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The buzzy season in North Dakota

*Marisela Perez, her son, Diego, and daughter, Juliana,
sell honey at a festival.*

The buzzy season of North Dakota honey producers

BY ANNE HANSEN



The team behind a Touch of Honey, **Letica Weisbeck, Braden Llerenas, Kristy Llerenas, Larisa Harmon.**

In rural North Dakota, it is not difficult to spot the white beehive boxes placed along the rolling hills of the prairie. From a distance, there is no sign of action, but busy bees are working to gather nectar and make honey.

And just like the bees they raise, the honey producers in our local communities are busy each year ensuring their bees are well-kept, and the honey keeps flowing.

In 2020, over 38.6 million pounds of honey were produced in the state of North Dakota, making it the No. 1 honey-producing state in the nation.

To celebrate National Honey Month, we take a look at the KEM Electric Cooperative members who are a part of the industry.

Chavinda Honey

For Hernan Perez, beekeeping is the family business. "My father, Alfonso Perez, started beekeeping back in 1978 and would have my

brother, Alejandro, and myself assist him to provide for the family," Hernan said.

Although he initially decided not to pursue the career his father had, he eventually came around after migrating to the United States from Chavinda, Michoacán, Mexico.

It wasn't an easy path in the beginning, as disease affected many of the hives he originally purchased. However, Herman persevered and continued to learn and grow his business, little by little. And so became Chavinda HoneyBee Farms, named after the love and memories of where Hernan and his wife, Marisela Perez, are from.

Eventually, with a desire to expand the business, Hernan and Marisela looked to the open prairies of North Dakota, which is known for honey production.

"During the search, we came across the listing of a wonderful farm that had all the characteristics of the ideal place to set up shop for the operation in Hague. Since 2021, Chavinda HoneyBee Farms owns this beautiful and blessed farm that had previously served as a Carmelite Monastery and, before that, the home and dairy farm of John Hulm's family," Hernan noted. "Hague is now our second home. Here, we have started building our honey extraction facility and hope to continue meeting wonderful people that will allow us to set bees on their land."

For Hernan, the best part of being in the business is meeting people and working outdoors, "and working with such amazing little creatures that are a very important piece to the food chain."

Danzig Honey Company

A Wishek native, Bryan Dohn's passion for the honey business began as a young man who received a summer job for a company from Nebraska.

"When I grew up, I swore I was never coming back to North Dakota. But after seeing the rest of the world, I couldn't wait to get back home,"



Danzig Honey Company harvests honey from its Wishek headquarters.

Dohn said.

“We are so proud of this area,” Dohn said, noting his business wouldn’t be as successful as it is today without this family, co-workers and the cooperation among landowners, farmers and the honey industry.

“That is the reason why North Dakota is the No. 1 honey producer – because of the willingness to work together and have cooperation with one another,” he said.

Danzig Honey Company, owned and operated by the Dohn family, produces commercial honey out of 9,300 hives.

“The business comes with a lot of time in various locations to ensure the health of the hives,” Dohn noted. “Our bees spend a season in California pollinating the almond orchards, followed by time in Texas, where we ensure the health of our hives during the winter months, until it is time for them to come back to North Dakota,” Dohn said.

All of the miles on the road wouldn’t be feasible without the help of his son, Erik Dohn, his right-hand man, Dave, and the remaining 12 Danzig Honey employees.

“There is a lot of manual labor that comes with the honey industry,” Bryan said. Each day, the crews are moving hives, and extracting honey, which happens in-house in Wishek. From there, 55-gallon drums of honey are sent to a packer in Kansas, where it is processed further and sent to the larger market.

A Touch of Honey

Kristy Llerenas begins each day bright and

early at her A Touch of Honey storefront in Linton. Although her journey to get where she is hasn’t always been easy, it has been an adventure nevertheless.

Llerenas got into the honey and bee industry through her husband, who had taken a job in the business when he was 16 years old. It was after her marriage to Joaquin that Kristy discovered she was allergic to bees, but she continued helping with the extraction of the honey. With an abundance of the sweet stuff, she eventually began developing an array of products.

A Touch of Honey has wholesale products that she sells throughout the state.

“The best part of my job is having the freedom in owning our own business, but furthermore knowing that we are producing a good – and good-for-you – product,” Kristy said.

Her wholesale products really took off after her daughters convinced her to take part in the Capital A’Fair vendor show, in which she sold out of product in 2007. From there, she began to develop more products which grew in popularity.

