

Northern Plains recognizes employees for years of service

Every year, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative expresses appreciation to those employees who have achieved a significant work anniversary. This year, we recognized 10 employees at our annual employee meeting who have put in a collective 245 years of service to the cooperative.

We thank these employees for their commitment to our cooperative and the role they each play in providing our members with safe, reliable and affordable electric service. Please join us in expressing appreciation for their many years of dedicated service. ■

40 YEARS



Stan Pierson
line foreman

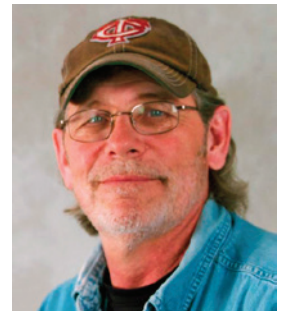


Cal Schlieve
line foreman

35 YEARS



Kevin Larson
district engineer



Mark Frost
line foreman

25 YEARS



Cathy Klocke
office assistant



Bob David
tree crew

20 YEARS

15 YEARS



Randy Thomson
lineworker



Jon Sjostrom
lineworker

10 YEARS



Seth Syverson
general manager



Jonathan Tandeski
lineworker

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Technology in the field
- Northern Plains earns safety award
- Safety poster contest announced
- ...and more

MAY 2019

Northern Plains earns safety award

The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) hosted the 55th annual Apprenticeship Training and Safety (AT&T) Conference in Bismarck in January.

At the awards banquet, Northern Plains Electric was awarded with a certificate of safety achievement from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). By receiving this award, Northern Plains participated in the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program, which is a three-year program that creates a culture of safety that starts with a leadership commitment from the manager, followed by a safety health check performed by the cooperative. This self-check is essentially graded by auditors at NDAREC after doing onsite inspections of all of Northern Plains Electric's eight warehouses and two offices to see what is being done correctly and to point out areas of improvement.

Northern Plains Electric also participated in an annual Safety Improvement Plan (SIP), in which



Northern Plains Apprentice Lineworker **Thomas Moravec** accepted the safety award on behalf of the cooperative from NDAREC safety instructors **Jeff Tweten** (left) and **Brian Lakoduk**.

employees met as a team to gather input on what categories needed more focus based on previous years of data. After the information is gathered, goals are structured, while keeping safety as the number-one priority.

The award Northern Plains Electric accepted is an acknowledgment that it successfully completed all of the programs as the co-op continues to stay dedicated to employee and public safety, regulatory compliance and loss control. ■



NPEC announces safety poster contest winners

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) hosted a safety poster contest asking for our members' children to show us "how to stay safe around electricity." The purpose of the contest is to help bring more awareness to the dangers of electricity. At Northern Plains Electric, safety always comes first,

and we are dedicated to doing our part to teach children how to be safe around electricity.

Fifty children entered their drawings, with a wide variety of scenes showing safety precautions taken at their home or on the farm. The judging of the contest took place during the all-employee meeting in March by Northern

Plains Electric employees. First through third place winners in each category received a cash prize.

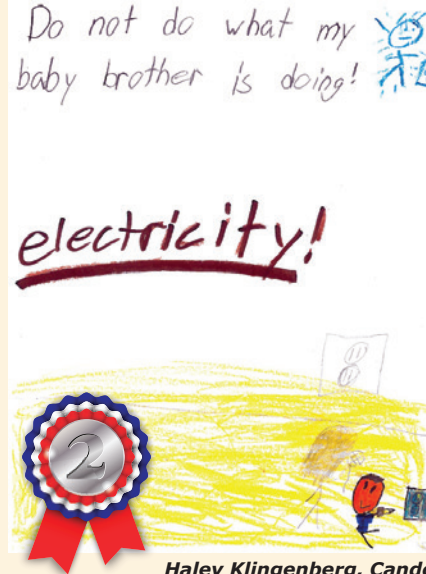
We hope the contest made the children more aware of their responsibility in practicing safety around electricity.

