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Two director seats up for election

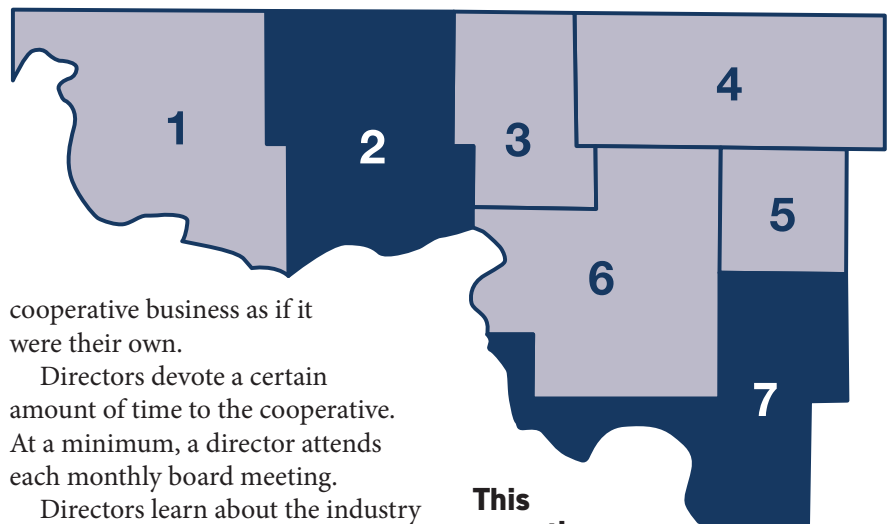
Do you want to become a director?

Have you ever thought of running for a seat on the board of directors? It is quite simple. Pick up a petition at the McLean Electric Cooperative headquarters in Garrison and secure 15 signatures of members from within your district. You can start circulating the petition right away, but it must be filed not less than 60 days before the annual meeting. Petitions for the 2020 director election must be filed with the co-op by Friday, April 17.

According to the bylaws, any member of McLean Electric Cooperative who is a member of this cooperative as a bona fide resident of the district he/she represents and is in no way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise can become a candidate for the board of directors. Directors shall be elected by the members at large.

Director duties

Directors have a fiduciary responsibility to the cooperative. They exercise care, time and responsibility in reviewing cooperative matters. Directors treat



cooperative business as if it were their own.

Directors devote a certain amount of time to the cooperative. At a minimum, a director attends each monthly board meeting.

Directors learn about the industry as a whole by reading other materials and by attending state and national meetings. An understanding of the issues facing the industry is vital.

To help directors with their responsibilities, training is offered through the electric cooperative's statewide organization. Courses cover director duties and liabilities, understanding the electric business, board roles and relationships, strategic planning and financial decision-making.

Directors who currently serve the cooperative find the duty extremely rewarding.

This year, the districts up for election are:

- **District 2**, which includes the townships of Douglas, Blue Hill, Gate, Roseglen, 149-86, 149-85, Saint Mary, 148-86, Blackwater, 147-88, 147-87, 147-86. District 2 is currently served by Clarence Behles.
- **District 7**, which includes the townships of Mercer, 146-80, 145-80, 145-84, 145-79, 144-80, 144-81, 144-82, 144-83, 144-84, 143-81, 143-80. District 7 is currently served by Larry Gessele. ■

**2020 annual meeting
to be held June 16, 2020, in Garrison**

Two directors will be elected at the McLean Electric Cooperative 75th annual meeting, Tuesday, June 16, in Garrison



MEC Line Foreman **Travis Voht** and Lineworker **Trevor Thomas** provide Turtle Lake-Mercer Public School third-graders a hands-on tour of the big bucket truck during an electrical safety demonstration.

It's never too early to think electrical safety in the outdoors

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

It's the dead of March and who knows how soon farmers can get in the fields and people can turn to the outdoors for gardening and recreation. However, it's never too early to think about outdoor electrical safety.

Spring is such a busy season across North Dakota, it's easy to

forget about electrical safety when it's time to plant everything, from crops to gardens, and starting landscaping projects.

One of the biggest safety issues is the fact that people tend to want to plant things around electrical equipment, described McLean Electric Cooperative Operations

Manager Keith Thelen.

Perhaps it's somewhat understandable, because not everyone's idea of garden art includes a 30-foot power pole in the yard. And those "green things" – technically called pad-mount transformers or sectionalizers, depending on their function and location – aren't the most aesthetic objects, either.

While planting flowers or vegetables, shrubs, trees, adding a fence, or even some form of decorative garden art may conceal the pole or electrical box, it makes it difficult for lineworkers to access the box or power pole.

In addition, those warning labels placed squarely on the top of that green structure are here for a reason – it's dangerous to touch the equipment inside. Thelen admits poles and electrical boxes may lack in appearance, "but it is a necessity."

