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*Happy Holidays!*

**McLean Electric Cooperative  
wishes you and your family a  
wonderful holiday filled with joy  
and a prosperous new year!**







PHOTOS BY DAKOTAS AMERICA

Dakotas America governing board and advisory board members at Rockyford School in South Dakota.



# Making a life-changing impact

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Christmas isn't an easy time of the year for those in low-income, underprivileged areas of the United States – and those areas exist in rural and urban locations alike.

They exist in North Dakota.

Dakotas America is working to change that.

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) has a voice in helping bring positive change here in North Dakota and beyond through its involvement with the organization.

Dakotas America is a certified development entity that administers the dollars from the federal New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program. It's a nationwide extension of North Dakota's Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC) and Dakota Resources, its

South Dakota counterpart. MEC General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl was elected to serve on the RDFC board of directors and that organization appointed him to serve on the Dakotas America board of directors.

The mission of electric cooperatives throughout the United States is essentially to provide reliable, affordable electricity as nonprofit entities. Yet, part of that mission also bears a responsibility to community, consumer-members and beyond.

The Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC) is part of that commitment and responsibility to community. MEC's participation in RDFC helped McLean County residents realize firsthand the value of that commitment and the

partnerships that make it a reality. One example is a low-interest loan to the Underwood Rural Fire Department, helping it purchase a fire pumper truck.

The Garrison Area Improvement Association qualified for another RDFC low-interest loan, enabling the purchase of boat slip docks at Fort Stevenson State Park.

Pumper trucks help save lives and property. Boat slips improve the quality of life for North Dakotans and generate revenue for Garrison, McLean County and the state of North Dakota.

RDFC is a nonprofit finance and development corporation owned by every North Dakota rural electric cooperative, nine North Dakota rural telecommunication cooperatives, and the North Dakota Association



*Dakotas America support has improved medical care in rural America through a program it helps fund at the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Auburn University, Auburn, Ala.*

of Rural Electric Cooperatives. A portion of funding for RDFC and Dakota Resources is generated from Dakotas America that attracts private investment for large-scale projects located in underserved and low-income census tracts throughout the United States using the federal New Markets Tax Credit Program.

The application process is rigorous, with applications judged and scored to determine what certified development entities receive allocations. The Dakotas America staff is one of the best in the business and has had great success in winning allocations, Dahl added. Earlier this year, Dakotas America was awarded one of the top two awards in the nation.

Family HealthCare, Fargo, is one benefactor of Dakotas America's NMTC-enhanced financing. Renovation of an historic downtown building allowed the health care facility to better serve its low-income patients. The Dakotas America impact report estimated 73 percent of those served at Family HealthCare live 200 percent below the national poverty line.

Two Dakotas America projects especially stand out for Dahl: The North Omaha (Neb.)

Intergenerational Campus and the Oglala Lakota County School District, Rockyford, S.D. Both projects were enlightening, he said, especially after he had the opportunity to visit the Pine Ridge, S.D., school.

The North Omaha Intergeneration Campus works with people of all ages in one of the poorest areas in Omaha. It provides meals and safe housing for those in need, and public health care, for example.

Dakotas America provided \$9 million toward the \$22 million school construction program, which wouldn't have been possible otherwise given the district's poverty level.

"It's very uplifting to be part of that board and we've made a real difference in some people's lives," Dahl described. "The smallest investment we've made is probably \$9 million or \$10 million." Without large-scale funding through New Markets Tax Credit Programs such as those administered by Dakotas America, the projects wouldn't be a reality "because they're underserved areas with high unemployment or high poverty levels," Dahl said.

The federal New Markets Tax Credit Program is the driving

funding source for the projects, Dahl explained. NMTC provides tax incentives to private investors, bringing in the amount of funding necessary for large-scale projects that wouldn't be available otherwise. Federal legislation creating NMTC specifies investment must be made in economically distressed and underserved areas.

Projects funded through Dakotas America and its allocation of NMTC have made an impact since its establishment:

- More than 150 medical students returned to work in underserved and rural areas through the program with Dakotas America and the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Auburn, Ala.
- More than 300,000 low-income people have access to improved health care.
- More than 4,900 quality jobs have been created.
- Almost 1.6 million square feet of real estate has been developed, including helping rural grain elevators such as Berlin and Oakes and McLaughlin, S.D., expand, enabling the agricultural-based community to sustain economic viability.

Dakotas America recently allocated more than \$348,000 each for RDFC and Dakota Resources to support rural economic development.

