

NORTHERN PLAINS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE 2020 Annual Meeting

RESCHEDULED!
Note: New date
& location

Wednesday, August 19
Foster County Fairgrounds, Carrington

AGENDA

Registration.....
5:30 p.m.

Business Meeting
6:00 p.m.

Supper.....
following business
meeting

*Compliments of
Northern Plains Electric*

ATTENTION:

Due to COVID-19, business meeting will be brief.

Voting will be conducted on proposed bylaw changes at the meeting and by mail-in ballots.

No entertainment or cash prizes will be provided.

NORTHERN PLAINS Electric Cooperative
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

AUGUST 2020

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Scholarship winners named



Payton Howard



Allison Dennis

This past February, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative hosted its annual district meetings that took place in Fessenden, Cando and Jamestown. New to the meetings was the luck-to-draw scholarship opportunity for high school seniors of Northern Plains Electric members. If those seniors stayed for the duration of the meeting and answered one simple question about the meeting, they had a chance to win a \$500 college scholarship.

A second \$500 scholarship was to be given out at Northern Plains Electric's annual meeting in April in Pettibone. Due to COVID-19, that meeting was postponed. Since then, the annual meeting has been rescheduled for Aug. 19 in Carrington. However, since those seniors would be entering college already at that date, Northern Plains conducted the

drawing at in-house meeting in June, drawing two lucky winners from those seniors who attend the district meetings.

Those names are:

- **Payton Howard**, a graduating senior from North Star High School. The daughter of Northern Plains members Alan and Darla Howard of Cando, Payton will continue her education at North Dakota State University in Fargo.
- **Allison Dennis**, a graduating senior from North Star High School. Her guardian is Northern Plains member Marilyn Carter of Cando. Allison plans to further her education at Lake Region State college in Devils Lake.

Congrats, Payton and Allison, and best of luck in your freshman year of college. ■

Youth Tour canceled for 2020



Normally, this time of year, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative shares photos and stories from our teen winner who was selected to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. Sadly, the tour that was scheduled for June 20-26 was canceled the middle of April due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson said in a release earlier

this year, "There's going to be a big void this year in Washington without having the Youth Tour. For over 50 years, teens from rural America have been coming to Washington, D.C., on the trip of a lifetime, courtesy of their local sponsoring electric cooperative, their state association and NRECA. Over the years, these delegates have toured some of the finest museums in the world and visited America's most historic monuments. They have met with their elected officials and explored Capitol Hill. They have learned about the impact electric cooperatives have on their communities."

Lindsey Nyhagen, a sophomore at North Star High School,

won Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's 2020 essay contest this winter and had planned on going. She is the daughter of Northern Plains members Scott and Rebecca Nyhagen of Cando.

We understand the trip was canceled to keep the delegates, staff and communities safe and we support their decision. We also know that Lindsey was looking forward to traveling to our nation's capital for one amazing week of learning.

Northern Plains has offered to send Lindsey on next year's Youth Tour, scheduled from June 19-25, 2021. She has accepted!

Thank you, Lindsey, for waiting a year. It will be worth it! ■



Overhead power lines are necessary to deliver electricity to hardworking farmers and ranchers, but those same power lines can also be deadly if not treated with respect. While you need to focus on the field and your machinery, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative urges you to also watch for electrical hazards around the farm or ranch.

Look up for hazards on the farm

BE AWARE

Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines on all sides. Field cultivators and sprayers can often reach as high as 12 feet in the air.

Use care when raising augers or the bed of a grain truck. It can be difficult to estimate distance, and a power line may be closer than it looks.

USE A SPOTTER

Avoid moving large equipment alone. Have

someone watch as you move equipment to ensure you are clear of power lines.

REALIZE THINGS CHANGE

If you have purchased new equipment, be aware of antennas or other attachments that may pose new hazards. A newer, bigger piece of equipment may no longer clear a line. In addition, shifting soil may also affect whether or not machinery avoids power lines from year-to-year.

Power lines also may

sag over the years. If power lines on your property are sagging, contact your electric cooperative to repair the lines. Never try to move a power line on your own.

EDUCATE THE CREW

Look over work areas carefully for overhead power lines and utility poles. Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines, and use routes to avoid the lines when moving equipment.