Construction crews also try to be cognizant of their location when installing them, so they might not be so obtrusive or problematic along a field edge, he added. "Typically we work with the farmer or landowner, so they're not an inconvenience to anybody," he said.

Another issue with those green electrical boxes is that it can, at times, be human nature to want to use that nice flat space for

Sharing safety message with students

McLean Electric Cooperative lineworkers want children to be safe around electricity in the yard and at home, so they're bringing their gear so elementary students can learn firsthand what it takes to be safe.

Line crews from Garrison and Turtle Lake go to area schools with their rubber safety gloves and an array of tools to bring

a hands-on, visual approach to teach the need to respect electricity.

"(Electricity) can be very hazardous, treat it with respect," described McLean Electric Cooperative Operations Manager Keith Thelen.

Even as the lineworkers carry their message, the students are having fun wearing the big

protective gloves, operating an "Extendo stick" as if they're reaching high up to a pole from the ground, and maybe even checking out a big bucket truck. "The kids love that," Thelen added, while at the same time, the lineworkers emphasize important points such as kite flying and tree climbing safety. ■

something. But Thelen reminds people they shouldn't place things on top of the boxes, either, whether it's a planter for decorations or a handy place to put tools when working nearby.

McLean Electric experiences fewer incidents with power poles as an increasing amount of new line construction involves underground electrical cable, especially in rural residential areas, Thelen said. The days of using the yard pole to hold the family basketball hoop is becoming a distant memory, although it may not be unusual to still see a set of deer antlers adorning a pole or a hanging flower basket.

However, just as it's a matter of lineworkers' safety and their need to be able to access a green electrical box or repairs or maintenance, it's equally a matter of safety and access – and importance – to keep objects off and away from power poles.

Even with more underground line, McLean Electric still has hundreds of miles of overhead power lines and every year, someone hits a pole.

"It's probably more frequent than a person would think," Thelen admitted, whether it's farm equipment, vehicle accident, or in the case of one sailboat enthusiast, forgetting to lower the sail mast when moving it to storage and becoming entangled in a power line.

It's imperative that occupants of vehicles and farm equipment stay inside should a vehicle, tractor or piece of machinery hit a pole and come in contact with a downed power line.

The only exception is if the vehicle is on fire, Thelen added. "Then you want to jump as far away as you can without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time." Otherwise, stay inside and call McLean Electric Cooperative, 701-463-6700, or 911 for assistance. ■



MEC Line Foreman **Nathan Ruud** shows Amelia Wilkinson, a third-grader at White Shield Elementary School, how to use an Extendo stick to reach the pole while standing on the ground during MEC's electrical safety program at the school.

Outdoor electrical safety tips for parents to instill in children:

- Don't play around power lines or in trees near lines. Be especially careful with kites and other flying toys.
- Stay far away from downed power lines and tell an adult immediately.

- Go inside immediately if thunder is audible or lightning is visible. Don't take shelter beneath trees.
- Don't play on or around electrical boxes. ■

Source: "4 Seasons of Safety," Electrical Safety Foundation International



Planning to dig? Add 'call 811' to the to-do list

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

If building, burying or digging deep in the dirt is on one's "to-do" list in 2020, adding "call 811" should also be on that list.

Call 811 – North Dakota One Call – is part of a national program designed to prevent accidents or worse – death – should someone expose a potentially dangerous hazard such as gas line or underground electrical cable when digging.

Like many states, it's the law in North Dakota. It's also the law for people to request a cable locate at least two days prior to when they intend to start digging. They can also

go online at www.ndonecall.com.

Utilities and companies are required by law to complete a locate request within 48 hours.

It doesn't matter if that person is a homeowner planting a tree, installing a fence, putting a birdhouse on a post, a building contractor, a farmer installing an irrigation system, a rural telecommunications cooperative expanding its fiber optic services, or a large pipeline company. As long as it's more than a few inches beneath the surface, it's wise to go through North Dakota One Call first.

North Dakota electrical code

requires major electrical lines to be buried at least 36 inches deep. Typically, McLean Electric buries new lines 48 inches deep, although lower voltage underground cable may not be as deep and depth could vary.

However, just as rocks mysteriously appear where they never existed the previous summer, winter weather can cause frost heaves to shove electric lines into shallower depths.

Even though someone may think they won't dig deep enough to hit any buried wires or pipelines, something like communications wires could be shallower than water lines or electrical cable.

It's better to be safe than sorry.

McLean Electric Cooperative's Kelly Schmaltz is the person who locates electric cables when N.D. One Call notifies the cooperative of a pending project. McLean Electric will locate electric cable up to its meter, Schmaltz described. It's the property owner's responsibility to locate their wires from the meter to the house. Many electricians now have electric cable locators available to identify a property owner's private buried electric lines.

