

## LASTING LEGACY:

# Tim Dockter retires from KEM Electric Cooperative

BY ANNE HANSEN



**Tim Dockter** works on restoring power to members during a winter outage.

**L**ineworkers are known for their commitment to their career and their community. Whether it be working nontraditional hours or being outdoors in difficult conditions, lineworkers are committed to getting power to those in need – despite the many challenges.

Linemen are known for their commitment to their career and their community. Whether it be working non-traditional hours or being outdoors in the difficult condition, linemen are committed to getting power to those in need – despite the many challenges.

Since an early age, Tim Dockter, has shown what it takes to be a lineman and furthermore do what is needed to help grow and power the communities in which he served.

### The path to KEM Electric

The path to KEM Electric all began in high school, after

reviewing the results of an Army assessment test. “After I received the results back of the assessment test, it showed that I had received high scores in electronics, which got me thinking about what I could do.”

It was after this test that Dockter took serious consideration of a career in the energy field. To explore it even further, Dockter received a summer job at KEM Electric while he was in high school. “As a high school kid, we were able to help with pole testing and other tasks,” noted Dockter.

He continued on to pursue his future career by taking classes and earning his lineman certificate from Bismarck State College (BSC) in 1976. His time at BSC had ended, it by no means meant that Dockter was done learning. Dockter has a passion for learning, as he approached every opportunity in his life with curiosity and wiliness to be taught.

“I am so grateful for all the experiences I had – whether that be as an intern at MDU, working as a lineman for the railroad or building a power plant – they have all allowed me to learn,” said Dockter.

### Back to KEM Electric

Although Dockter worked for a few organizations throughout the beginning years in his career, his heart led him and his wife him back to KEM Electric.

One day while helping at the family farm, he was approached about a career at KEM Electric. “I still remember the day that Ed Wagner, at the time KEM Electric’s Line Superintendent, was visiting the family farm to inspect some lines.”

It was at that time that Dockter was informed of a

## MAY 2022

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Scholarships awarded
- Volunteers dive in to save swimming pool
- Manager’s message: Safety above all else



possible position becoming available at KEM Electric Dockter applied and received the position. “I got my wish, raising my family, working outdoors and helping the community I grew up in.”

The sense of community is what inspired Tim to get up at any hour of the day to help those in need. “I missed life events because of the things mother nature would throw at us, but if I had to do it all over again, I would,” said Dockter.

Dockter recalled one incident in the late 80’s when members were without electricity for weeks due to heavy frost. The crews were in Steele for 5 days straight, sometimes working 40 hours in a row. “I remember staying in the hotel in Steele, which was powered by a generator, and people from all over coming to the hotel to get water from the pool to be able to flush their toilets.”

But, Dockter noted, there are things as a lineman you can grow to expect, “Storms will come, and go, and that is the constant you can count on.”

Another reason Dockter wouldn’t change his profession is because of the people he met and learned from along the way. “The credit goes to those who impacted my life. There are so many people who played a part in my life, and who helped me along the way from Ed Wagner helping me get my start, to Chris Baumgartner and Don Franklund who helped me progress through my career and move into the role of Manager of Member Services.”

“John Ballard, a former lineman at KEM Electric, and I were together a lot during my early career, and I learned a lot about life from that man,” said Dockter, “He was an excellent mechanic who knew how to get any piece of equipment to work. I said at his wake, ‘if there was anyone in the world I would want to be stranded with, it would be him because he would make sure we got back home.’”

The commitment Dockter has to the community, grew from the fact that he knew most of the people

from growing up in the KEM service area. “They were people I played sports against, people who I knew from community activities and the people who I grew up with.”

Dockter’s knowledge and care for the community is evident. “Tim’s Knowledge of KEM’s service area and the members that reside in it is impeccable,” said Dale Nagel, Chief of Staff and Line Superintendent at KEM Electric, “If there is a section line that can get you where you need to go, he knows where it is and when you pull into most farmyards, he knows the member by name and good chance the member knows him as well.”

### **The next chapter**

Dockter retires from KEM after 40 years of service. “I will miss working with the members but looking forward to spending more time with my wife, children and grandchildren,” said Dockter. “I leave knowing that our members are in good hands with a great board, management, and staff.”