Thank you to all who participated and congratulations to the winners! ■

Kindergarten-first grade



Graham Kuginskie, Pingree



Haley Klingenberg, Cando



Addysin Armstrong, Bisbee

Second grade-third grade



Emmi Odenbach, Buchanan

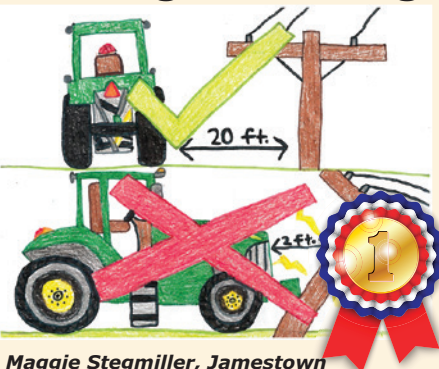


Leighton Martz, Cando

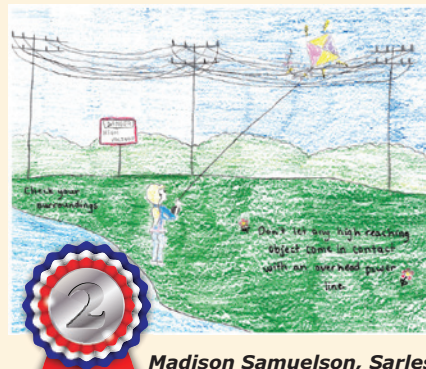


Brian Kurtti, Mylo

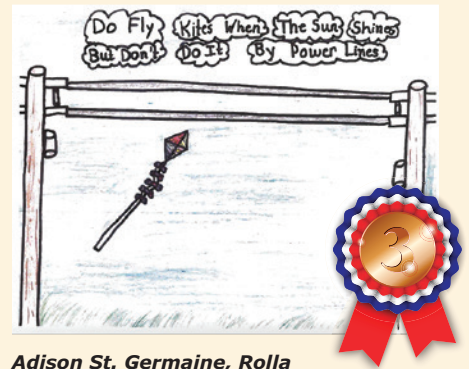
Fourth grade-sixth grade



Maggie Stegmiller, Jamestown



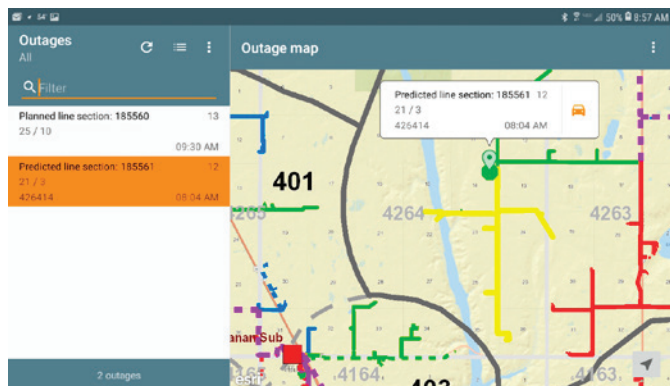
Madison Samuelson, Sarles



Adison St. Germaine, Rolla

Technology in the field

BY BRITTNEE WILSON



An outage map helps lineworkers see exactly where they need to work.

To say that technology has changed the world in just a few short years is an understatement. Technology, for the most part, has made many jobs more efficient, safer and more accurate, including the job of the electrical lineworker.

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative has recently taken another step to connect its lineworkers with newer technologies by providing each lineworker with a handheld tablet. There are many benefits to having lineworkers equipped with their own tablet in the field.

The lineworkers' morning starts with dispatch loading work orders on their tablets, detailing the day's projects. This can include a list of materials so they can pull those materials from inventory before they leave the warehouse.

Also on their work order is a map to their job locations. Gone are the days of cumbersome map books that were likely outdated the day they were printed. Now, lineworkers have mapping that is constantly being updated right in their hands.

A huge benefit of this mapping software is having a live feed of the cooperative service area when there is an electrical outage. When an outage is reported, it is entered into the system's outage map by dispatch. Then, crews can see exactly where the outages are and where to go, just by looking at their tablets. This helps shorten outage response time during work hours, during the night or during storms. Also from their tablets, they can look up member information if that member needs to be contacted; this is especially beneficial after-hours when the cooperative's offices are closed.

In addition to helping lineworkers perform their job more efficiently, tablets are now a big part of the cooperative's safety procedures. Downloaded onto their tablets is the Federated Rural Electric Insurance S.A.F.E. app. Complete with job safety checklists, this app helps line crews identify hazards and slow down in an effort to eliminate shortcuts and missed steps. After each checklist is complete, it automatically sends a report to the supervisors. Lineworkers use the app on all work orders, even small routine jobs where many of the worst injuries can occur.