Even though Dakotas America projects are large-scale, it still makes a difference through allocations to RDFC on the local level, including McLean County, Dahl explained.

Dakotas America applies for allocations annually, Dahl described, but is not always a recipient. When it is, though, it makes a huge difference in people's lives and it's a program Dahl is proud to represent in North Dakota and McLean Electric. ■





# Christmas

## in McLean County

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

**G**arrison's Dickens Village Festival marks its 25th anniversary in 2018, with the popular event concluding Dec. 7 and 8.

Several other McLean County communities also bring the spirit of Christmas home during the month of December:

### MAX

Gathering over a meal is an opportunity to share laughter, friendships and family when Max celebrates Santa's arrival with a free pancake and sausage breakfast Dec. 8.

The longstanding community-wide event also spreads goodwill and Christmas spirit by encouraging breakfast-goers to help stock the community food pantry, Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, with nonperishable food item donations. Monetary donations supporting the food pantry will also be accepted during the breakfast, described Susan Halverson, a longtime event volunteer.

Sponsored by the Max Civic Club and Garrison State Bank, "we actually serve right around 100 people," Halverson suggested. "And Santa will arrive at 10 a.m."

Breakfast with Santa will be held at the Max Community Center from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Dec. 8.

### TURTLE LAKE

Volunteers for Turtle Lake's Santa Store were busy collecting items throughout the year to stock their "store" at the community's American Legion Building.

The popular event was held Dec. 3. It typically draws at least 50 to 60 children. "Pretty much everyone in the elementary school comes," longtime volunteer Linda Huelsman added.

Children can shop for friends, parents, grandparents and anyone else on their Christmas list while parents and guardians can relax with coffee and cookies. "Nothing costs more than \$10," Huelsman described.

Sponsored by the Turtle Lake Chamber of Progress,

Huelsman said volunteers set up the store – long covered rows of tables adorned with new merchandise purchased or donated for the children to buy. Volunteers help the children shop and even wrap their purchases for them.

“It takes us three days to set it up. ... We cover the tables. ... Last year, we had every table full,” she described.

It’s an opportunity for the young participants to buy presents without mom or dad knowing what they’re getting. It also provides a means for children in some families to purchase gifts they might not otherwise be able to afford.

Children can select jewelry, toys, blankets, tools and an array of other “must-have” items for adults and kids, alike. They can even buy a gift for the favorite pet because dog toys are often on the “shelves” as well.

Troy Presser, rural Turtle Lake, also volunteers with the Santa Store. His passion for the project helped generate support from Basin Electric Power Cooperative. Presser, a McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) board member, also serves on the board of McLean Electric’s two wholesale electric providers, Central Power Electric Cooperative and Basin Electric, as McLean Electric’s representative.

The Santa Store provides opportunities for children they might not otherwise have, Presser explained. Basin Electric Power Cooperative’s supports stems from the cooperative principle, commitment to community. It’s a concept Basin Electric has used in other communities to help establish Santa Stores for children, such as two in Wyoming. “They (Basin) would like to see it expand,” Presser added.

As Huelsman helps wrap, assist children in selecting the perfect gift, and glances over the busy crowd of young people, she marvels at the excitement and joy during the three-hour shopping spree. “It’s really been a fun things to watch. ... It’s just fun,” she smiled.

## **UNDERWOOD**

Underwood’s Soup and Bread Dinner and Hometown Holiday Concert and Santa are just two events highlighting several activities celebrating the Christmas spirit. The dinner and concert will be held at the Underwood school with times to be determined.

The Northern Expression Art Council presents the play, “One Bright Star,” at 6:15 p.m. Dec. 16 at St. John’s Lutheran Church, Underwood Area Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Wendy Spencer added. A live nativity scene begins prior to the presentation at 5:30 p.m. and continues afterward at 7 p.m.

Other events held earlier include the annual Kountry

Kids 4-H Craft and Bake Sale, Shop Local Saturday, Kid’s Shopping and community tree lighting.

## **WASHBURN**

Another longstanding community Christmas event is Washburn’s annual Santa Party Dec. 7.

Held at the Washburn Memorial Building, a holiday vendor show takes place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. “Santa will arrive at 11:30 a.m.,” Washburn Area Economic Development Association Economic Development Director Tana Larsen explained.

Sponsored by the Washburn Civic Club, the popular event is for all ages, Larsen described. “It’s just amazing how many kids come out of the woodwork for this,” she added.