“Tim has a wonderful relationship with each one of our members and although it will be hard to see Tim retire, we are grateful to him for his years of service, and the many years he dedicated to KEM Electric – Tim will be missed!” said Marcy Sanders, Manager of Member Relations, KEM Electric.

Dockter hopes to work on the family farm as well as continue his over 30+ year football coaching career at Linton High School, “I still enjoy coaching and have found joy in coaching alongside other great people and seeing the success we have had on the field in our many championships, and off the field as I have seen our great athletes have future success.”

Dockter also plans to stay involved in local community organizations and his church but looks forward to fulfilling a retirement goal of his, “With my coaching career, I have been to the majority of football fields in the state of North Dakota, so now I would like to play a round of golf at the majority of the golf courses with the state.” ■



**Dockter tests for stray voltage at a local dairy farm.**

# Volunteers dive in to save Kidder County swimming pool

BY ANNE HANSEN

For rural North Dakota towns, community pools are a gathering space for social interactions, and offer an opportunity to meet new friends and a reason to go outside while getting exercise.

Nothing could be more true for the Kidder County swimming pool.

“Our community pool provides an extracurricular activity for the residents of Steele and surrounding communities,” said Erin Dewitz, Kidder County swimming pool board member. “We provided swimming lessons to over 140 kids last year, as well as offered water aerobics classes in the early mornings. We have many kids who come to the pool every day and stay all day. This is their only option for getting out of their homes and having a safe place to go and hang out.”

But, as in every organization, challenges have arisen. When the pandemic threatened a permanent closure of the pool, a few remaining board members stepped up to preserve the recreational location.

“In 2020, with the onset of the pandemic, we saw the first closing of the pool. With restrictions due to COVID, financially the pool just was not able to open,” Dewitz said. “At this time, many of the previous board members stepped down, leaving two remaining members.”

Rather than letting the pool close, the two remaining board members reached out to individuals in the Kidder County area to complete the board once again. With a new board together, they faced their challenges as they battled aging infrastructure, and the need to relocate due to other expansion projects happening in the community.

“It was a lot to take on and we knew this was a huge undertaking,” Dewitz said. “Luckily, we had a room full of motivated volunteers that didn’t want to see the pool disappear and wanted to keep this much-needed summer activity for our community.”

The board members rolled up their sleeves and took action.

“Our committee worked with an engineering firm in Bismarck to construct plans for a new pool, in addition to fundraising efforts,” Dewitz said.

Part of the board’s fundraising efforts included a petition for a city sales tax increase, which passed in December 2021.

“This was the key for us to be able to build the new pool, helping to partially fund the project, along with the board’s fundraising efforts,” Dewitz said. “Our goal is to start construction on the new pool in the spring of 2024.”

The board members who are continuing to spearhead the



**Abbey Messer**, Kidder County swimming pool board member, receives the RDFC grant from **Dean Dewald**, a KEM Electric Cooperative director.

project include Dewitz, Michell Pfaff, Abbey Messer, April Rutledge, Miranda Wolff, Sam Coetzee, Emily Devore, DeAn Sackman and Melissa Hochhalter.

## Fundraising efforts

The fundraising got creative last year, as the board members decided they would like to try to bring back some events that no longer exist in Steele as a form of fundraising.

“I feel like we all fundraise too much in small towns for so many different groups we are involved in that I really wanted to do something that raised funds for the new pool, but also gave something back to the community. If there was anything we learned from the pandemic, it was how important all of these things were,” Dewitz said.

This included hosting a band and food trucks during the county fair, along with a large gun raffle.

“And we also undertook planning and putting on Winterfest, a celebration in Steele starting in 1995. It had died out a few years ago,” Dewitz said. “We had a fabulous turnout. It was a ton of work, but our pool board was amazing and stepped up to the plate.”

Each year, \$2,000 is allotted to KEM Electric Cooperative from the Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC) to be used to support community owned entities, nonprofits and community-based projects.

In 2021, the Kidder County swimming pool received funds through RDFC and KEM Electric Cooperative. ■



## MANAGER'S MESSAGE: **Safety above all else**



**Travis Kupper**

**M**ay is Electrical Safety Month. While we all depend on electricity to power our lives, accidents can happen when electricity is improperly used.

