

- Co-op awards scholarships
- Make your voice heard
- Tree trimming is vital
- Student of the Month



*Bridger Rivinius*

## EMPOWERING RURAL YOUTH: **Rivinius selected for Youth Tour**

BY ISABELLA FILIPI

Each year, KEM Electric Cooperative looks forward to announcing the high school sophomore or junior who has been selected to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. This opportunity provides these blossoming students with the chance to explore our nation's capital and build relationships with fellow students from across the United States.

Sen. Lyndon Johnson inspired the Youth Tour when he addressed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting in 1957. He envisioned the trip as a chance to broaden the horizons of high school students living in rural areas and further educate them about America's system of government.

Now, this weeklong trip awards students with firsthand exposure to some of the best historical monuments in Washington, D.C., and a better understanding of the structure and importance of electric cooperatives, all while establishing new and

lasting friendships.

KEM Electric is proud to sponsor one of the 1,800 participating students from across rural America on this all-expense-paid trip annually. Congratulations to Bridger Rivinius for being named the Youth Tour winner this year. Read his winning essay here and on KEM Electric's website, plus a feature story in the August issue of *North Dakota Living* will delve into his unforgettable journey.

### **Meet Bridger**

A sophomore from Gackle-Streeter Public School, Bridger is the son of KEM Electric members Daniel and Connie Rivinius, who live on the family farm near Streeter.

Bridger enjoys golfing, FFA, spending time with

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family and friends and helping on his family's farm.

He was first encouraged to apply for the Youth Tour by his parents, when his mom found the announcement on Facebook. He was further inspired by a previous Youth Tour winner who spoke highly of the experience. This will be Bridger's second trip to Washington, D.C., and he is most excited to explore the Lincoln Memorial, sites around the National Mall and congressional buildings, as he has a deep interest in politics. In his essay, Bridger wrote about the impact of the Vietnam War on Americans and how he would have contributed by promoting awareness in North Dakota and assisting veterans.

"My main motivator for the essay was my grandpa. He was a combat medic in Vietnam and is very open about his experiences in Vietnam. I love chatting with him and hearing all his stories from his time overseas," Bridger says.

### **Bridger's winning essay**

*The Vietnam War era, spanning from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, was full of conflict, and created deep divisions in American society. Imagining oneself in such a time would raise the question, "What would I have done?" In this essay, I will explore what I would have contributed if I were alive during the Vietnam War, considering the anti-war protests were going on, cultural shifts were happening and political unrest was dividing the country.*

*Firstly, the anti-war movement was not a huge movement in North Dakota at the time. As my grandpa, Henry Hackman, who served in Vietnam as a combat medic, said, "It wasn't really talked about. It was just kind of treated like it never happened. We weren't really celebrated nor criticized after coming home."*

*Unfortunately, this indifference allowed public opinion in other parts of the country to sway negatively toward people who were involved in the war. And as public opinion made the war a negative thing, it delayed government-funded help for veterans across the nation by discouraging leaders in Congress, North Dakota and local governments to act. Although some of these protests were based on promoting peace, it had a negative effect on our Vietnam veterans. I would want to change that, and here are some of the strategies how I would create change.*

*Engaging in grassroots organizing and veteran outreach would have been one of my major contributions. As the anti-war activists worked tirelessly to build networks to mobilize communities against the war, I would have worked against them to help returning veterans to start new lives as citizens. From simply saying thank you to veterans in public, to reaching out to the homeless ones, I would want to try my very best to make them feel at home again. In a perfect world, I would want to start a*



*program to assist veterans in finding jobs or housing after coming home. I could do this by lobbying on the state and local levels of government. Working with legislators and local leaders would also bring the narrative into a more positive light, with real policy change that helps the people who deserve it most.*

*I would want to change the indifference in North Dakota by promoting honoring our veterans. In addition to direct activism, I would leverage the power of media and communication. Positive communication channels would have been crucial. The Vietnam War was one of the first conflicts extensively covered by the media, bringing the harsh realities of war into the living rooms across America. I would want to use this same tool to showcase the success stories of Vietnam veterans across America and showcase our veterans in need. Talking with veterans and listening to their experiences would be very important to me, because the power of information and storytelling in educating the public would have been crucial.*

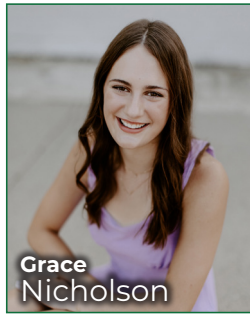
*In conclusion, my hypothetical contributions during the Vietnam War era would revolve around bridging gaps, fostering community support for veterans and actively participating in efforts to reshape the narrative surrounding the conflict. By engaging in grassroots organizing, promoting understanding and advocating for what they deserve, I envision making an impact on the lives of those who served during this challenging period in American history. ⚡*