Although Llerenas manages the business, her son, Braden, handles all the logistics and the bee management.

“After my husband passed away in 2014, my son, who had no intention of taking over the business, stepped up and assisted. We wouldn’t be able to do it without him,” she noted.

In addition to her son, her daughters also are credited with helping their mother’s business succeed. Her eldest daughter, Larisa, designs labels and the website, and Letty, the middle child, helped immensely with the store when it opened – she could finish up any project her mom started.

A Touch of Honey and Llerenas Apiaries truly are a family. ⚡



Danzig Honey Company employees work in the field.

MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

Be prepared before the storm



Travis Kupper

It's your worst-case scenario. A major storm was predicted, and the predictions were right. Many power lines are down, and your electricity may be out for several days. You are low on everything – food, pet supplies, toilet paper, batteries, diapers and your medication.

Imagine how you would feel in this situation. While you can't predict the weather yourself, you can plan ahead, so when a severe weather event strikes, you have the tools and resources to effectively weather the storm. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security offers several resources to help you prepare for major weather events and natural disasters. Visit www.ready.gov/make-a-plan.

Preparedness actions and items

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of nonperishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials, such as diapers and toiletries.
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies, including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and a portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies, so they are together in an easily accessible location.

With advance warning

If a severe storm is expected with high winds and sustained rain, you may need to take extra steps to safeguard your home. Fully charge all

cellphones, laptops and devices, so you have maximum power in the event of a power outage. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

During a prolonged outage

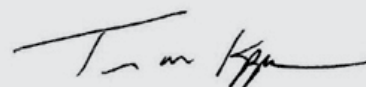
In the event of an outage, turn off appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from a power surge, and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If utilizing a small household generator, consider using LED holiday lights to illuminate a living area. A strand of 100 white lights draws little energy, yet produces considerable light. Solar lights also work, if they can receive some sunlight during the day for charging.

During thunderstorms, the American Red Cross recommends avoiding electrical equipment and land-based telephones. Use battery-powered TVs and radios instead. Keep away from windows. Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio for emergency updates, or check KEM Electric Cooperative's Facebook page for restoration updates.

After the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs, including on your property.

Power in planning

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Act today, because there is power in planning. ⚡



Safety Starts with ME: Lisa Rossow

For Lisa Rossow, KEM Electric Cooperative’s data and communication analyst, the shift from summer to school comes with the reminder to remove distractions while driving, as crosswalks get busier and an influx of new drivers take to the roads.

“At KEM Electric, we speak a lot about safe driving practices and remind members to be safe and recognize their surroundings, whether that be driving in a tractor around power lines or slowing down if lineworkers are working alongside a road,” Rossow said. “It is important to remove the distractions while driving.”

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts our attention, including texting, calling or adjusting the entertainment system, according to Anne Prince, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s member communications manager. Doing any of these activities while driving increases the potential for injuries and fatalities. In fact, distracted driving is one of the leading causes of motor vehicle accidents in the United States.

“At KEM Electric, we understand our jobs have the potential to be dangerous, but we are motivated to stay safe, not only for ourselves, but for our families and our children,” Rossow said. “We want the same for our membership and that is why we ask to remove the distractions – no matter if you’re in a field or a school zone. A text, call or entertainment is not worth the potential consequence.”

The National Safety Council recommends taking these valuable tips into consideration, as we get back into the swing of things this school year:

- **Obey school speed zones** – Pay attention upon entering a school zone. Know the speed limit, and learn the drop-off and pick-up procedure.
- **Never pass a bus loading or unloading children** – Ten feet around a bus is the most dangerous area for children. Please keep your distance to allow for children to safely enter and exit the bus.
- **Stay back from the curb** – Teach your children to stay at least three big steps back from a curb. This ensures a safe distance from your child and the street.



