



McKenzie Electric  
COOPERATIVE

APRIL 2018

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# ANNUAL MEETING



**SAVE THE DATE:**

**JUNE 19, 2018 - 5 P.M.**

**WHERE: MCKENZIE ELECTRIC HEADQUARTERS**



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Become a fan of McKenzie Electric Cooperative on Facebook, and receive updates on power outages, youth opportunities, the annual meeting, *North Dakota Living* stories featuring our member-owners, and much more! Just search McKenzie Electric Cooperative Inc.

[www.mckenzieelectric.com](http://www.mckenzieelectric.com)

McKenzie Electric Cooperative

Connections

# Theresa Olson earns Youth Tour trip

Every year, McKenzie Electric Cooperative offers a sophomore or junior within its service area a chance to write an essay in response to a chosen topic. The student who writes the award-winning essay earns a trip to Washington, D.C., to tour the nation's capital and learn about the cooperative business model, our nation's history and American government.

Theresa Olson, daughter of Jeremy and Christine Olson, is the winner for the 2018 Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

Theresa is a 16-year-old homeschooled junior, and is a mentor for her two younger sisters, Grace and Julia. She is an active member of the Storm Riders 4-H Club, participating in photography, cooking and painting. Theresa is also a junior leader for 4-H, responsible for planning events and service projects. When Theresa isn't busy with schooling and 4-H, you can find her reading. Upon graduation, Theresa plans to attend Oklahoma Wesleyan University to pursue a degree in student ministry.

Theresa learned of the Youth Tour through an ad in the *North Dakota Living* magazine. Youth Tour student applicants were asked to respond to the following 2018 essay topic: "There are approximately 20 million military veterans in the United States today. How shall fellow U.S. citizens honor and look after these veterans, who have served and sacrificed on our behalf? Describe any special connection you may have to a veteran or active-duty member of the military."

Below is Theresa's excellent 2018 Youth Tour award-winning essay that McKenzie Electric Cooperative is proud to print in our center pages:

## How Americans can honor and support our veterans

*I am the daughter of an Army veteran. I was born in a military hospital in Ft. Riley, Kan., and I am a fifth-generation McKenzie County resident. There are several veterans in my extended family, including two uncles who are currently serving in the Army. Because of my personal connections to the military, I believe we as U.S. citizens should honor and look after our veterans by*



Theresa Olson

*supporting them in the areas of health care, education and career assistance.*

*The first area of emphasis should be on veteran health care. Twenty-two veterans a day commit suicide as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder. Our government should place priority on funding counseling for veterans, so it will not affect their careers negatively. In addition to needing mental health care, many soldiers come back from deployment injured and need physical therapy. As veterans age, medications are often needed to keep them healthy. My father is a disabled veteran, and he gets health care provided for him in the areas that are service-related. Veteran health care should always be readily available and accessible to veterans. Unfortunately, a veteran often has to travel a long way to see a veteran health care provider. Many local veterans frequently travel from McKenzie County all the way to Fargo for medical treatments. Veterans should always be able to see local health care providers.*

*Many service members join the military to get education benefits before and after their military service. My dad attended the United States Military Academy at West Point, where he got a college degree prior to being commissioned as an officer in the Army. My two uncles who are still on active duty also take college courses paid for by the military. We Americans should continue to support our service members in this area, because many military veterans become productive members of society after they leave the military with the education and skills learned in the military. Educational benefits are often available for veterans after leaving the military, through programs such as the GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation for veterans who need to change their careers due to a disability. My dad was able to get his master's degree paid for by one of these programs. This is a valuable service to our veterans that should be continued.*

*The final area of emphasis should be on career assistance. One of the great things about the military is that they provide great professional skills training. You can be a carpenter or a nuclear scientist or anything in-between. Unfortunately, there are many veterans who get injured and can no longer do the jobs they were trained to do. There are veterans programs available to train disabled veterans in professional skills that they are able to use. We as citizens should continue to support our veterans with training for professional skills. In addition to providing educational benefits, many veterans programs assist the veteran in finding jobs. Sometimes this assistance is done as the veteran leaves active military service, and other times, it is given to veterans who have recently been re-trained. A good example of this is job fairs that cater toward veterans and employers who try to hire veterans. McKenzie County Electric has three veterans currently working for*

the company.