Do this every year, as equipment sizes and soil conditions may change.

LOOK AROUND, TOO

Overhead power lines are not the only electric hazard on the farm. Pole guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are grounded. However, when one of the guy wires is broken, it can become charged with electricity. If you break a guy wire, call the cooperative to fix it. Don't do it yourself. ■

ORU helps Rugby youngster

BY BRITTNEE WILSON



Bethany and Ben Mack of rural Rugby with their children **Jaydyn**, 16, **Addi**, 8, **Brilee**, 5, and **Anders**, 3.

Brilee Mack has never led a “normal” life. At the age of 27 days, Brilee was hospitalized for the first time.

Now at age 5, Brilee has had numerous surgeries and hospital stays, the exact number unknown as her parents stopped counting after 12.

Brilee is one of four children of Northern Plains Electric Cooperative members Ben and Bethany Mack of rural Rugby. She loves animals, particularly her old horse, Art. She loves to spend time with her family and to go camping. She loves to roast marshmallows, even though she cannot enjoy them due to her medical conditions.

What makes Brilee so unique is that she has been doctoring for five years and she still is undiagnosed. The Mack family travels to see Brilee’s doctors at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., about every four to six weeks. A typical visit lasts about a week, but they have often stayed two to three

weeks at a time.

Brilee has applied to the Undiagnosed Disease Network (UDN), as suggested by her provider. UDN is a research study that brings together clinical and research experts from across the United States to solve the most challenging medical mysteries using advanced technologies. They are currently waiting to hear if she has been accepted.

What doctors do know about Brilee’s condition is that she is extremely hypoglycemic and struggles with dehydration. To combat this, they have her on a continuous feeding pump that gives her formula and water at a constant rate to keep her blood sugar from dropping.

It is also believed Brilee has a fructose malabsorption issue. She is on a modified diet, because many things that should raise her blood sugar actually drop it instead, like juice, fruit or honey.

They also have found out that there is a correlation with overstimulation and Brilee’s sugar dropping. Although Brilee was enrolled in an all-day preschool this past year, she never attended more than two-and-a-half hours a day due to the toll it took on her body.

Brilee’s mother, Bethany, also described that from early age, it has been extremely difficult for their now 5-year-old to fight off a simple infection like an ear or sinus infection.

“Her last infection ended with 110 consecutive days of antibiotics, three hospital stays and two surgeries. Now due to infection concerns, Brielle takes an antibiotic every other day to try to stay ahead



Brilee Mack wears a feeding pump that gives her formula and water at a constant rate to keep her blood sugar from dropping.

of the game,” Bethany said.

Brilee’s medical conditions really prohibit her from participating in many activities that a “normal” 5-year-old should be enjoying. The Mack family is cautious when it comes to exposure, because everything with Brilee is so unknown. They became especially cautious when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

“I might be the only person in the country, but COVID-19 was a blessing for our family,” Bethany said. Because of social distancing, school and other activities being canceled, the Mack family hunkered down to their farm and cut down on germ exposure and overstimulation issues for Brilee. “This has been the most stable Brilee has been in her entire life,”



Bethany and Brilee in Rochester, Minn., where Brilee doctors at Mayo Clinic

Bethany said.

This wasn't the only time that Bethany's views were unpopular this year. Many would disagree that a snowfall in April would be a godsend, but that's just what it was for Brilee. Because her feeding pump prohibits her from being outside when the temperature drops below 40 degrees, for the first time ever in Brilee's life she was able to play in snow, as April temperatures allowed. A celebration with her siblings, complete with snow angels, of

course, was shared on Bethany's social media page.

Being a parent of a child with medical issues, Bethany has found that sharing some of those struggles on her social media has helped her stay positive.

"I feel if I can be upbeat and look for the positives, hopefully my kids will see that and realize that even in the worst of situations, you can find something good, no matter how small it is," Bethany continued, "Brilee makes me a stronger person each day. She is the fighter and her spunkiness and grins make it all bearable."

Bethany also contributes her positivity to the support she receives from her family and friends and her community. When Brilee has her appointments, it's usually just Bethany who travels with her, as Ben stays back to watch over their three kids and to also run his business. Bethany says that grandparents step in and help when they can, and that their help has been "invaluable." Knowing that everything at home is being handled lets Bethany focus on

Brilee's medical appointments.