- **Practice with your new driver often** – Inexperience in teen drivers is often the leading cause of teen crashes. It is important to teach your student-driver possible situations that can occur when driving. “Although we should work to eliminate distracted driving no matter the season, it is especially important with the new school year approaching,” Rossow said. ⚡

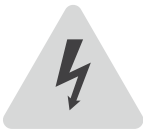
BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- Approved June 16, 2022 board minutes
- Reorganized board, where Victor Wald was elected as Chairman, John Beck as Vice-Chairman, and Carter Vander Wall as Secretary-Treasurer.
- Heard co-general manager/CEO report.
- Heard Basin Electric updates
- Provided a director gold program certificate to Dean Hummel
- Approved a contract between MSC and KEM.
- Approved WSPC Participation
- Discussed strategic planning
- Heard financial reports
- Heard board member reports
- Heard operations report

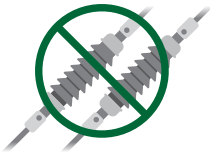


ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR HUNTERS

This hunting season, KEM Electric encourages all members to be aware of electrical equipment and take necessary precautions while hunting. Keep these safety tips in mind as you enjoy the great outdoors.



Take notice of posted warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.



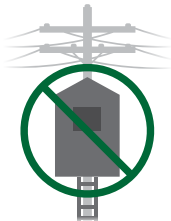
Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.



Know where power lines and equipment are located on the land where you hunt.



Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.



Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.



Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Any non-electrical equipment attached to a pole can pose an obstruction and serious hazards to our line crews.

Hummel receives Director Gold Credential



KEM Electric Cooperative Director **Dean Hummel**, right, is presented his Director Gold Credential certificate by **Don Franklund**, co-general manager/CEO.

Dean Hummel, a KEM Electric Cooperative director representing the at-large district, recently received the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Director Gold Credential.

The Director Gold Credential has been created to recognize directors committed to continuing their education and who desire a tangible credential that demonstrates their ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability.

NRECA's Director Certificate Programs are specifically designed to help electric cooperative

directors, at every stage of their service, understand their roles and responsibilities, stay up-to-date on the key issues and trends in the industry and prepare them to meet the challenges facing electric cooperatives now and in the future. NRECA offers director education courses throughout the year in conjunction with a variety of NRECA educational conferences and events across the country, in partnership with statewide associations and onsite at individual cooperatives. ⚡

KEM lineworkers attend hotline school

KEM Electric Cooperative joined lineworkers from across the state for the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) Hotline School.

The session was held at the Bismarck State College lineworker training facility in Mandan. The annual field training teaches lineworkers how to safely work on energized lines through hands-on instruction and demonstrations from experienced lineworkers.

"Hotline school allows employees to simulate live linework they potentially could work in a normal day," said Dale Nagel, line superintendent and chief of staff. "It is used as a training tool, so the new employees, who may not get to utilize hot work in their normal everyday work, get a chance to keep their skills up-to-date and help them learn safe ways to keep the power on while working on energized equipment."

This training prepares lineworkers for situations when de-energizing the lines is not possible and helps keep power flowing during storms or scheduled maintenance, when possible.



Dillon Steinolfson participates in a simulated live line exercise.

"It is important to train employees on new equipment and keep familiar with industry changes and provide a chance to work with others in the state to learn different ways to get the job done safely and efficiently," Nagel noted.

This year, KEM Electric sent two journeyman lineworkers, Tyler Schummer and Dillon Steinolfson. ⚡

GENERATOR SAFETY

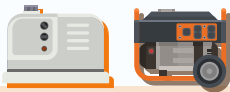
USE BACKUP POWER SAFELY

When used properly, portable and standby generators are a great option to provide backup power during brownouts or blackouts.

Learn how to use generators safely with the following tips:

GENERATORS

Location



Always keep generators at least **20 feet** away from your home



Never operate a generator in an **enclosed space**



Make sure the generator has **3-4 feet** of clear space above and on all sides for proper ventilation



Keep generators **away** from doors, windows and vents



Always **direct exhaust** away from your home

Use



Always use **grounded cords** and inspect cords for damage prior to use



Use the **proper cord** for the wattage being used



Always use **GFCI protection**



Make sure to start / stop generators when **no electrical loads** are connected



Keep generators dry, **do not operate when wet**, and refuel when cool

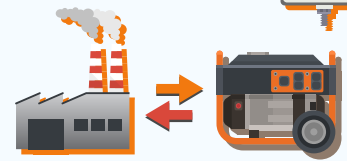


Do not overload generators



Do not plug a generator directly into your home, connect items being powered **directly to the generator**

TRANSFER SWITCHES



Transfer switches, whether manual or automatic, allow you to choose between **utility power** or **backup generator power**



Transfer switches are the only way to **safely power** your home's electrical system



Using a transfer switch **prevents backfeeding**. This occurs when your generator becomes a power source for the **surrounding area** and can damage your home, your neighbors' homes, and injure workers trying to restore power

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.

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