We as citizens do a lot to support our veterans; from providing physical and mental health care to our wounded warriors, to giving them the opportunity to further their education, and assisting in career transition from the military life to the civilian world. Americans do a lot for veterans, as I have seen it done for my father. There is certainly room for improvement, but I believe that we are on the right track. The best thing we can do as Americans

to honor our veterans is to provide our honored veterans with the tools they need to continue serving our country as productive citizens and leaders.

McKenzie Electric Cooperative would like to congratulate Theresa on earning the opportunity to go on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour trip. Stay tuned for updates on Theresa's trip when she returns from Washington, D.C. ■

# CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!



**Planting a tree? Installing a fence?** Remember to contact North Dakota One Call first! The first step to any project is safety, and damaging an underground facility while you dig can cause injury or even death.

Numerous utility lines may be buried on your property, ranging from electric and telephone lines to water and sewer lines, but North Dakota One Call will help you locate these lines before your project begins.

Contact North Dakota One Call and utility line owners will locate and mark their lines. These locates do not include any lines you may have installed to your private facilities, such as detached garages, wells or yard lights.

Go online at [www.ndonecall.com](http://www.ndonecall.com) or call **800-795-0555** or **811**.

*It's free, it's simple and it's the law.*

## THE 811 PROCESS:

### 1. NOTIFY

Notify the North Dakota One Call Center by calling 811 or making an online request at least 48 hours before work begins, excluding weekends and holidays. You'll give the operator information about how to contact you, where you are planning to dig and what type of work you will be doing, or go online to enter this information. Utility companies who have potential facilities in the area of your dig site will be notified about your intent to dig.

### 2. WAIT

Wait the required amount of time for affected utility operators to respond to your request.

### 3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utility operators have responded to your request and marked underground utilities. Compare the marks to the list of utilities the One Call Center notified.

### 4. RESPECT

Respect the marks. The marks provided by the affected utilities are your guide for the duration of the project. The marks are valid for 21 calendar days.

If you are unable to maintain the marks during your project, or the project will continue past your request's expiration date, please call 811 to ask for a re-mark.

### 5. DIG CAREFULLY

Dig carefully around the marks. No mechanical excavating can take place within 24 inches on either side of the marked location of the underground facility. If you plan on digging within that 4-foot-wide area, hand digging is allowed, but please dig carefully and cautiously.



# Serving the membership, rain, shine or snowstorm

BY CARISSA SUTER



**O**n cold, stormy days in western North Dakota when the wind is howling, the snow is blowing and the temperature is well below zero, most folks can be found curled up under a blanket at home and enjoying a “snow day,” away from work and school until the storm blows over. But there are some people who have never known a snow day. For these people, a lingering storm only means that their day will be longer, more difficult and more treacherous. During a storm, farmers and ranchers are out in the elements, trudging through the rain and snow, caring for their livestock and equipment. Farmers and ranchers don’t get snow days, and neither does the cooperative that provides them power.

Lineworkers can similarly be found in the most inclement weather, working through subzero temperatures and snowstorms to restore power to the membership. McKenzie Electric Cooperative has seen no shortage of winter storms through the years. The tenured lineworkers who have been around to restore power to members during bad weather over the years have endless stories about making the decision to go out in the middle of a storm. Rick Pokrzywinski, a line foreman who has worked at

PHOTOS BY CLARICE KESSLER

McKenzie Electric Cooperative for more than 32 years, has responded to countless storm outages during his time at the cooperative.

“The worst storm I remember was years ago when we had outages all over the place and we were all going different directions and we lost contact with a fellow lineman,” Pokrzywinski said.

Pokrzywinski remembers that night years ago as being the worst storm, not because of the weather, but because he spent the night not knowing if his fellow lineworker was safe. The lineworker ended up finding safety for the night and made contact with the crew first thing in the morning. The cooperative was able to use this storm scenario as a learning opportunity for future storms.