That is why safety is the top priority at KEM Electric. Over time, KEM Electric Cooperative has created a culture of safety by putting our employees' safety and that of the community above all

else. KEM Electric's mission is to provide safe, affordable and reliable electric service to its member-owners. At the end of the day, we strive to deliver affordable and reliable electricity to our member-owners. But, more importantly, we want to return our employees home safely to their loved ones and keep our members safe. To do this requires ongoing focus, dedication and vigilance.

### **Following leading national safety standards**

Working with electricity is an inherently dangerous job, especially for lineworkers. KEM Electric has a safety coordinator whose focus is keeping employees and the community safe around electricity. We established and follow safety protocols based on leading national safety practices for the utility industry. We require our lineworkers to wear specialized equipment when working next to or with power lines. There are specific protocols our lineworkers follow when dealing with electricity.

As importantly, we encourage all our crews to speak up and hold each other accountable for safety. By cultivating a culture of openness and transparency, we promote

problem-solving with regard to safety. We examine the information and data gleaned from near misses and accident reports to discern patterns, and use safety metrics to improve in those areas where we have fallen short.

### **Keeping the community safe**

Because we live and work in the community we serve, we care about our neighbors and their safety. We continue to share safety information with our members through our social media, website and our monthly "Safety Starts with ME" articles, which can help members learn what they can do to stay safe.

With it being National Electrical Safety Month, we want to encourage you to keep electrical safety in mind. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation, thousands of people in the United States are critically injured and electrocuted as a result of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes each year. Many of these accidents are preventable. There are many things you can do to keep yourself and your community safe around electricity, including:

- Do not attempt to do electrical projects that could overload your outlets.
- Do not use any extension cords that are cracked, frayed or damaged.
- Report downed power lines, unlocked substations or pad-mounted transformers that look amiss.
- If you see anything that does not seem quite right, give us a call at the office or send us a photo at [safety@KEMElectric.com](mailto:safety@KEMElectric.com).

Be mindful when it comes to electrical safety. Pause and take the extra time to plug into safety. ■

## **Vander Wal receives Gold Credential**

**C**arter Vander Wal, a KEM Electric Cooperative director representing District 2, 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. ■



**Travis Kupper**, left, presents **Carter Vander Wal** with the Director Gold Credential certificate.



Mary Huber



Jackson Meidinger



Danny Keiley



Erin Kelsch



Kylie Ternes



Payton Feist



Seth Wolf



Abigail Rossow

## KEM Electric awards scholarships to graduates

**K**EM Electric Cooperative announces the 2021-22 student scholarship winners, whose families are member-owners of the cooperative. In the spirit of the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives value of commitment to community, KEM Electric Cooperative is proud to offer yearly scholarships to assist in developing rural leadership in our region.

The winner of the Basin Electric Power Cooperative/KEM Electric scholarship award is **Mary Huber** from Strasburg High School. She will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to attend college this fall. Huber plans to attend the University of Mary and obtain a nursing degree.

KEM Electric Cooperative offered one \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior from each of the high schools within our service area, along with one scholarship for a student who is homeschooled, obtained a GED or schooled outside of the cooperative's service area, for a total of eight \$500 scholarships awarded. This year's \$500 scholarship recipients are:

- Ashley Public School chose **Jackson Meidinger**, son of Marisa and Eric Meidinger. Jackson will be

attending Bismarck State College (BSC) in pursuit of a degree in energy services and renewable technician.

- Hazelton-Moffit-Braddock School did not have applicants.
- Kidder County High School chose **Danny Keily**, son of Michelle and Mike Keily. Danny will be attending North Dakota State University (NDSU) and pursuing a pharmacy degree.
- Linton Public School chose **Erin Kelsch**, daughter of Jodi and Mike Kelsch. Erin will be attending NDSU to pursue a degree in architecture and accounting.
- Strasburg Public School chose **Kylie Ternes**, daughter of Lisa and Aaron Ternes. Kylie will be attending NDSU and pursuing a degree in radiology.
- Napoleon Public School chose **Payton Feist**, daughter of Michelle and Scott Vetter. Payton will be attending the University of Mary to pursue a degree in psychology.
- Wishek Public School chose **Seth Wolf**, son of Melissa Kaseman-Wolf and Nathan Wolf. Seth plans to attend BSC for a degree in process technology.
- Zeeland Public School chose **Abigail Rossow**, daughter of Dawn and Joshua Rossow. Abigail will be attending Lake Area Technical College in Watertown, S.D., and pursuing a degree in dental assisting.