**Teagan Erbele**



**Daniel Schumacher**



**Grace Nicholson**



**Emma May Weiser**



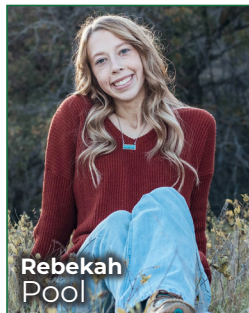
**Jazlyn Weigel**



**Riley Richter**



**Dominic Meier**



**Rebekah Pool**



**Abby Rivinius**

## EMPOWERING MINDS: KEM Electric awards high school scholarships

Each year, KEM Electric Cooperative awards outstanding high school seniors with scholarships toward their post-secondary education. This is just one of the many ways KEM Electric embodies the commitment to giving back to our cooperative family and service area.

This year, KEM Electric honored one student with a \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship. Additionally, one outstanding 2024 graduate from each high school in our service area and one outside our service area were selected to be recipients of \$500 scholarships.

KEM Electric recognizes the personal and academic achievements of these students are made possible by their hard work, sacrifices and dedication to their goals. We believe these accomplishments deserve to be recognized and celebrated.

### Basin Electric/KEM Electric scholarship recipient

This year's winner of the \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative/KEM Electric scholarship is **Teagan Erbele** from Napoleon High School. Teagan, the daughter of Shanon and Gabriel Erbele, plans to attend North Dakota State University (NDSU) for agriculture education.

### KEM Electric \$500 scholarship recipients

**Ashley Public School:** Daniel Schumacher, son

of Quentin and Gwyn Schumacher, plans to attend NDSU for civil engineering after his upcoming year of service in the Air National Guard.

**Kidder County School:** Grace Nicholson, daughter of Carmen and Neil Nicholson, plans to attend Bismarck State College (BSC) for accounting.

**Hazelton Public School:** Emma May Weiser, daughter of Kurt and Lisa Weiser, plans to attend BSC for nursing.

**Napoleon High School:** Jazlyn Weigel, daughter of Nikki and Chris Weigel, plans to attend the University of Mary for biomechanics.

**Strasburg High School:** Rebekah Pool, daughter of Melanie and Derry Pool, plans to attend South Dakota State University for animal science.

**Linton High School:** Riley Richter, son of Jaime and Jon Richter, plans to attend the University of Mary for computer science.

**Zeeland High School:** Dominic Meier, son of Jennifer and Michael Meier, plans to attend BSC for agribusiness.

**Wishek High School:** No applicants were received.

**Student outside of KEM Electric service territory:** Abby Rivinius, daughter of Becky and Ryan Rivinius, plans to attend BSC for nursing.

In addition, KEM Electric will award two \$500 luck-of-the-draw scholarships during KEM Electric's annual meeting June 11 in Linton. ⚡

## MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

# Make your voice heard at the 2024 annual meeting



Travis Kupper

KEM Electric Cooperative is excited to extend an invitation to our upcoming Annual Meeting, a cornerstone event that highlights the essence of our cooperative model and the impact of member engagement on our community. Each year, we look forward to KEM Electric's Annual Meeting. You, the members we serve,

always bring value to the discussion, and I know our cooperative team is energized by these interactions.

We are not just an ordinary utility company. We are a cooperative deeply rooted in serving our members and the communities we call home. Our core purpose is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electric service, but our mission goes beyond electricity.

We are driven by a commitment to our members. If you've never attended the Annual Meeting, I'd encourage you to participate. Why? Because input from members like you matters and helps drive the direction of the cooperative. At the Annual Meeting, we report on current initiatives and discuss the financial health and priorities for the coming years. And, equally important, this is an opportunity for KEM Electric to hear from you.

### You have the power

This is also a time to vote for new directors who will represent you and our community's interests on the cooperative's board. As a member of KEM Electric, you have the power to help shape our community's energy future.

Electric cooperatives are democratically controlled by the members we serve, which means you have a say in who governs our cooperative. By voting in the annual director election, you can select the leaders who will make important decisions about the future of the cooperative and our local energy needs.

KEM Electric's Board of Directors includes community-minded individuals with different skillsets. We rely on them to help us make more

informed decisions on long-term priorities and investments. KEM Electric has seven directors who live in the cooperative's service area. We consider them the eyes and ears of the community, because they provide their unique perspective on various local issues.