Central among stories like these is the largest priority during storms – safety. The issue of safety during storms is one of complexity. During subzero temperatures, the members often require power as a condition of safety, but when road conditions are poor, lineworkers need to take caution when tending to an outage.

“We want to make every effort possible to respond, but safety has to be the priority,” Pokrzywinski said, “safety for yourself, your guys, the members and the equipment.”

McKenzie Electric lineworkers are trained on responding during storms and determining when to respond to a storm and how to respond with the utmost caution. McKenzie Electric Cooperative Operations Manager Jim Hansen ensures that lineworkers of the cooperative are trained in winter driving and all areas of winter response so they are equipped to respond when winter storms occur.

While classroom-style training is imperative, in some areas, on-the-job training is perhaps the best teacher. Apprentice Lineworker Andrew Nyhagen, who graduated from Bismarck State College’s Lineworker Program in 2017 and started with the cooperative thereafter, attests to the knowledge gained during storm outages. Nyhagen responded to his first winter storm on Jan. 30, 2017, and remembers calls coming in, one after another, to report outages. Nyhagen accompanied senior lineworkers to the outage and recounts watching them troubleshoot, build line and restore power throughout the night, all while it was 40 degrees below zero.

“It feels really good to restore power quickly,” Nyhagen said. “During that storm, I was able to see power restored quickly and be a part of it and I learned fast that it’s going to take years of experience to do that so well.”

Another storm, during the holiday season of 2016, brought vast amounts of snow and wind that didn’t seem to stop. As a result, many members were left without power. Lineworkers were informed of the outages and made the decision to leave their families during the



holiday to go out into the storm so that other families might be able to enjoy theirs.

Josh Knowles, a journeyman lineworker who has worked at McKenzie Electric Cooperative since 2012, was on call during that holiday storm of 2016. Knowles and another lineworker were told by Hansen to assess their comfort with the situation and decide if they wanted to proceed into the storm to restore power. They decided that they would tend to the outage and the two left the headquarters driving slowly and with caution, while maintaining communication with Hansen.

“Visibility was poor and we had to stop twice after leaving to remove the air filter because it was sucking in so much snow,” Knowles said. “We made it within eight miles of where we needed to be until we got stranded. We had the ranger with us in case that happened, so we got that out and made it to the substation to attempt to restore power.”

The lineworkers had finally made it back to the vehicle at 2 a.m. and tried to dig the pickup out, but they were unable to do so. They spent the night in their pickup, with

the heat on and in contact with their manager every 20 minutes. When the storm subsided at 6 a.m., a member pulled the lineworkers out and they were able to get back on the road.

This isn't an isolated incident of member assistance; members assist lineworkers in the field whenever it's needed. Hansen relies on this relationship which has been central to the cooperative for as long as anybody can remember.

"We know that our members will take care of us because they know we are doing whatever we can to take care of them," Hansen said. "We rely on our members' help often. They help us in every major storm."

The members don't only assist when called upon, they show gratitude to lineworkers who are working during snowstorms and thunderstorms or on weekends and holidays. During the holiday storm of 2016, prior to the day that they became stranded, Knowles and his fellow lineworker were greeted by a member with a prime rib dinner that the member was enjoying with their family on Christmas Day, to show their appreciation.

During the recent storm, in March 2018, many businesses and schools were closed due to the weather conditions. One member, Eva Hepper, posted on Facebook to remind her friends to keep rural electric employees in their prayers for all that they do.

Hepper, a rancher, understands the importance of a rural electric cooperative that is committed to responding quickly and efficiently to outages during storms. Hepper and her husband, Jeff, have ranched in McKenzie County for 16 years. She remembers a time when she and her husband were living in another state. They were in the middle of calving when they experienced a major storm. They took their tractor to pick up roughly 15 of the calves that required warmth. When they finally got them inside, they placed heat lamps on them, hoping to bring the mother cows in the next day. Suddenly, they lost electricity and they had no generator and couldn't get out to borrow one, so the calves died.

