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Becky Rivinius volunteers for the local ambulance service.

Leading by serving: Becky Rivinius

Leading by serving: Becky Rivinius

BY ANNE HANSEN

Robert Greenleaf coined the term, “servant-leader,” in an essay published in the 1970s, in which he noted, “The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”

This term has been used to describe mother, farmer, rancher and KEM Electric Cooperative member Becky Rivinius.

Her outlook to put others first often includes shying away from the spotlight. Although recently named the Jamestown Area Chamber of Commerce Ag Woman of the Year, her response to the award was one of humility.

“I am not so different than anyone else. I know that God put me on this earth, and I am just trying to figure out what it is he wants me to do,” she said.

Whether she wants the spotlight or not, Rivinius’s outlook on servitude naturally allows her to stand out in the communities she serves. Just ask Renae Schultz, who nominated Rivinius for the Ag Woman of the Year Award.

In her nomination letter, Schultz commented, “When you hear the name, Becky Rivinius, you think of a kindhearted, hardworking, amazing mom, wife, wonderful daughter, sister and friend.”

Not only did the nomination outline Rivinius’s passion and dedication to the farm-ranch life, but also her passion for serving the local communities.

This passion came from the example set for her. Growing up in Steele, Rivinius’s father, Joel Dewitz, showed his children what it meant to be a part of your community and help where needed.

“My dad was a part of the fire and rescue departments, and my grandfather was a fire chief,” Rivinius said. “As a freshman in high school, I can remember going on fire and rescue calls with my dad.”

Her ability to go with her dad opened her eyes to serving in the fire department.

“I’m not sure I would do it if I had to alone,” she said.

The rescue side of the fire department also influenced Rivinius to look into becoming a

first responder.

“In 1993, I took my first responder class. I believe I took that first class with my dad,” she said.

Her passion to serve others continued into her adult life, as she married and moved to the Gackle-Streeter area. Today, she serves on the Streeter Fire Department, the Gackle Fire Department and as a first responder for the Gackle volunteer ambulance crew. Her three children, Jayce, Abby and Karly, also volunteer within the community.

Schultz noted in her nomination form about the impact Rivinius has in the community: “Becky played a big part in applying for and receiving a grant from AgCountry for the Streeter Fire Department to obtain grain bin rescue equipment, as well as a Bayer Award, which was given to the Gackle Fire Department to purchase rescue equipment. She always finds the time to volunteer in the community, along with helping in various activities with the church.”

In her humble way, Rivinius says she stays involved to help others.

“I know that one person can’t do it themselves, but we all are able to make it better for someone else and help out,” she said.

And she urges other community members to do the same.

“Our communities are dying, because people are not willing to step up and help, but we all have to do our part,” she said. ⚡



Becky Rivinius, alongside her father and children, who all volunteer.

MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

May your holiday season be merry and bright



Travis Kupper

The holidays are a time of year many of us eagerly anticipate. The season is marked by special foods, seasonal decorations and lots of festivities. In our service area, many members look forward to annual traditions.

We cherish carrying on old family traditions and enjoy creating new ones.

For me personally, I look forward to more time spent with family and friends.

However, given the hustle and bustle of the season, the holidays can also offer an opportunity to slow down and reflect. All of us at KEM Electric Cooperative are grateful for you, the members of the co-op.

You see, one of our founding principles as a co-op is "concern for community." While our main focus is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we want to give back. We want to help our membership thrive.

Reflection

In looking back at this past year, I'm grateful we were able to make a positive impact in our local area. Through programs such as Operation Round Up, we are able to help

nonprofit organizations in our communities, thanks to your contribution.

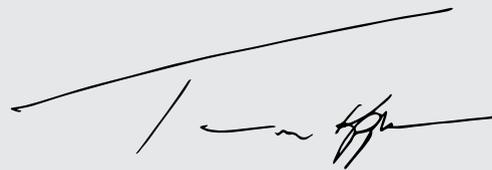
We continue to work closely with our local high schools to award college scholarships. In 2022, we awarded \$6,500 to local scholars.

There are other ways we can help, including finding ways to save energy at home. We want you to know we're here to help.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead to 2023, we hope you will share your opinions with us. We recognize our members have a valuable perspective, and that's why we continually seek your input. Whether through community events, our social media channels or the annual meeting, we want to hear from you. We are led by you – the members of the co-op – and we depend on your feedback.

As we prepare for next year, we look forward to the opportunity to serve you and the greater community. On behalf of the KEM Electric family, we hope your holidays are indeed merry and bright! ⚡



BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- Approved Sept. 27 board minutes
- Heard co-general manager/CEO report
- Heard Basin Electric Power Cooperative updates
- Discussed Energy Transfer Partners update
- Heard financial report
- Heard operations report
- Heard member relations report
- Heard legal counsel report

Franklund retiring from KEM Electric

BY ANNE HANSEN



Don Franklund

After more than 46 years in the industry, and 10 years as co-general manager and CEO of KEM Electric Cooperative, Don Franklund has announced his retirement.

