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Tyler Jacob, a journeyman lineworker assists members with supper during the annual meeting.



KEM Electric Cooperative members participate in annual meeting

KEM Electric Cooperative member-owners gathered in Napoleon for the cooperative's 2023 annual meeting on June 15. Prior to the meeting, members enjoyed a complimentary meal made by Karri Stroh and entertainment by Tiff, Kell & Mel. A bucket truck and an operations and safety booth were also present for members to engage with. While visiting the booths, members could register for prizes, learn about upcoming projects and safety protocols our lineworkers take every day.

KEM Electric Cooperative Chairman Victor J. Wald welcomed and thanked members for attending the annual meeting, which celebrated "Power for Generations." This year's theme reflected on previous generations who joined together to provide electric service to local areas where no other utility would serve, and how KEM

Electric has been preparing to serve generations to come.

The membership fulfilled the cooperative principle, democratic member control, by voting to fill the board positions in District 4, held by Victor J. Wald, Napoleon; District 5, held by Dean Dewald, Dawson; and District-at-Large, held by Carmen Essig, Lehr. All three incumbents were unanimously reelected to retain their seats on the board.

Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile presented the financial report to the membership. He noted Brady, Martz & Associates P.C. audited the 2022 financial statements of KEM Electric and gave the organization an unmodified opinion, the highest rating possible.

Members listened to cooperative updates from Co-General Managers/CEO's, Travis Kupper

and Jason Bentz, along with Chief of Staff Dale Nagel and Manager of Member Relations Marcy Sanders.

Susan Wald, secretary of the Operation Round Up board of directors, highlighted the charitable foundation's 2022 giving. Operation Round Up is a cooperative program in which KEM Electric members can voluntarily choose to round up their monthly utility bills to the next dollar and donate their pennies. The Operation Round Up board members, who are also KEM Electric members, meet and disburse funds in the form of grants. Grants are distributed to worthy nonprofit corporations, organizations and individuals in need in the KEM Electric service area.

Youth recognized and awarded

KEM Electric annually awards one \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior from each of the high schools within its service area. The following scholarship winners were chosen by faculty members from each respective school:

- Ashley High School – James Tyler Schumacher
- Kidder County School – Alexandra Dewitz
- Linton High School – Lacey Bosch
- Napoleon High School – Trenton Erbele
- Strasburg High School – Lilly Haak
- Wishek High School – Charles Herr
- Zeeland High School – Loren Wolf
- Hazelton-Moffit-Braddock (HMB) School – Madison Dahl
- The homeschool/GED/or school outside of KEM territory – Landon Wolf who attends Eureka High School

The recipient of the \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship, Landon Schumacher of Linton High School, was also recognized.

This year's Youth Tour recipient, Nicole Lawler of Linton, was also acknowledged. Lawler joined delegates from across the state and nation to learn from and about each other while participating in events that showcase our nation's rich history, U.S. government, the cooperative business model and rural electrification.

Each year, KEM Electric awards "Luck-of-the-Draw" student scholarships to students who registered for the meeting and attended with a parent or guardian. The goal of these scholarships is to encourage the younger generation to learn about the cooperative business model, and to show that their voices



Director **John Beck** passes out kuchen.

can be heard and how their votes count. Recipients included:

- Nicole Lawler – Linton High School, who will be attending Minot State University
- Emmalyn Napton – HMB School, who will be attending Bismarck State College (BSC)
- Rebecca Wikenheiser – Strasburg High School, who will be attending North Dakota State University
- Kaylee Weininger – Linton High School, who will be attending BSC

KEM Electric holds a contest for children preschool to sixth grade. The children are asked to create a safety poster reflecting this year's theme: Power for Generations. The winners of this year's contest are Megan Van Beek and Shanda Haak.

Members recognized for participating

Bentz wrapped up the evening by stating, "Without you, we would not exist. As we look to the future, we view our role as a catalyst for good. Working together, we can accomplish great things for our members now and be your family's power for generations."

The evening concluded with door prizes being drawn for the members. Prizes ranged from bill credits to Medora Musical tickets.

The board of directors, co-general managers/CEO's and staff at KEM Electric wish to thank our members for participating in the annual meeting of the membership and look forward to meeting your electrical needs in the future. ⚡

MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

Affordable electricity powers quality of life



Jason Bentz

Most of us use electricity, either directly or indirectly, almost all the time. Because electricity is so abundant and available with the simple flip of a switch, it's easy to take it for granted.