KEM Electric Cooperative chose Josie Dallman, daughter of Lori and Darlan Dallman, for the homeschool, GED or school outside the cooperative's service area scholarship. Josie will be attending Valley City State University to pursue a degree in business administration.

Thank you to all the students who took the time to apply, and congratulations to this year's winners! KEM Electric Cooperative is proud to play a small role in supporting your education and careers. ■

### Still to come: luck-of-the-draw \$500 scholarships!

KEM Electric Cooperative will award two \$500 luck-of-the-draw scholarships to be drawn at our annual meeting on June 16 in Linton. All high school seniors whose parent(s)/guardian(s) are members of KEM Electric Cooperative are eligible for this scholarship. Students must attend our annual meeting with at least one parent/guardian and are required to RSVP for the meeting.

# Safety starts With ME: **Kirk Praus**

BY ANNE HANSEN

Last year in North Dakota, over 100,000 acres burned from grassfires and wildfires – a dramatic increase from previous years. The effects of a drought cycle have left North Dakotans more susceptible to fire.

“As your local cooperative, KEM Electric takes these growing threats seriously,” said Kirk Praus, a journeyman lineworker. “Our cooperative has continuously embraced a proactive approach to fire prevention.”

KEM Electric Cooperative’s goal is the safety of its members and the protection of the communities where they live. In recent years, KEM Electric Cooperative began implementing a fire mitigation plan, which included many practices and strategies to minimize the possibility of fire.

The line crew routinely receives hazard recognition and fire extinguisher training. In addition to training, the trucks are equipped with fire extinguishers and flappers.

“We receive training from the statewide organization that creates a fire simulation, and we are required to put it out firsthand, using proper techniques,” Praus said.

In addition, KEM Electric Cooperative works with other utilities and regional transmission operators to avoid fire issues, which may include not automatically reclosing the transmission line and breaker operations.

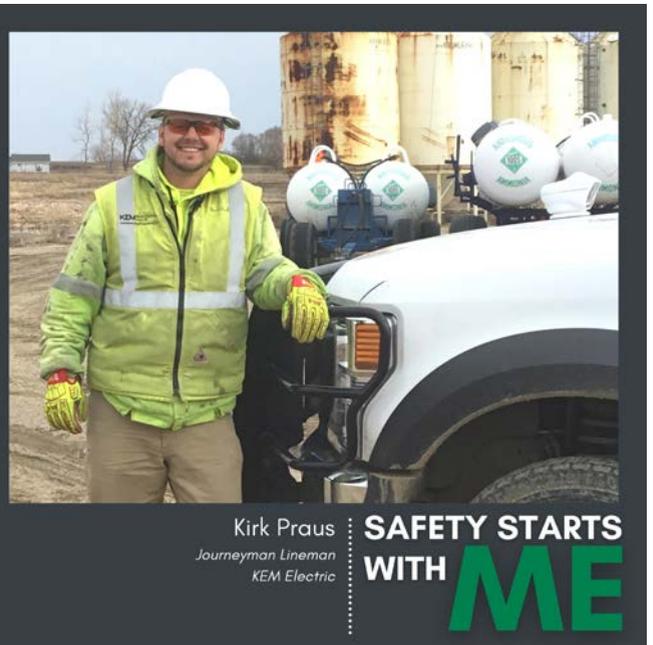
“Our employees are advised to be cautious and on the lookout for smoke and fire hazards while working, in addition to performing routine line patrols on the system to avoid any issues of trees or brush that may be near the distribution lines,” Praus said.

Members can also help reduce the risks of fires:

- Do not stack hay or other materials under power lines.

- If you see an unattended fire, immediately call 911 or your local fire department.
- Report any trees that appear to be too close to power lines, and keep your own trees and bushes regularly trimmed.
- Completely extinguish all campfires and fire pits after use. Follow all local ordinances to make sure burning a fire is allowed.
- Never throw cigarettes outside a moving vehicle or on the ground.