Franklund announced his intentions of retirement to the board of directors and will serve as co-general manager/CEO.

Early beginnings

Sleeves rolled up and ready to work, Franklund, 16 years old at the time, received his first taste of serving cooperative members by trenching cables for Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative. Little did he know that several years later, Franklund would be returning to the cooperative, but in a much different capacity.

For Franklund, the energy industry was always a passion, stemming from his father, who was an electrician. After graduating from Mandan High School, he obtained a degree as a lineworker. A year into the field, during a stormy night changing crossarms in the hail, he vividly remembers asking himself if he wanted to do this for the rest of his life.

After that experience, Franklund found another field in the energy industry and went back to school to pursue a degree in electrical engineering from North Dakota State University. His new degree led him out of state to Denver, CO. Although he traveled to a few more states for employment opportunities, his heart returned him home to North Dakota to raise his family.

In 1991, Franklund was hired as general manager/CEO for Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative. Franklund reflected that his first day of work would serve as an omen for his career.

“On my first day as general manager, I was driving from Bismarck to Flasher, and Highway 6 was under construction, which resulted in no pavement and a little bit of a bumpy ride. On the way home that night, I received a flat tire,” he said. “The road isn’t always smooth, and it is



Don Franklund attends one of many annual meetings throughout the years.

likely to have rough patches and stops along the way, but it’s all about the people that are along on the journey with you, and that is how you determine the quality of your journey.”

Innovating along the way

In 2007, many electric cooperatives were struggling with a declining membership and an increased cost of doing business. To survive, they needed to find innovative ways to prepare for the future. When Slope Electric Cooperative’s general manager resigned, the Slope Electric’s board approached the boards of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric and Roughrider Electric Cooperative and suggested they form a temporary management alliance.

“It was a bold step toward managing all of our cooperatives’ futures,” Franklund said.

The alliance would allow the cooperatives to remain as separate businesses with their own identities, assets and obligations, and retain

their authority. Franklund embraced the spirit of an alliance, which supports the sharing of employee skills, equipment and more.

During his time serving as co-general manager and CEO of KEM Electric, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric, Slope Electric and Roughrider Electric, Franklund has seen many changes and challenges along the way.

"I remember as a new manager in 1994, a manager in his mid-60s approached me and told me he was jealous of all the things I was going to be able to see and do during my career," he said. "I never understood that until recently, and now I am the one jealous of all the things the cooperatives will get to see in the coming years as we face a changing industry. Yet, some of my fondest memories are happening now, as I see the fruits of my labor mature and see employees who we have hired as young individuals grow into what they are today."

Lasting impact

Over the years, Franklund has attended over 1,000 board meetings, 73 annual meetings and has met countless individual members and mentors.

"Along the way, I have found it best to always focus on the mission on why we exist – to provide affordable, reliable and safe energy for our members," Franklund said.

"Don's focus has always been on what best

serves the member," said co-general manager/CEO Travis Kupper. "He has a knack for evaluating every situation and making sure that every option has been explored to find the best solutions for the cooperative member."

That focus throughout the years earned Franklund the respect of many of his peers, and many look to him for advice and counsel.

"While having a co-manager is a unique situation, it has served as a peer sounding board. I will be forever grateful for the years I have been able to work with him in this capacity," Kupper said.

The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives noted Franklund as an effective spokesperson and leader, and a strong representative of North Dakota's electric cooperatives, when he was awarded the Cooperative Leadership Award.

Franklund credits those who have mentored him throughout the years.

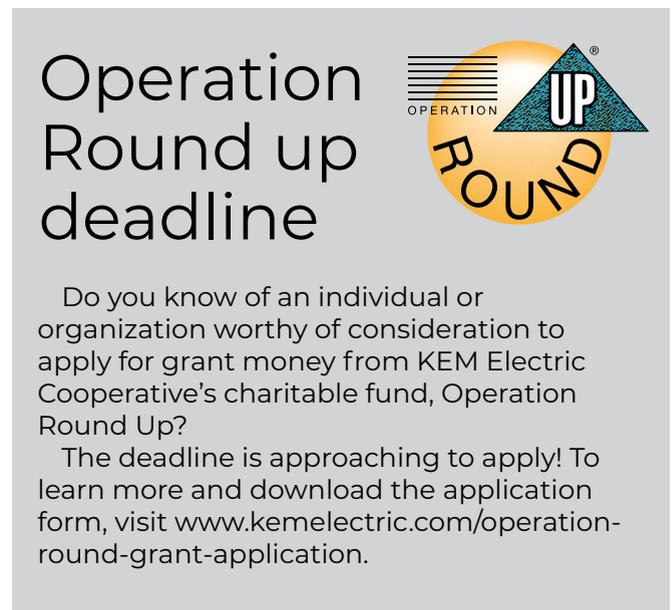
"I had so many colleagues along the way who didn't think they were mentors, but were," Franklund said. "That included people like Bob McPhail, Ron Harper, Vern Dosch, Paul Sukut, Jeff Nelson and so many more."