The Santa Party is a culmination of several other holiday activities held earlier in Washburn, which included the second annual community Christmas tree lighting ceremony and lighted parade, “Small Business Saturday” promotion, and its inaugural “Ladies Night Out” shopping in Washburn – complete with snacks – held Dec. 5.

## **WILTON**

Like several other McLean County communities, celebrating Christmas with Santa Claus early in December has proven to be a popular event in Wilton.

Sponsored by the Wilton Lions Club, Santa Claus Day takes place Dec. 8 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Santa Claus somehow manages to slip away from his workshop to visit with area children about noon each year.

The event is held at the Wilton City Hall, Lions Club representative Todd Weisenberger added.

Even though the final weekend of the Dickens Festival highlights Garrison’s activities Dec. 7 and 8, Santa still takes center stage with Milk and Cookies with Santa Dec. 8 at the Garrison Lamplighters Center (adjacent to City Hall).

Held from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., the popular children’s event is a tradition sponsored by the Garrison Chamber of Commerce Trade Promotions Committee, described Garrison CVB Director McKaila Behles. ■



# Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree, Much hazards do you bring thee!

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), U.S. fire departments respond to an average of 230 home fires that start with Christmas trees each year. Whether you're pining for pine, fervent for fir or even if you're ardently artificial, Christmas tree fires can be avoided by following some simple safety tips.



**While decorative lights and other electrical decorations add to the splendor of the season, they can increase the risks of fire and electrical injuries if not used safely. Here are more tips from McLean Electric Cooperative:**

- Follow the manufacturer's use and care instructions that accompany electrical decorations.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.
- Make sure that cords are not pinched in doors, windows or under heavy furniture, which could damage the cord's insulation.
- Do not mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations used for outdoor decorating are marked for outdoor use.
- Match power needs (amperage) of electrical products with amperage rating of extension cords.
- Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, the house, or other firm supports to protect them from wind damage, but take care not to attach the lights in a way that could damage the cord's insulation.
- Keep all extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water.



**JUNE 15-21, 2019**

**WRITE A WINNING ESSAY AND**

# **WIN A TRIP OF A LIFETIME!**



**AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.**

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by McLean Electric Cooperative.
- If you have a question, contact Sonja Moe, McLean Electric, at the address listed below, or call 701-463-6700 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 31, 2019. Emailed entries should be directed to sonjadm@mcleanelectric.com, and hard-copy entries mailed to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, McLean Electric Cooperative, 4031 Hwy. 37 Bypass NW, PO Box 399, Garrison, ND 58540-0399.

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1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of McLean Electric Cooperative.
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## **ESSAY QUESTION:**

*Electric cooperatives are member-owned and controlled. As a future member-owner of your cooperative, describe ways that smart technologies and social media might be used to communicate with young adults. How might they be used to increase awareness and interest in the many career opportunities with electric cooperatives?*

**CHECK OUT THE ESSAY-CONTEST GUIDELINES AT**  
**[www.ndyouthtour.com](http://www.ndyouthtour.com)**

**HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES & JUNIORS**

North Dakota Electric Cooperative

# **YOUTH TOUR**

# Operation Round Up grants awarded

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Operation Round Up continues enriching people's lives in McLean County.

The Operation Round Up board of directors awarded three grants during its fall 2018 meeting on Nov. 1:

- Tiny Turtles Daycare, Turtle Lake - \$2,500 for kitchen upgrades.
- North Dakota Association for the Disabled - \$1,000 to continue providing lake recreational opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Turtle Lake Hospital Association, Turtle Lake - \$2,500 to help fund a new elevator.

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program in which McLean Electric consumers round up their monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar. Money goes into a trust fund, with grants awarded by a seven-member volunteer board.

The most a McLean Electric account could contribute annually is \$11.88. For a majority of MEC consumers, that averages about \$6 annually when each month's bill is rounded to the nearest dollar.

McLean Electric's seven board of directors each appoint three people to the cooperative's advisory committee.

The advisory committee, in turn, elects the Operation Round Up board of directors from among its membership.

The Operation Round Up board focuses on the organization's goals and mission of serving individuals or

families in need and nonprofit organizations providing services within McLean Electric's service area in its ranking process as it reviews applications. Serving on the Operation Round Up board of directors is a volunteer, non-paying position.

The next grant round will be in the spring of 2019. Applications details are available on McLean Electric's website, [www.mcleanelectric.com](http://www.mcleanelectric.com), or applicants can call McLean Electric Cooperative Member Services Representative Sonja Moe at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922 for more information. ■



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