While it's advisable to call 811 early enough prior to starting a digging project, digging must be begin within 21 days of the request. That helps reduce the potential for marking flags to become lost or removed.

If the project hasn't been done, property owners need to request another cable locate, Schmaltz added. Utilities can assess compensation fees if they have to return to a locate request site more than three times.

Utilities must complete a locate request within two days after they receive notification of a request.

People can ease the process of

reporting a project by having the site's legal description, project description, exact address and specific location. North Dakota One Call then notifies utilities, pipeline companies, water authorities and other utilities and they, in turn, identify if a line locate is necessary.

People can also ease the amount of time it takes to conduct a cable locate by accurately identifying the area of the proposed digging with a white line of delineation, either with white staking flags or white spray paint on the ground, for example.

By contacting North Dakota One Call, the onus is on the entity responsible for any cables or pipelines. For example, if someone doesn't request a cable

locate and hits McLean Electric's underground electrical cable, it is that person's responsibility.

In addition, it helps property owners if they measure and map precise locations of buried lines when doing a project – whether it's electric lines serving an adjacent building, decorative outdoor living area, water lines or anything else – because it's easy to forget where things are buried. Maps help property owners and others doing any future cable or line locates, as well as future property owners.

Based on the number of cable locate requests in recent years, Schmaltz already anticipates another busy year. He's often locating from the frost-out in the spring into

the fall after the ground freezes. Sometimes, it doesn't end in the winter if emergency situations such as broken water lines occur. "They're still digging if they have to," Schmaltz added.

So even though it's only March, just remember to call North Dakota One Call, 811, or go online to www.ndonecall.com, mark the proposed digging site, and call early enough to give utilities time to locate cables and pipelines.

Schmaltz tries to notify people before he locates cable, as well, because it's helpful if property owners can be onsite. ■

McLean County community calendar:

Events and activities to see and do

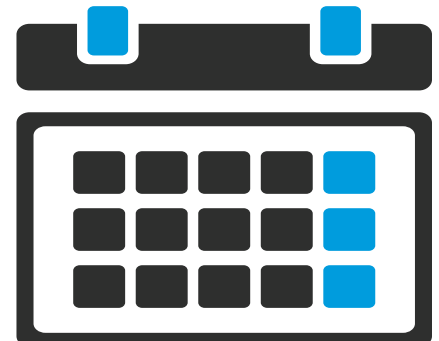
BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean County food pantries:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood:** 4-6 p.m. March 5; 10 a.m. to noon, March 21; and 4-6 p.m. April 2, 208 Lincoln Ave.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** March 26, noon-2 p.m., 5-7 p.m., back door, former Lazy J's building.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** March 16, noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. March 12; 10 a.m.-noon March 28; Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone; full distribution 4-6 p.m. March 19, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

March events:

- **March 4: Northland Health Center Specialty Foot Care Clinic,** 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m. Call 701-448-9225 for information and appointments.
- **March 14: Lions Carnival,** 3-6 p.m., Washburn Memorial Hall.
- **March 15: Benedictine Living Center St. Patrick's Day breakfast buffet,** auction, and entertainment, Garrison City Auditorium, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
- **March 17: Leprechaun's Gold Geocache,** Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison. Contact the park, 701-337-5576, for details.
- **March 17: Underwood Public Library Storytime,** 10 a.m.



- **March 18: Northland Health Center Specialty Foot Care Clinic,** 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m. Call 701-448-9225 for information and appointments.

Early April events:

- **April 1: Northland Health Center Specialty Foot Care Clinic,** 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m. Call 701-448-9225 for information and appointments.
- **April 6: Taste of Turtle Lake,** recipe sampling served by Turtle Lake businesses, American Legion Hall. ■

McLean County organizations and communities can contact Patricia Stockdill by emailing stockdill.patricia@gmail.com, or calling 701-337-5462, to submit listings.

5 keys to your cooperative



Cooperatives have strong ties to their members. Rural electrification came about in the spirit of cooperation, and electric cooperatives play a vital role in the state today. As an electric cooperative member, here are five key points you should know about your cooperative that sets it apart:

1 You are a member.

Electric cooperatives are owned and democratically controlled by their members – the people who purchase the power. With voting power, you have a voice in how your co-op operates, by attending annual meetings and electing directors to represent you.

2 Members receive capital credits

Did you know that electric cooperatives return money to their members in the form of capital credits?

An electric cooperative exists to provide its members with electric service – on a nonprofit basis. Capital credits reflect each member's ownership in the cooperative. Electric cooperatives do not earn profits. Instead, any margins or remaining revenue after all expenses have been paid are returned to the cooperative's members in proportion to their electrical usage.