"Electricity is so important," Hepper said, "We learned from our earlier mistakes, but we are grateful for the service and we know we are in an area where it is exceptional."

Hepper emphasizes the importance of gratitude for those that provide such an important service.

"We have been in the cold and we know what they are sacrificing with their family to be out in the cold to be sure that we have power," Hepper said, "We are very appreciative."

Lineworkers are, of course, the employees who are braving the storm to restore power regardless of the time the storm comes and outage occur. However, there are many other positions within the cooperative that assist in

the speed at which the outages are restored. For example, Zane Frick is McKenzie Electric Cooperative's system planning and reliability engineer and has been with the cooperative for almost five years. During past storms, the cooperative had no automated way to know the extent of an outage. Now, Frick can send a signal to meters to see if they have power or not, narrowing the area of trouble to send lineworkers to the trouble spot quickly and allow for faster restoration of power to the members.

The cooperative's investment in technology enables it to strive to restore power faster. Eventually, the cooperative's goal is to provide an outage map on its website which will allow members to see any current outages and verify that they are aware of outages, improving communication between the cooperative and its members.

When members recognize that there is an outage, they call the cooperative; during normal business hours, the employee at the other end of the phone is often Arlene Ashihi. Ashihi has been McKenzie Electric Cooperative's secretary/receptionist for more than two years. During large storms, Ashihi works with operations to confirm outages and answer members' questions. Members generally want to know the cause and duration of the outage and are understanding that the cooperative might not know all of the answers.

"One member (who called during the winter storm outage) made the comment 'I'm sure glad MEC is open and working so there's someone in the office to take calls,'" Ashihi said.

During this year's large storm when many businesses closed due to weather conditions, many members commented on how grateful they were to speak to a person rather than an automated system. Ashihi had calls inquiring about duration from ranchers concerned about their cattle, from businesses who needed to know if they should schedule fuel deliveries, and from members with medical conditions. McKenzie Electric Cooperative values the priorities of its members and knows that speaking with a person about these priorities is valuable.

Every employee at McKenzie Electric Cooperative is essential to the mission to serve the membership and each employee understands that the reason the cooperative exists is to provide power to the membership. Always taking safety into consideration, the employees continue to take pride in providing this service to the membership, be it a pleasant summer day or a brutal North Dakota winter storm. The cooperative has proven that even on the harshest winter day, the employees can be found answering phones and climbing poles – always attempting to do whatever they can to serve the member at the end of the line. ■

# LINEMAN GEAR

A lineman uses the following gear to work safely.



**SAFETY GLASSES:**  
Protects eyes from an arc or flying debris.

**HARDHAT:** A must for all linemen, this insulated hat protects the head from blows and falling objects.

**FIRE RESISTANT (FR) CLOTHING:**  
To protect linemen from a possible electric arc, they must wear FR pants, shirts, and jackets (in cold weather) at all times. A long-sleeve FR shirt must be worn during all seasons, even in the sweltering heat.

**RUBBER GLOVES:** Elbow-length gloves provide protection from high voltage.

**EQUIPMENT BELT:**  
Features clips, loops and D rings for linemen to carry tools commonly needed in the bucket, on the ground or in the air.

**LEATHER PROTECTORS:**  
Worn over rubber gloves, they provide protection from cuts and abrasions or punctures from tools.

**HANDLE:** Featuring a pulley block and steel clips, the handline is used to hoist materials to the lineman while working on a power line. This handline is 60 feet long.

**BOOTS:** These boots, specific for climbing wood structures, are 14 inches tall to protect linemen from gouging themselves in the leg.

**BUCKSQUEEZE:** Provides fall protection when working on wood poles and is designed to grip the pole if linemen start to fall.

**GAFFS:** Sharp steel spikes that are strapped to boots to climb poles safely and efficiently. Only the tips sink into the wood.

**CLIMBERS:** Strapped on just below the knee, these contoured leg shanks hold gaffs in place on linemen's boots. They are padded for comfort and support.