Another technology lineworkers use today is a forward-looking infrared camera, also known as FLIR. With this technology, crews can rapidly scan power lines, transformers and other equipment when searching for hot spots. A piece of distribution equipment about to fail will often get hot. While not visible to the naked eye, it shows on the FLIR display. Scanning the system with a FLIR camera is a fast and accurate means of spotting a problem before it becomes an outage.

These technologies used in the field not only help the line crews work safer and more efficient, but also save the cooperative time and money. Because Northern Plains Electric is a cooperative, those savings are passed onto you, the member-owner. Having a well-connected lineworker is just one of the ways Northern Plains is committed to improving your electrical service. ■



Lineworkers use tablets on a daily basis.



You've planned every acre Have you planned for your safety?

As spring planting nears, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative reminds hardworking farmers and ranchers to stay safe.

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

Be aware

Farmers and their equipment should always be 10 feet away from power lines on all sides. Field cultivators and sprayers can often reach as high as 12 feet in the air. Practice extreme caution and use a spotter to make sure you stay far away from power lines when you use tall equipment.

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 Northern Plains to repair the lines. Never try to move a power line on your own.

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.

Follow these other tips:

- Check 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.
- Be aware of increased heights of equipment, especially new equipment with higher antennas.
- Avoid moving large equipment alone. Have someone watch as you move equipment to ensure you are clear of power lines. ■

What if you contact a power line?

Imagine that you are driving a tractor to the field when things come to a screeching halt. You look back to see what's stopping you, only to discover that you're tangled in an overhead power line! What do you do?

- First, **DON'T** climb out. If your equipment does contact a power line, stay in the cab and call for help. Warn others to stay away and wait until the electric cooperative arrives. Most utility lines are uninsulated, bare wires. Do not let your body become a direct link between the power line and the ground.
- If you must leave the tractor due to immediate danger, such as a fire, jump as far away as you can, making sure that no part of your body touches the tractor and the ground at the same time. Land with both feet together and hop or shuffle your feet a few inches at a time, making sure to never break contact with the ground or cause separation between your feet.
- Once you're off the tractor, do not go back until your local electric co-op disconnects the power line.



Starting his career at Baker Electric in 1975 (left), Evan devoted much of his life to the cooperative.



Evan Miller retires after nearly 44 years

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

One of the longest-working employees at Northern Plains Electric has said goodbye. After nearly 44 years, Evan Miller has retired.

Straight from college, Miller's whole career has been dedicated to the cooperative. At age 20, Miller graduated from lineworkers school from Bismarck Junior College (BJC) on a Friday in May 1975. That following Monday was his first day at Baker Electric. Baker Electric Cooperative (Cando) and Tri-County Cooperative (Carrington) consolidated in January 1997 to form Northern Plains Electric Cooperative.

Miller started his career as a lineworker on the underground construction crew in Cando. He really enjoyed the underground work, trenching and laying wire for that crew for about eight years. But when an opportunity for a foreman position opened at Baker Electric's Rugby outpost, he couldn't pass it up.

"I believe I was the youngest lineman to be promoted to foreman for Baker Electric at age 28," Miller recalls.

He worked out of the Rugby outpost as foreman for three years, then found his way back to Cando when he was offered the warehouseman position in the fall of 1986. He continued his position as warehouseman for more than 32 years, until his retirement. Although he was based in the Cando warehouse, he oversaw all of Northern Plains's eight warehouses across our service area. His typical day consisted of receiving phone calls from other Northern Plains outposts on their needs, ordering materials and correct safety equipment, delivering materials and performing tool repairs.

For 13 years, from 2005-2018, when Northern Plains and Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative had their cooperative alliance, Miller was also the sole warehouseman for Dakota Valley's six warehouses.

"I was responsible for the buying of 14 different locations for 13 years," Miller says. "When the alliance first formed, it was a mess using two different ordering systems, so I had to get both cooperatives on the same page to make ordering seamless."

A lot of advances in technology have changed Miller's job over the years. He recalls vividly when the co-op went to the iVue computer programming system in 1996. "Once implemented, I was able to look up all of our inventory items and quantities to place orders accordingly. It was really nice and a big time-saver to look up the inventory without actually having to go out and count each item," he says.

Advances not only took place with in-house technology during Miller's career, but also on the line.