KEM Electric wishes Franklund the best of luck in his retirement and future endeavors, and thanks him for the years he has spent serving our members. ⚡



Holiday closings

KEM Electric Cooperative wishes our members a merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year! In observance of the holidays, we will be closed on Dec. 23 and 26 as well as Jan. 2. Line crews will be available in the case of an emergency or power outage.



Operation Round up deadline



Do you know of an individual or organization worthy of consideration to apply for grant money from KEM Electric Cooperative's charitable fund, Operation Round Up?

The deadline is approaching to apply! To learn more and download the application form, visit www.kemelectric.com/operation-round-grant-application.

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

JUNE 18-23, 2023

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by KEM Electric Cooperative.
- If you have any questions, please contact Marcy Sanders, KEM Electric, at 701-254-4666 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 20, 2023. You can email entries to Marcy Sanders at msanders@kemelectric.com or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, 107 S. Broadway, Box 790, Linton, ND 58552-0790.



TOP 3 REASONS

1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of KEM Electric Cooperative
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol
3. A learning experience you'll never forget

ESSAY QUESTION:

If chosen as a Youth Tour delegate, you will be traveling to Washington, D.C. to experience and learn about America's rich history. What moment in American history do you wish you had been a part of and what would you have contributed?



CHECK OUT THE ESSAY CONTEST GUIDELINES AT
<https://ndyouthtour.com>

WASHINGTON, D.C.

KEM Electric supports students with scholarships

KEM Electric takes pride in assisting with the development of rural leadership through our scholarship program.

We are happy to continue our scholarship program and offer scholarships to qualifying seniors, who must be dependents of KEM Electric members.



Download application at www.kemelectric.com

Complete applications and send to: msanders@kemelectric.com or by mailing to:

KEM Electric Cooperative
Attn: Marcy Sanders
107 S. Broadway | P.O. Box 790
Linton, ND 58552

Return completed application before Feb. 10, 2023

Area high school scholarship

KEM Electric Cooperative will award eight \$500 scholarships to qualified applicants whose parents or guardians are members of the co-op. School representatives from Ashley, Wishek, Zeeland, Strasburg, Linton, Hazelton-Moffit-Braddock, Kidder County and Napoleon will select a graduating senior.

Contact your school counselor for more information. The deadline to apply is Feb. 10, 2023.

\$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship

KEM Electric Cooperative will award a \$1,000 scholarship to a student who is already enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-

time graduate or undergraduate program. The student must attend an accredited two- or four-year program, university or vocational/tech school. All applicants must have parents or guardians who are members of the co-op.

Home School, GED setting, or student outside of KEM service area

The co-op will also award one \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior from a homeschool setting, GED setting, or a school outside of our service area. Students can get the applications from our website, www.kemelectric.com, or call the office in Linton. Applications can be filled out online and emailed to msanders@kemelectric.com, or printed and mailed to: KEM

Electric Cooperative, Attn: Marcy Sanders, 107 S. Broadway, P.O. Box 790, Linton, ND 58552.

Luck-of-the-draw scholarship

KEM Electric will award two \$500 luck-of-the-draw scholarships to be drawn at our annual meeting. All high school seniors who are dependents of KEM Electric members and have not previously been chosen for a co-op scholarship are eligible and must attend the annual meeting. A luck-of-the-draw form is available at KEMElectric.com.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Safety Starts with ME: Gerald Zink



It's no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards.

"During the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters,

electric blankets and portable generators," said Gerald Zink, a journeyman lineworker for KEM Electric Cooperative.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates 47,700 home fires occur each year in the United States due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

- 1. Don't overload outlets.** Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections. They should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.
- 2. Never leave space heaters unattended.** If you're using a space heater, turn it off before

leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed at least 3 feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

- 3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets.** These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads – look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

- 4. Use portable generators safely.** Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system, without having an approved transfer switch installed by a licensed electrician. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Operate it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

"In addition to the tips from the National Fire Protection Association, we also remind everyone to check their fire alarms to ensure their families safety in case of an emergency," Zink said. ⚡

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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