer Satisfaction Index.

Electric cooperatives are built by and belong to the people they serve. They are led by members from the community and are uniquely suited to meet local needs.

Cooperatives have strong ties to North Dakota's history – and the state's future. Rural electrification was born 85 years ago in the spirit of cooperation, and electric cooperatives play a vital role in developing the state today. ■

7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES:

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic member control
- Members' economic participation
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training and information
- Cooperation among cooperatives
- Concern for community

KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

DIRECTORS:

Victor Wald, ChairmanNapoleon
 John Beck, Vice ChairmanLinton
 Carter Vander Wal, Sec.-Treas. Pollock
 Dean Dewald, Director..... Dawson
 Carmen Essig, Director..... Lehr
 Dean Hummel, Director..... Hague
 Neil Meidinger, Director..... Zeeland

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

MANAGEMENT:

Don Franklund Co-GM/CEO
 Travis Kupper Co-GM/CEO

**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.

Website: kemelectric.com / Email address: info@kemelectric.com