"When I first started, there was only one truck for the whole service area, no four-wheel-drive and no power tools. I had worked for Baker Electric for close to 10 years before I ever set foot into a bucket truck. Before then, we had to do all



Evan in 1990, working in the warehouse fixing a meter box.

“When I first started, there was only one truck for the whole service area, no four-wheel-drive and no power tools.”

our work by climbing the poles,” Miller recalls.

Miller was seasoned with experience of different types of jobs within the cooperative, but when asked about his favorite job, he responded without hesitation, “being on the line and getting the power restored to members during an outage. When the lights finally came on, it was the best feeling.”

Throughout his career, Miller was in the midst of many storms, but the one storm that sticks in his mind was in November 2005,

when a major winter storm rocked Dakota Valley’s system. The storm left more than 550 broken poles and 1,500 members without electricity. Lineworkers from other co-ops all over North Dakota and Minnesota came to Dakota Valley’s aide. Crews worked heavily around the clock in an effort to restore electricity to their members and Miller was at the helm, ordering new materials and getting them ready for the crews on a daily basis. Because he was Dakota Valley’s warehouseman and due to the desperate need for

round-the-clock hours, Miller lived out of a Wahpeton hotel for two weeks in efforts to get the system restored as quickly as possible.

Although Miller says he would miss working for the co-op, he is ready to enjoy retirement. As a well-known “Harley man,” he plans to spend many hours on his motorcycle. As for bigger plans, he and his significant other, Annette, will celebrate his retirement with travel plans to Las Vegas and Alaska in the spring to visit family. Evan has four grown children and six grandchildren, with whom he looks forward to spending more time.

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative thanks Evan for his dedication and years of service to the co-op. We wish him well in his retirement. ■



Cando student earns \$1000 scholarship

Kayla Nyhagen has earned a \$1,000 scholarship from Northern Plains Electric Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative. She is a senior at North Star High School and the daughter of Northern Plains Electric Cooperative members Scott and Rebecca Nyhagen of Cando.

Kayla plans to pursue her higher education at Lake Region State College in Devils Lake, majoring in nursing. She is active in volleyball, SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), National Honor Society, Student Council, Wednesday Youth Group, choir and her local food pantry.

The scholarship is based on many factors, including an essay on how a cooperative can build a culture to best serve its members. Kayla’s winning essay was one of 20 winners chosen in a member cooperative employee category through Basin Electric. Congratulations, Kayla! ■



Operation Round Up awards \$10,400 in grants

Operation Round Up wouldn't be possible without you, the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative member who generously elects to have his or her electric bill 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 beginning in October 1998, grants totaling \$759,762 have been awarded to 1,037 local charitable causes. Northern Plains is proud to serve the communities that come together to help one another in times of need.

At its March meeting, the Northern Plains Electric Operation Round Up board of directors approved 13 grants totaling \$10,400 to help support local worthy causes.

Grants approved in March include:

- Paul Grann, Perth, to assist with medical expenses.
- Donald Long, Heaton, to assist with medical expenses.
- Sylvia Martin, Pettibone, to assist with medical expenses.
- Tina Hendrickson, Bisbee, to assist with medical expenses.
- Charles LaRocque, Rocklake, to assist with medical expenses.
- Deborah Jacobson, Maddock, to assist with medical expenses.
- Ruby Duciaome, Carrington, to assist with medical expenses.
- Jane Forde, Carrington, to assist with medical expenses.
- Lynn Schultz, Medina, to assist with medical expenses.
- Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota, Maddock, new laptop for Maddock office.
- Steele Swimming Pool, Steele, assist with major pool repairs.
- Father's Farm, Wolford, funding for housing, kitchen, rural water and sewage system.
- Ave Maria Village, Jamestown, funding for kitchen upgrade.

Any person or group in the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative service area may apply to receive an Operation Round Up grant.

To request an application or to opt into the program, contact our business office at 1-800-882-2500 or download the form at our website www.nplains.com. The next round of applications are due May 29. ■

**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..... **Russell Carlson, Jamestown**
District 3..... **Judy Geier, Heaton**
District 3..... **Curtis Hanson, Pettibone**
General Manager..... **Seth Syverson**
Manager of Engineering & Operations **Ashten Dewald**
IT Manager **Scott Buchholtz**
Business Manager..... **Cheryl Belle**
Northern Notes Editor..... **Brittnee Wilson**