## February 21, 2018



Monsen



Thompson



Hanna



Houghton



Wasem



Wahlstrom



Sanford



Tescher



Link

The regular meeting of the McKenzie Electric Board of Directors was held at the Headquarters Building in Watford City, North Dakota. Directors present were: Clayton Monsen, Travis Thompson, Rondee Hanna, Cameron Wahlstrom, Ken Sanford, Chris Link, Glen Houghton, Tim Wasem and Ray Tescher. CEO John Skurupey, Attorney Dennis Johnson and staff personnel of McKenzie Electric were also present.

**PRELIMINARIES:** The agenda for the meeting, minutes of the previous board meeting and minutes of an executive committee conference call were approved by the Board of Directors. Expenses were also approved.

**DIRECTOR DISCUSSIONS:** The Board and management discussed member concerns which had arisen from their director districts.

**COST OF SERVICE STUDY:** Kirk Dewey, HDR Engineering, presented the 2017 Cost of Service Study to the Board of Directors. Mr. Dewey reviewed the basis of the study and explained how all expenses are allocated to each rate class along with their contribution to margins. After review, the Board approved a demand rate change for rate class IP-5.

**ASSOCIATED ORGANIZATIONS:** Director Tim Wasem reported there was no meeting on which to report. Director Chris Link reported on a recent Credentialed Cooperative Director educational program he attended titled "Director Duties & Liabilities."

**POWER SUPPLY:** Director Travis Thompson reported on the Upper Missouri board meeting. The Basin Electric board summary was reviewed. Director Ray Tescher briefly reported on Mid-West Electric Consumers Association details. The Board appointed Travis Thompson as Trustee and Ray Tescher at Alternate Trustee to the Upper Missouri Board of Trustees. The Board appointed Ray Tescher as the Chairman of voting delegates and Ken Sanford as Alternate Chairman of voting

delegates to the Upper Missouri annual meeting.

**ATTORNEY'S REPORT.** Attorney Dennis Johnson gave his report relating to collection of delinquent accounts and litigation. Johnson also presented a proposed bylaw amendment for Board review.

**CEO REPORT:** CEO John Skurupey reported on several items including a recent Upper Missouri managers advisory meeting, Basin Electric rate subcommittee meeting, building issues and wholesale power issues. The Board approved budget deviations as presented.

**HUMAN RESOURCES:** The Board reviewed the written report. Other administrative issues were discussed with the Board.

**OFFICE REPORT:** Financial and statistical reports for January were reviewed with the Board along with a budget-to-date comparison, the capital projects report and the comparative cash report. MEC's independent auditors were on site from February 5-8, 2018.

**ENGINEERING REPORT:** An update was given on the progress of unfinished items remaining on the headquarters building complex. The Board approved a budget deviation as presented. System loading statistics were reviewed. An update was given on inspection and repairs on steel poles identified as critical. Updates were provided on member issues, system outages, potential new loads, substations, SCADA, metering and reclosures. A partial release of easement was approved by the Board.

**OPERATIONS/CONTRACT MANAGEMENT/SAFETY REPORT:** Written reports provided updates on projects currently being worked on by MEC contractors and a work order progress report. The weather has generally been good for construction during the winter. MEC crews have also been busy working on outages, maintenance projects, work orders, meter changes, retirements and high loads. The written safety report was reviewed by the Board.

### SPECIAL PROJECTS

**COORDINATOR:** An update was given on NERC (North American Electric Reliability Corporation) compliance activities. MEC is reviewing the Facility Matrix which details the equipment owned at each site and indicates if the asset is BES (Bulk Electric System). Maintenance cost responsibility on BES assets was reviewed. MEC will be starting a systematic review of all member policies. An update was also given on Member Service activities.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** The next meeting date was set for March 28, 2018, at the Watford City Headquarters building.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. ■



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Rondee Hanna, Sec.-Treas.  
Director, District 2C, Watford City..... 675-2516  
Glen Houghton, Director At Large  
Director, District 3B, Grassy Butte ..... 863-6606  
Tim Wasem, Statewide Director  
Director, District 3C, Halliday..... 938-4376  
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