### 2024 Candidates

The following KEM Electric Cooperative members are candidates for the 2024 director election.

**District 1:** John R. Beck, Linton, ND

**District 2:** Carter Vander Wal, Pollock, SD

**District At-Large:** Michael (Mike) Knoll, Hague, ND, and Anton (Tony) Schaffner, Zeeland, ND

We want to make voting as convenient as possible for our members, so we offer a variety of ways for you to participate. We hope you'll join us at the Annual Meeting on June 11, where you can cast your vote in person. If you're unable to attend, you can vote online or by mail. An Annual Meeting packet will be delivered to your mailbox around the middle of May. Voting instructions will be included should you wish to vote online or by mail.

If you've never been to an Annual Meeting or it's been a while, we invite you to stop by. We'll have fun activities for all ages, so we hope to see you and your family there. Join us for food, fun, door prizes and more. Also, all members who attend the event will receive an appreciation gift. All members who participate in the Annual Meeting, whether you vote prior to the meeting or attend in person, will also have the opportunity to win a wide variety of door prizes, from Medora Musical tickets to bill credits.

Your KEM Electric team will be ready to answer any energy-related questions you may have, from electric vehicle options to ways to manage your home energy use. We look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting at 6 p.m. June 11 at Our Club (formally the Knights of Columbus Hall) in Linton. ⚡





Keep an eye on your mailbox  
for KEM Electric's Annual  
Report for more Annual  
Meeting information.



## HOW TO VOTE: KEM Electric's Annual Meeting

As KEM Electric Cooperative gears up for the 2024 Annual Meeting, we want to remind members of the many ways you can vote.

In addition to traditional methods, such as mail-in ballots and in-person voting at the Annual Meeting on June 11, KEM Electric is pleased to offer online voting as an alternative option for electing cooperative directors. If members submit their votes ahead of the meeting, either via mail or online, they won't receive a ballot at the annual meeting.

Members will receive an Annual Report and paper ballot in the mail around mid-May. Instructions will be included on the paper ballot should you wish to vote electronically through a secure website. Please watch for the Annual Report and vote by mail or electronically, unless you know you will be attending the Annual Meeting. ⚡

SPARK YOUR FUTURE:

## Luck-of-the-Draw Scholarships

High school seniors, you still have an opportunity to win a \$500 scholarship from KEM Electric Cooperative! At the 2024 Annual Meeting, KEM Electric will award two \$500 Luck-of-the-Draw Scholarships. If your parents or guardians 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 parents or guardians to claim your spot in the drawing!

Don't miss out on this opportunity to power your future. 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:

# Tree trimming

Overgrown trees and branches pose a significant risk to the reliability of our power supply and can often result in unplanned outages. KEM Electric Cooperative strives to balance maintaining natural beauty with ensuring a reliable power supply. Through clearing of power lines in rights of way, our proactive vegetation management serves to safeguard safety, reliability and affordability for our cooperative members.

### Safety

Overgrown vegetation and trees present a significant risk to power lines. If trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose grave danger to families. For instance, if children have access to these trees, they may inadvertently enter a danger zone by climbing them. This situation can be very dangerous, because electricity can arc or jump from a power line to nearby conductors like trees, heightening the risk of accidents and injuries.

### Reliability

Of course, one of the biggest benefits of a smart vegetation management program is reliability. Strategic tree trimming reduces the frequency of downed lines causing power outages. Generally, healthy trees don't fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems. Proactive trimming and pruning keep lines clear to promote reliability.

"At KEM Electric, we take a proactive approach to tree trimming, which also helps us diminish the chances of fallen branches or trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power," said Linton Area Foreman Kevin Horner.

### Affordability

KEM Electric is a not-for-profit cooperative, which means we strive to control our costs to keep our rates affordable. This extends to our approach to vegetation management. If trees grow too close to power lines, the potential for expensive repairs also increases. Effective tree trimming and other vegetation management efforts keep costs lower for everyone.

### Here is what YOU can do

There are ways you can help KEM Electric limit tree trimming.

By planting trees in the right place from the start based on their expected height, you can help reduce the need to trim trees near overhead power lines. If you're planting shrubs, bushes or other vegetation near transformers, remember to plant at least 4 feet away



from the transformer sides and at least 10 feet away from the transformer door.