In the spring of 2019, friends of the Mack family organized a benefit to help with Brilee's medical/travel expenses. "The support from the community was very humbling," Bethany said. And in the winter of 2020, a family friend spearheaded the process for their local church to apply for an Operation Round Up (ORU) grant on the behalf of the Mack family. Brilee was granted funds by Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up board at the March meeting.

"We are very fortunate to have supportive family and community," Bethany said. "Travel and medical treatments are costly. We are lucky to be able to continue to get her the treatments and care she needs with the help of generous people and programs."

If you would like to help the Mack family, a benefit account is set up at Merchants Bank in Rugby under Brilee Mack Benefit.

For more information on Operation Round Up, visit www.nplains.com or call 800-882-2500. ■

Northern Plains Electric Operation Round Up approves charitable grants

At its June meeting, the Northern Plains Electric Operation Round Up board of directors approved eight grants totaling \$8,900 to help support worthy causes.

These charitable grants are made possible through the generosity of Northern Plains Electric Cooperative 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 participate member and raises approximately \$37,000 each year.

Grants approved in June include:

- North Dakota Association for the Disabled Inc, medications, supplies and travel expenses for clients in NPEC territory.

- Todd Leske Jr., Cando, medical expenses.
- Kenneth LaRocque, St. John, medical expenses.
- Laurie LaRocque, St. John, medical expenses.
- Roxann and Kerry Haugen, Cando, medical expenses.
- Darrel Mitzel, Esmond, medical expenses.
- Pam Mahutga, Woodworth, medical expenses.
- Kirt Tripp, Pettibone, medical expenses

The board meets quarterly to review applications.

Deadline to submit for the next quarter is Aug. 20. To apply, find an application on our website www.nplains.com. ■

Is solar right for you?

Solar panels are good for the environment, but what's their effect economically? That's the question Northern Plains Electric Cooperative was searching for when we installed a 16-panel solar system at our Carrington office in 2015 as a research project.

North Dakota already has some of the lowest electric rates in the country. And because of the state's northern location, the sun shines for as little as eight hours a day in winter and up to 16 hours a day in summer, according to the National Weather Service.

It's this limited access to the sun during a good portion of the year that can limit the solar panel's output. So, by purchasing a solar system, how long will it take the co-op to see the return on its investment?

"That's what this project is for, to find out if it's economically feasible," said Scott Buchholtz, manager of information technology.

Choosing a system

Before you install any solar or wind generation system, you are required to apply for an interconnection agreement with Northern Plains Electric and get prior approval from the co-op for the equipment you are planning to purchase and install. Check out our website for all the policies applicable to this or give us a call before you purchase anything.

After doing our own research, Northern Plains Electric chose a 6.56-kilowatt solar system to install at its Carrington office headquarters. Click on the "Solar" link on our website to see this system's kilowatt-hour output in

real time, along with a history of its performance.

The economic value of a solar system is in self-generating power, Buchholtz said, because the members can replace power they would otherwise purchase from the co-op at about 10 cents a kilowatt-hour (KWH). If the system generates more electricity than they can use at any instant in time, the members can sell any excess power back to the co-op.

"However, we would purchase that electricity from you at the co-op's avoided cost of energy production rate – the rate which represents only the fuel that was not used to generate this electricity by our power suppliers. That rate is about 2 cents per KWH as of January 2020. Cent-for-cent, it's worth more if you use what you're generating, as opposed to selling it back to the co-op," Buchholtz said.

Northern Plains is using every KWH generated by its solar system, as we always have a load larger than the solar system's maximum output. But you should take into consideration that this is due to the co-op office having large computer server systems that operate continuously and they require almost constant climate control. This is not the case for most homes, as many people are at work during the day.

Another thing to consider is the alignment of time the solar arrays produce the most electricity versus when the highest demand occurs for the cooperative. In North Dakota, your electric bill is usually higher in the winter as we spend more time indoors, with more hours of lighting required, along with your furnace operating

to heat your home. All this takes more energy than a residence tends to use in the summer months. As you will see in the "Total Energy Generated" chart (right), solar produced in June, July and August produces almost three times as many KWH than in December and January. In a nutshell, for many people, solar production in North Dakota will typically generate the least amount of power at a time where you would need it the most.