According to the Energy Information Administration, the typical U.S. household

now uses more air conditioning, appliances and consumer electronics than ever before. The average home also contains 10 or more internet-connected devices. Considering everything powered by electricity, it's no wonder we occasionally might wince at our monthly bill. But keep in mind, it's no longer just the "light bill."

But the cost of electricity only increased 4.6%. Considering all the ways we depend on electricity, it still remains a great value.

So, the next time you're enjoying your favorite podcast, TV series or movie, consider the value of electricity and how it enhances your quality of life.

We care about you, the members we serve, and understand electricity is more than a commodity. It's a necessity. That's why KEM Electric Cooperative will continue working hard to power your life, reliably and affordably. ⚡



Electricity powers quality of life

Electricity powers our quality of life. From the infrastructure of your home (appliances, water heater and HVAC system) to charging your smartphones and powering your computers, TV and Wi-Fi router, your energy bill covers so much more than lighting.

Today, there is more demand for electricity than ever before. At home, in schools and businesses, and in commercial sectors, such as transportation, the need for electricity is increasing.

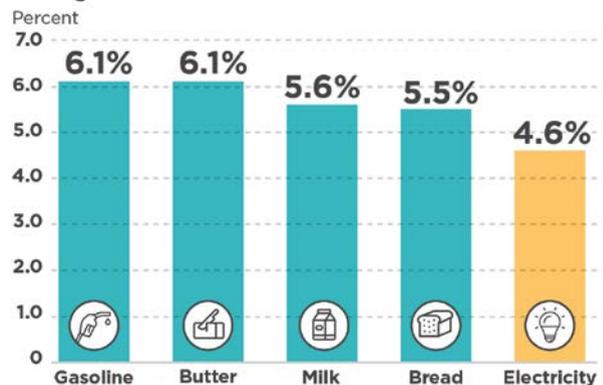
Typically, when demand goes up, so does the price, as is the case with most goods or services, like cable or even your favorite specialty coffee. However, that's not true with electricity. Let's take a look at how the value of electricity compares to other common expenses.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the five-year national average of the cost of gasoline increased 6.1%, butter increased 6.1% and bread increased 5.5%.

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

Although inflation has led to increasing costs in many areas of our lives, the cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common goods. Looking at price increases over the last five years, electricity remains a good value.

Average Annual Price Increase 2017-2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Consumer Price Index



Lawler and other Youth Tour delegates visit Washington, D.C.

Lawler makes memories on the 2023 Youth Tour

Each year in June, over 1,000 high school students travel to Washington, D.C., for an opportunity to learn more about electric cooperatives, meet state congressional delegates and make lifelong friends and memories. This year, KEM Electric Cooperative provided a sponsorship for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Nicole Lawler from Linton.

Getting to Washington, D.C.

KEM Electric holds a contest annually for high school sophomore and junior students to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. Students enter the contest by writing an essay in response to a question posed by the cooperative. This year's question had to do with American history.

Lawler was this year's winner and joined North Dakota youth sponsored by rural electric



Congressman **Kelly Armstrong** joins the North Dakota Youth Tour delegates for supper at *Founding Farmers*.

cooperatives and students from around the nation in Washington, D.C., for a week of learning and networking.

An experience like no other

Fifteen North Dakota youth gathered before the trip at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives headquarters in Mandan for some team building before leaving for Washington, D.C. The group reviewed the itinerary and gathered T-shirts for the week. The youth left from North Dakota Sunday and returned late Friday. Each day included a new learning experience and sights to see.

Once the plane landed, the group was off to their first stop, the Holocaust Museum. Later that day, the Youth Tour students learned about co-ops and youth advocacy. The following days were busy. The group toured museums, national monuments and visited Arlington National Cemetery. They also attended other activities, such as a riverboat cruise, “The Lion King” musical and a Nationals baseball game. The group even got on the big screen during the Nationals game!

While in Washington, D.C., the Youth Tour group met with North Dakota’s Senators John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer and toured the U.S. Capitol. Congressman Kelly Armstrong joined the group for dinner at *Founding Farmers* and visited with the North Dakota students about issues ranging from energy to agriculture.