Our community is a special place. We appreciate the beauty trees afford, but we also know our community depends on us to provide reliable energy. If you spot an overgrown tree or branch dangerously close to power lines, call us at 701-254-4666 or 800-472-2673. Through vegetation management, we are better able to keep the power lines clear, prepare for future weather events and help ensure reliability. ⚡



STUDENT OF THE MONTH:

# Carson Glaesman, Wishek Public School

Carson Glaesman, son of KEM Electric Cooperative members Travis and Shelly Glaesman, was named the March Touchstone Energy® Student of the Month from Wishek Public School. A senior, Glaesman was recognized for being respectful to his peers and others around the school and community.

"He is respectful to his peers and older adults. Carson is also dependable and always willing to lend a

hand," says Glaesman's nominator.

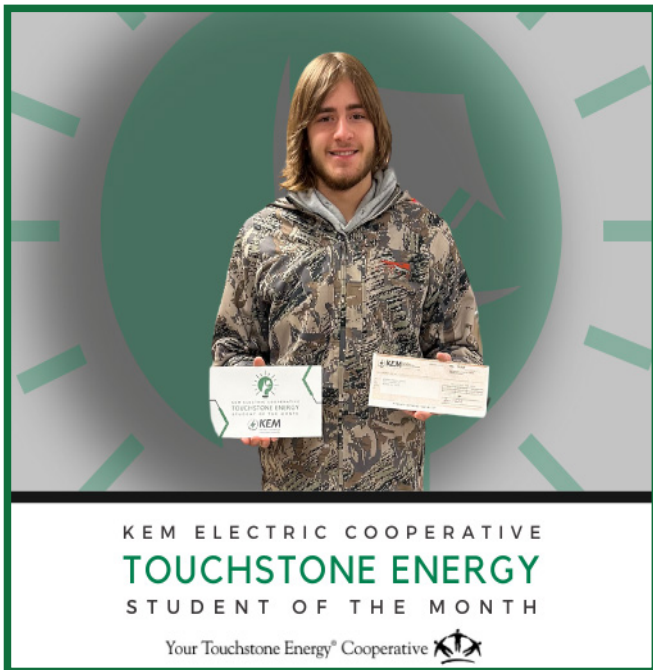
Glaesman plans to utilize the funds for the Wishek football and wrestling programs.

We would also like to recognize the other outstanding students who were nominated:

- Kelsey Vetter – Was nominated for being reliable and finding a way to take every opportunity to make situations fun.
- Nora Gader – Was nominated for having quiet leadership skills and being humble in her academic achievements as well as her artistic ability.
- Carter Kettlerling – Was nominated for being kind and supportive as well as a great leader.

Throughout the school year, KEM Electric 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.

In May, KEM Electric is accepting nominations of homeschool students and students outside of KEM Electric's service area. The deadline for nominations is May 10. This is open to any K-12 student. ⚡



Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera 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).



## Thank you, members!

Thank you, members, for participating in the Member Satisfaction Survey. We appreciate your time and feedback.



# KEM Electric board meeting highlights

## Feb. 27

The meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on Feb. 27 at KEM Electric's office in Linton. The meeting was called to order at 9:43 a.m. CT 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, Tom Bair with Bair Law, Line Superintendent/Chief of Staff Dale Nagel, Member Relations Manager Marcy Sanders and Administrative Assistant Samantha Fischer.

**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 a substation request, the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives annual meeting, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association International Program, the North Dakota managers winter meeting, Basin Electric Power Cooperative managers meeting and Southwest Power Pool. An update on the Basin Electric CEO report, West Dakota Utility Services and 3C Construction were also provided.

**Action items:** The board approved the easement

resolution and certificate of authority as presented.

**Department reports:** Craigmile provided the financial report. Nagel included a department report, noting outage information, safety statistics for January and the February safety meeting minutes. Sanders included a department report, which highlighted annual meeting updates, membership appreciation events, the member engagement survey and the March local pages. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided Microsoft Teams training for the board. Bair provided information on the policy review group within the Innovative Energy Alliance.

**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 dates and locations are as follows:

- March 26, 9:30 a.m. CT in Steele
- April 30, 9:30 a.m. CT in Linton
- May 28, 9:30 a.m. CT in Linton . ⚡



**KEM Electric Cooperative 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 of "TOUCH2024" for a 15% discount on all of the following during any night of the season.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medora Musical</li> <li>• Pitchfork steak fondue</li> <li>• Bully Pulpit Golf Course</li> <li>• Gospel Bruch tickets</li> <li>• Old Town Theater shows</li> </ul> | <p><b>LODGING AT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elkhorn Quarters</li> <li>• Badlands Motel</li> <li>• Rough Riders Hotel</li> </ul> |
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*The code is good for reservations over the phone, website or in person. A green fees discount will be applied at check-in for a tee time at the golf course.*

### 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**

Hazelton, 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:

