

A joyful connection



See story on next page



*Towner County Living Center resident **Anna Olsen** helps clean **Allie Price's** frosting-covered hands while decorating sugar cookies together.*

FEBRUARY 2025

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Create a colorful poster
- You have payment options
- Operation Round Up grants



Residents Mary Boe, left, and Nancy Bolton of the Towner County Living Center enjoy a game of parachute with the children from the Cando Community Child Care, including Oaklyn Guthrie, center, with her friends, Aspyn Kennedy, left, and Amelia Wahl, right.

A joyful connection

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

Have you ever heard a child's laughter and instantly felt your own spirits lift? Have you ever witnessed someone's eyes light up when a child enters a room? And are some of your most cherished childhood memories from the time spent with grandparents?

No matter your age, a meaningful life involves joy and connections. Connections with others help increase feelings of happiness and may help prevent depression and anxiety. Staying connected with friends and family or forming new relationships can be difficult for any age group, but it is especially difficult for the elderly community living in nursing homes away from their friends and family.

Through the opportunity to relocate, the Towner County Medical Center (TCMC) found a way to help its residents at the Towner County Living Center (TCLC) form connections with others.

In 2021, TCMC CEO Ben Bucher decided to embark on the journey to promote the replacement of the health care system for the community of Cando and surrounding areas, focusing on the hospital, clinic and nursing home. The project would address insufficient clinic space and outdated infrastructure and combine with the nursing home facility located across town into one location.

The community backed his vision, puzzle pieces fell into place and the new 70,000-square-foot facility

opened in July 2024. The facility, which is served by Northern Plains Electric Cooperative, also houses a chiropractor clinic, physical, occupational and massage therapies, a 24-hour emergency center, a surgical suite with operating recovery beds, an infusion therapy space, laboratory, radiology, a café and a day care center.

“Our new facility is attempting to bring not just sick care to the community, but wellness care. It’s a place to go to recharge and increase your level of health,” Bucher says.

Melding the generations

Many factors went into the design process, especially where to place the 30-bed skilled nursing home. It was decided the west wing would give the residents the opportunity to enjoy the sun setting over the open field. They would be able to watch the North Star High School students on the track and football field just out their south windows and, most importantly, they get to have in-person interactions with the children from the Cando Community Child Care (CCCC) center located in the same wing.

“Research has shown that when various generations share a common space, the health and well-being of both the young and the older generation experience reduced social isolation, a feeling of increased well-being and a shared purpose,” Bucher says.

Once or twice a week, TLC Activities Director Lindsay Mickelson invites the day care to join certain activities with the residents. CCCC has 25 children enrolled, ranging from 9 months to 6 years old. Generally, it is the 3- and 4-year-olds who participate in the activities with the residents. Depending on the activity, sometimes the 2-year-olds will join.

Mickelson develops a monthly schedule of activities to keep the residents entertained, get exercise and to socialize. It is the residents’ choice whether they would like to join in any certain activity.

“The activities scheduled with the day care are always well attended,” Mickelson says.

Some of those activities have included creating arts and crafts, using sidewalk chalk, making bubbles, decorating cookies and simply enjoying a snack together. One of the most successful activities is playing with a giant parachute. Children are placed in-between residents, and each is given an edge to hold, encompassing a circle. Both the children and the residents take turns being under the parachute.

“It was fun to hear the laughs and see the smiles.

When the kids come around, I can tell the residents are more uplifted as well as moving around more than usual,” Mickelson says.

Laurie Colton, director of CCCC, says the intergenerational relationship benefits the children just as much as the elders.

“It is a wonderful way for the children to improve on social and emotional development as they practice communication and listening skills with the residents,” she says.

Children often have limited interactions with the elderly, Colton says. The relationship between CCCC and TLC provides the chance to have an increased empathy and greater understanding of aging as well as individuals with varying diverse abilities.

“The relationship between the residents and the day care is going just as we had planned and hoped,” Bucher says.

“We have seen our shared spaces consistently being utilized by both generations, especially during the holiday season. It’s heartwarming to see the joy on all the faces,” he says.

It takes all kinds to brighten a resident’s life and TLC invites the community to make a difference and volunteer your talents, from styling hair to playing a musical instrument to simply reading a book or playing cards. Volunteers can contact Mickelson at 701-968-2615. ■



In December 2024, the children from the day care located in the Towner County Medical Center were invited to enjoy hot cocoa and candy canes with the residents at the Towner County Living Center. Crew Wilson hides his marshmallows from resident Mary Boe.



Co-op announces annual poster contest

Attention kids! Grab your art supplies, as Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) sponsors a safety poster contest for children in kindergarten to sixth grade. The purpose of the safety poster contest is to help make children aware of the dangers of electricity. At NPEC, safety always comes first, and we are dedicated to doing our part to teach children how to be safe around electricity. Winners will be announced on our Facebook page and featured in the NPEC local pages of *North Dakota Living*.

RULES

- Posters must be on white, 8.5x11-inch paper.
- Posters must depict the theme, “How to stay safe around electricity.”
- Print the child’s name, school grade, address and parents’ names on the back of the poster.
- Only dependents of a current NPEC members are eligible for this contest.

ENTRY CATEGORIES

- Kindergarten to first grade
- Second to third grade
- Fourth to sixth grade

PRIZES IN EACH CATEGORY

- First: \$20
- Second: \$15
- Third: \$10

HOW TO SUBMIT

- Deadline is March 15.
- Submit entries to an NPEC office (Cando or Carrington) or mail to:
Northern Plains Electric Cooperative
Attn: Poster Contest
P.O. Box 608
Cando, ND 58324

Need to pay? You've got options!

In today's fast-paced world, we all need a convenient way to pay bills. That's why NPEC offers several bill payment options! Along with mailed paper statements, these options are designed to suit other preferences when it comes to receiving and paying your power bill.

1 OUT AND ABOUT

In-person lets you pay your bill in person with one of our representatives or place payment in our drop boxes located at either of the NPEC offices located in Cando and Carrington.



VanillaDirect Pay generates a barcode on the back of your bill that you can take to participating retailers to scan and pay with cash.



2 AUTOMATED



Bank* and credit card draft will let you have your bill automatically deducted from a bank or credit card account.

3 MOBILE & ONLINE

Our **mobile app - Smarthub** lets you pay your bill or check your account 24/7.



Web pay lets you pay your bill in our online portal 24-hours a day by E-check or debit/credit card by visiting www.nplains.com



4 NO HASSLE

***E-bill** allows you to have your bill emailed straight to you, no paper statement necessary. Just click the link and pay online.



Pay-by-phone option allows you to pay 24/7 by dialing 1-855-963-3619. The easy-to-follow prompts guide you through the payment process. Pay by e-check or debit/credit card.

Budget billing. Since your bill is based on the average usage for 12 months, you can keep the surprise of a drastic bill change at bay. Call today to see if you qualify.



***Pay and Save Program:** NPEC offers members a \$1 monthly bill credit to those who sign up for E-bill and autopay with a checking or savings account.

Board approves rate adjustment for 2025

BY SETH SYVERSON, GENERAL MANAGER

As we experience an increasing demand for energy, our power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, is taking the necessary steps to invest in new generation and transmission facilities. These long-term investments will support both load growth and reliability for our cooperative members. The addition of these new facilities does come at a cost. Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) is subject to a 7% increase in power supply costs in 2025.



Syverson

With power supply costs being the largest expense for the cooperative, the NPEC board of directors approved a 3.1% rate increase. The board stressed the need to manage the impact of the power supply increase, so the cooperative will absorb over half the increase itself. The decision aims to balance the need to ensure the cooperative's financial stability, while minimizing the burden on the members.

The approved rate change includes an increase to the monthly service availability charge of \$2 or \$3, dependent on your specific rate schedule. Members who have uncontrolled electric heat or off-peak heat will also see a small increase to their energy rate. In addition, large power accounts will receive an increase to the demand and energy charges as a passthrough from the power supplier increase.

The cooperative strives to keep rates affordable for the members and to minimize the impacts of rising costs to your electric bill. ■

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Scammers will try anything to deceive utility customers, including a tactic that claims customers have overpaid their bill. If you receive a call, text or email from someone claiming you overpaid a utility bill and need to provide your banking or credit card information to receive a credit, it's likely a scam. In most cases, your utility will apply a credit to your account to cover future charges or refund an overpayment with a mailed check.

Source: *Utilities United Against Scams*



Play to Win

Congratulations to Philip Thomas of Jamestown.

Philip is our latest winner of a \$25 bill credit for playing the December bill insert word search contest. Members can regularly check bill inserts for future contests.



5 ways to use smart plugs

Whether you're a smart device expert or a home automation newbie, smart plugs are a great addition to make your home more efficient.

A smart plug connects the plug to an app on your phone via Wi-Fi. The smart plug can then turn an appliance into a fully automated device you can control from your phone or with your voice.

Smart plugs don't cost much and they're easy to install. Just plug them into an outlet and you're ready to go. Regardless of how you intend to use your smart plug, investing in this helpful technology is a wise move.

Check out these creative ways you can use smart plugs around the house to save money and make your life easier.

1. Charge multiple types of devices

Whether you have a two-prong, three-prong or USB plug at the end of a cord, smart plugs can handle them all. Smart plugs come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some ideal for space-saving situations and others fully equipped to handle a variety of appliances and devices.

2. Pinpoint energy-wasting appliances

Want to know exactly how much it costs to run your appliances and devices? Smart plugs can track how much

electricity your appliances use, helping you determine if it's time to upgrade to a more efficient model.

3. Connect with other smart devices

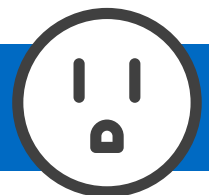
You can get the most out of your smart plug and control your devices from anywhere by connecting it with a smartphone app or a voice assistant like Amazon's Alexa, Apple HomeKit or Google Assistant.

4. Keep your home safe

Smart plugs can reduce the chance of electrical fires by automatically switching off appliances like space heaters and electric blankets. To ward off burglars, you can set timers for lights near windows to make it seem like your home is occupied when you're away.

5. Make holidays more jolly

Plug your festive light displays into a smart plug, so you can create a schedule and have them turn on and off at set times. Or, make Halloween a little spookier by turning lamps on and off through a connected smartphone app. ■



Operation Round Up totals \$37,275 in grants



At its December 2024 meeting, the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) Operation Round Up board of directors approved grants totaling \$10,500 to help support worthy causes. A total of \$37,275 in grants was distributed in 2024.

These charitable grants are made possible through the generosity of NPEC members who voluntarily elect to have their electric bills rounded up to the next dollar. The donated amount averages about 50 cents a month for each participating member and raises approximately \$37,000 each year. Since the program's

inception in October 1998, grants totaling \$973,062 have been awarded to 1,337 local charitable causes.

Grants approved in December include:

- John W. Jones III, Jamestown, medical expenses
- Randy Rogers, Rolla, medical expenses
- Gary and Donna Neys, Buchanan, medical expenses
- North Dakota's Gateway to Science, Bismarck, traveling outreach program to local schools
- Maddock Close-Up, Maddock, student educational trip to Washington, D.C.
- Turtle Mountain Animal Rescue, St. John, Feed Our Heroes project
- Veterans Honor Flight of North Dakota/Minnesota, to take local veterans to Washington, D.C.

If you would like additional information about this worthy program, please contact NPEC by calling 800-882-2500 or obtain guidelines or download applications at www.nplains.com. The board will meet again in March to review applications. The application deadline is Feb. 20. ■

NORTHERN PLAINS

Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

An equal opportunity provider and employer.

CANDO OFFICE:
609 4th Ave.
Cando, ND 58324

CARRINGTON OFFICE:
1515 West Main
Carrington, ND 58421

OFFICE HOURS:
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

www.nplains.com
justask@nplains.com
800-882-2500

BOARD & MANAGEMENT:

President.....	Tracy Boe, Mylo
Vice president.....	Curtis Wiesz, Heaton
Secretary/treasurer.....	Randall Simon, Oberon
Assistant secretary/treasurer.....	Dave Teigen, Rugby
District 1.....	Mark Brehm, Cando
District 1.....	Bruce Olsen, Cando
District 3.....	Lori Carlson, Jamestown
District 3.....	Judy Geier, Heaton
District 3.....	Curtis Hanson, Pettibone
General Manager.....	Seth Syverson
Manager of Engineering.....	Ashten Dewald
Manager of Operations.....	Josh Cabler
IT Manager.....	Chris Mertz
Business Manager.....	Cheryl Belle
Northern Notes Editor.....	Brittnee Wilson