While in Washington, D.C., students trade pins with each other. For Lawler, pin trading was one of the highlights. She said the pins helped start

conversations with other states’ delegates that may have not started otherwise. A skill Lawler learned from her conversations with various other students was how to be more personable when visiting.

This wasn’t Lawler’s first visit to Washington, D.C., but she noted this time was different. The Youth Tour group made it a completely different trip, getting to hear other students’ experiences, learn more about our nation’s history and life skills that will be carried with you for a lifetime.

Stay tuned for the 2024 Youth Tour application in an upcoming issue of *North Dakota Living*. ⚡



Nicole Lawler tours the Smithsonian Museum during the Youth Tour.

Safety Starts with ME: **Safe harvest**

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops provided by America's farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous – even deadly – when farming near electrical equipment.

“Every year, we see collisions where tractors and other farming equipment accidentally collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages,” said Tyler Jacob, a journeyman lineworker at KEM Electric Cooperative.

These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery. If you're preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- **Maintain safe distances.** Always be aware of the power poles and maintain a safe distance. Keep all machinery, including combines, tractors and other tall equipment, at least 10 feet away from power lines. Remember, some power lines may be lower than others, so it's crucial to remain vigilant and make sure you are aware of their height.
- **Know the location of power lines.** Familiarize yourself with the locations of power lines and poles in the fields where you are working. Take note of any changes or new installations since the last harvest season. Stay updated and ensure all workers are aware of the potential hazards posed by power lines.
- **Be extra cautious with tall equipment.** When operating tall machinery, such as grain augers or portable elevators, always be mindful of the height and the proximity to power lines. Ensure these tools are carefully maneuvered, and their movements are coordinated to avoid any contact with power lines.
- **Report damaged or downed lines.** If you encounter any damaged or downed power lines, never attempt to move them yourself.



Immediately report the situation to the utility company or local authorities and keep a safe distance until help arrives. If your equipment makes contact with an energized line, contact 911 immediately and remain inside the vehicle until the power line is deenergized.

Safety Starts with ME (and YOU)

Each one of us has a responsibility to prioritize safety during the harvest season.

“By following these safety tips and encouraging others to do the same, we can create a safer work environment for everyone involved,” Jacob said. “It's important to remain vigilant, keep an eye out for potential hazards, and report any unsafe conditions promptly.”

Remember, safety should never be compromised. The harvest season is a time to celebrate the fruits of our labor, but let's ensure that we celebrate it safely. By staying aware, informed and cautious around electricity and power poles, we can make this harvest season a successful and accident-free one. ⚡

Look up and around

The fall is a busy time for agricultural producers across the state, with harvest getting started. KEM Electric Cooperative wants to remind all those operating farm equipment to look up and around to familiarize yourself with the location of power lines. For your safety, make sure you have at least 10 feet of clearance between power lines and your combines, grain augers, pickers, balers and front-end loaders. Also, never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.

If you see a power line issue that may need KEM Electric Cooperative's attention, please call the office. Or send an email to info@kemelectric.com with location information and a photo, if possible. Working together helps ensure the safety of all. ⚡



Farm equipment is getting larger and the increased height can cause more contacts with powerlines.

Always look up before operating machinery or raising implements. And be extra cautious when moving tall equipment around the yard and exiting or entering fields from roadways.

Touchstone Energy Student of the Month



KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
 Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
 STUDENT OF THE MONTH



KEM Electric Cooperative is excited to announce our partnership with Touchstone Energy for the “Touchstone Energy Student of the Month” program! This program aims to recognize outstanding students in grades K-12 and provide a monetary \$100 donation to their school for a project or initiative chosen by the winning student.

At KEM Electric, we firmly believe in supporting education and fostering the development of young individuals in our community. The Touchstone Student of the Month program presents an excellent opportunity for us to celebrate and recognize students who excel in anything ranging from academics to leadership to community involvement or personal growth.

Keep an eye on our social media, newsletter and *North Dakota Living* for more information on the program and how you can nominate an outstanding student. ⚡

In observance of



LABOR DAY



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Our office will be closed on Sept. 4.

Line crews will be available to respond to emergencies and power outages by calling 800.472.2673.

KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

DIRECTORS:

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

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

FIND US ON:



OFFICE HOURS:

Monday through Friday,
 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 Website: kemelectric.com / Email address: info@kemelectric.com