Capital credits are allocated to each member based on electrical usage. Those capital credits are the most significant source of equity for the cooperative. Equity is used to help meet the expenses of the co-op, such as paying for new equipment to serve members and repaying debt. Capital credits help keep rates at an affordable level by reducing the amount of funds that must be borrowed to grow and maintain a cooperative's existing electric system.

Upon completion of the rotation period, the board of directors will review the cooperative's financial health and can declare a retirement (your cash payment), and a portion of your capital credits are returned to you.

3 Your cooperative is nonprofit.

Electric cooperatives developed because many citizens who did not have access to electricity in the 1940s decided to band together and form their own companies to acquire power. Investor-owned power companies said they couldn't make a profit in areas with a small number of consumers per mile of expensive power line.

The cooperative business structure already was a well-established part of the American free enterprise system for providing services that were too big for individuals to do alone. Nonprofit cooperatives were a natural for distributing electricity in areas where making a profit would be difficult.

A co-op exists to provide high-quality service at the lowest possible price to its members.

4 You elect the directors.

Since an electric cooperative is owned by the members it serves, members elect their own representatives to the board. Members maintain democratic control of a co-op, which means they elect fellow members to represent them on the board of directors.

5 Your cooperative cares about your community.

North Dakota's electric cooperatives are continually involved in the communities they serve, from delivering more power to the oil boom to offering scholarships to college-bound students.

As one narrator notes: "When the electric co-ops were born, something much bigger happened. For when we turned the lights on, we helped democratize the American dream for the people, families, farms, ranches and businesses of rural America."

That dream continues as cooperatives help develop the communities they serve. ■

TRACTOR TECHNOLOGY DOESN'T ALWAYS EQUAL SAFETY

As farmers use more equipment with auto-guidance systems, less focus is needed on steering, which may lead some drivers to think they do not need to be as aware of navigation issues. However, even while using a GPS with auto-steering, farmers need to keep safety in mind and stay focused on their surroundings.

North Dakota's electric cooperatives have had accident reports from farmers who are trusting their auto-guidance systems blindly and hitting power poles and other infrastructure.

Putting safety first requires alertness, focus and knowledge of potential hazards and safety steps. Varying pass-to-pass accuracy levels and potential issues, such as power poles not being correctly plotted in the system, reinforce the need for drivers to stay focused on the location of the farm equipment while in the field and to be ready to take action if necessary.

Regardless of the technology used on the farm, remember the following electrical safety tips from McLean Electric Cooperative:



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. Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines, and use routes to avoid the lines when moving 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 your electric cooperative 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.**

McLean Electric employees recognized at conference

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean Electric Cooperative was recognized for its commitment to safety at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) Apprentice Training and Safety (AT&S) January conference.

Garrison Line Foreman Nathan Ruud was one of two recipients of the inaugural "Stepping Up For Safety" award. It honors a cooperative safety advocate who inspires employees to commit to safe job performance and influences a culture of safety.

Ruud has served as McLean Electric's employee safety coordinator for several years, including working with management and employees on safety, safety issues and safety committee meetings.

Ruud's strength is his ability to communicate with everyone on the process involved in safe working procedures, creating a safe working environment, and the "hows and whys" of safety and safety procedures, described McLean Electric Operations Manager Keith Thelen.

NDAREC sees the work Ruud does when its staff conducts safety inspections at McLean Electric, Thelen added.

In addition, McLean Electric was one of six cooperatives recognized with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) "Safety Performance Award" for having zero OSHA recordable injuries for one year, from Dec. 1, 2018, through Nov. 30, 2019.

Turtle Lake lineworker Trevor Thomas earned a milestone and was one of 11 apprentice lineworkers recognized for completing the required curriculum to graduate to journeyman lineworker status.

The apprenticeship program is a four-year course in which apprentices must complete one module each year.



Nathan Ruud, McLean Electric Cooperative's Garrison line foreman, was honored at the January North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives Apprentice Training and Safety Conference for his efforts in promoting safety. He was one of two recipients of the "Stepping Up For Safety" award.

McLean Electric Cooperative lineworker **Trevor Thomas**, Turtle Lake, received recognition at the January North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperative Apprentice Training and Safety Conference for completing the curriculum promoting him to journeyman lineworker status. The four-course course is a combination of tests and on-the-job training.

Each module consists of 10 tests and 2,000 hours of on-the-job training that must be completed within a year.

Hours are divided into 16 categories, including overhead and underground maintenance, overhead and underground construction, transformer connections and substations. Each category, in turn, has a minimum amount of hours necessary at the end of the four-year program and must total 8,000 hours.

The coursework and on-the-job training hours must be done within those four years. Thomas joined McLean Electric April 1, 2016. ■

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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District 7, Mercer

Darcy Klain, vice president
701-448-2408
District 4, Ruso

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Clarence Behles, asst. secretary-treasurer
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Karen Hanson, director
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James Odermann, director
701-743-4415
District 1, Parshall

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