One of the most confusing aspects of renewable energy is the difference between installed capacity and the actual output that is obtained from the solar system. For example, most think because you have a 10-kilowatt solar system, you just take 10 kilowatts x 24 hours a day = 240 KWH a day of power it will generate. That would be true if it was producing electricity at 100 percent output all day long. However, the sun doesn't shine all day long and because of our geographic location, the changing of the seasons resulting in fewer hours of available sunlight, along with an accompanying lower angle of the sun, and several other factors, the system cannot produce at 100 percent of capacity the majority of the time. In fact, the 6.56-kilowatt system at the Carrington office for the past three years (2017-2019), has produced power at an average annual capacity factor of just 15 percent.

Analyzing return

When buying a solar system, size it for YOUR use. If you oversize, your payback could potentially be longer than the panels themselves may last. Most users would do best to look at your monthly summer

KWH usage to determine the number of solar panels you may consider installing vs looking at your winter usage.

Northern Plains is looking at

a 20-year return on its \$19,000 16-panel system. Without the \$10,000 in grants received, the payback period would extend to a 30-year return.

For more information, visit www.nplains.com or call us at 800-882-2500. ■

Total Energy Generated [kWh]

| Year | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total | \$ Saved |
|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|----------|
| 2020 | 321 | 678 | 868 | 947 | 1019 | 1048 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 4881 | \$537 |
| 2019 | 303 | 190 | 879 | 814 | 958 | 942 | 1138 | 978 | 710 | 474 | 250 | 190 | 7825 | \$861 |
| 2018 | 398 | 593 | 765 | 1113 | 1015 | 1051 | 1142 | 1004 | 757 | 584 | 266 | 257 | 8945 | \$984 |
| 2017 | 276 | 538 | 723 | 759 | 905 | 1016 | 1208 | 1011 | 760 | 721 | 426 | 332 | 8675 | \$954 |
| 2016 | 325 | 484 | 831 | 821 | 975 | 1104 | 991 | 1042 | 730 | 536 | 440 | 248 | 8527 | \$938 |
| 2015 | - | - | - | - | 530 | 961 | 1065 | 1019 | 861 | 607 | 413 | 232 | 5689 | \$626 |

Spreading joy during a pandemic

BY BRITTNEE WILSON



Arts Council spent the evening painting over 30 windows for the residents at Towner County Living Center in Cando. Babe Benson, an area resident, was a recipient of a Thrivent Live Generously grant project and offered it to the Cando Art Council to come up with an idea to best share with the community.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, elder living centers across the country were put on high alert, not allowing visitations and taking

extra precautions to social distance residents. Kathy L. Benson, CAC’s secretary, came up with the idea to paint inspirational messages and joyful images on the residents’ windows, in hopes to bring them joy in such a dark time.

And that’s just what they did!

“We are so blessed that they took the time to brighten our resident’s lives,” said Towner County Living Center’s Activity Director Beth Yoder. ■

The Cando Arts Council (CAC) is used to doing the “behind-the-scenes” work to bring art shows, theater productions and art classes to Cando for area residents to enjoy or participate in. Early this June, members did something they never done before – put the paint in their hands.

After a regular council meeting, council members of the Cando



Cando Arts Council members paint uplifting imagery and messages on residents windows at the Towner County Living Center.



Journeyman **Chris Schroeder**

Safety training saves lives

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRITTNEE WILSON

Safety is the top priority at Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC). We take the time to educate crews and office employees to provide a powerful culture of safety in the workplace.

In addition to our in-house Safety Committee that meets monthly to go over incidents and potentially unsafe scenarios, job-specific safety training is given to Northern Plains' employees on a regular basis.

In June, lineworkers participated in an annual educational course conducted by Mike Koenig, a safety instructor with the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC), on pole-top rescue. Each lineworker had to climb a pole, secure a rope around the waist of a 200-pound mannequin and lower the "body" to the ground.

Regularly reviewing what they already know can make the difference between life and death in a critical situation for lineworkers who sometimes work long hours

in extreme weather conditions to restore electric service following an outage.

We hope our lineworkers never have to perform a rescue, but if they do, they will be prepared. ■



Journeyman **Brian Backer**

NORTHERN PLAINS Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

An equal opportunity provider and employer.

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