If you do have a wildfire and it is near our power line poles, please contact the cooperative. ■



**SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 16, 2022**KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING  
LINTON, NORTH DAKOTA

## Attend KEM Electric's annual meeting!

It's that time of year again; KEM Electric Cooperative is gearing up for the 2022 annual meeting, which will be held at 7 p.m. on June 16 at the Linton High School auditorium.

The annual meeting is a special time for co-op members to gather, share experiences, hear from co-op leadership and, perhaps most importantly, vote to elect your new board members.

KEM employees work hard to host this fun event, and we encourage you to attend and exercise some of the many rights you have as a member of an electric cooperative. We know the food, games and prizes are the best parts of the meeting, but there is so much more to the event. This year, we will also be unveiling something new you won't want to miss!

Your annual meeting is also the occasion to exercise one of the greatest benefits of being an electric co-op member: voting for the upcoming year's board of directors.

Your electric cooperative is not owned by faraway investors, and it is not overseen by an appointed board of directors. Your electric cooperative is operated by a democratically elected board that is given the privilege to serve because of your vote.

At this year's annual meeting, not only will you have a blast (and maybe win a prize!), but you will feel good knowing that you had a voice in an important decision that impacts one of our most vital resources, electricity.

### Your co-op, your vote

The annual meeting is also the time to vote for board members who will represent you, the members of the co-op. Board members are local members, just like you. If you don't vote, you're not only missing the opportunity to support a candidate who shares your views and concerns, but you're also allowing others to chart a course that impacts your future.

In 2022, the two board positions sought include: one for the District-at-Large, one for the District 3. In addition there will be a by-law change proposed to the membership.

Due to the by-law changes in 2021, no nominations will be welcomed from the floor of the annual meeting. KEM Electric Cooperative wants to ensure your voice can be heard, even if you are unable to attend the annual meeting. That's why the board has voted to use vote by mail this year, to make voting and having your voice heard even easier.

### What can you expect?

As in the past, your cooperative will continue to offer the opportunity to vote in-person at the annual meeting. KEM has added a second option for members to vote by mail, making it even easier for your voice to be heard. KEM will be utilizing a third-party vendor to handle mail-in ballots, to ensure security and member anonymity.

Members will receive a voting packet after May 20 with voting instructions. ■

## BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

March 22

- Approved Feb. 22 board meeting minutes
- Heard co-general manager/CEO reports
- Discussed Energy Transfer Partners update
- Approved Wildfire Mitigation Plan
- Reviewed Rural Utilities Service documents
- Heard revenue financial report
- Heard operations report
- Reviewed manager of member relations report
- Heard board meeting reports

# CO-OP 101: WHAT DOES 'NONPROFIT' REALLY MEAN?

Did you know that electric cooperatives return money to their members in the form of capital credits? While you may like receiving those capital credit checks from KEM Electric Cooperative, you may not be sure exactly why you get them. It's simple, really.

Capital credits reflect each member's ownership in the cooperative. Electric cooperatives do not earn profits. Instead, any margins or remaining revenue after all expenses have been paid are returned to the cooperative's members in proportion to their electrical usage.

How are capital credits returned to you, the member?

### STEP 1: ALLOCATION

An allocation determines your share of the cooperative's margin in a particular year. Margins are "allocated" or assigned to members who belong to the cooperative during the year in which a margin is generated. The allocation is based on the member's proportion of electrical usage for that year. Each member's portion is referred to as a "capital credit allocation."

### STEP 2: RETIREMENT

Once capital credits are allocated, they are retained by the co-op for a certain time. Capital credits are the most significant source of equity for

the cooperative. Equity is used to help meet the expenses of the co-op, such as paying for new equipment to serve members and repaying debt. Capital credits help keep rates at an affordable level by reducing the amount of funds that must be borrowed to grow and maintain a cooperative's existing electric system.

Upon completion of the rotation period, the board of directors will review the cooperative's financial health and can declare a retirement (your cash payment), and a portion of your capital credits are returned to you.

If you have questions about capital credits, contact KEM Electric Cooperative.

## KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

### DIRECTORS:

Victor Wald, Chairman .....	Napoleon
John Beck, Vice Chairman .....	Linton
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](http://kemelectric.com) / Email address: [info@kemelectric.com](mailto:info@kemelectric.com)