

Northern Electric

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Cooperative Connections

SEPTEMBER 2017 VOL. 18 NO. 5



Game On!

Page 8-9

**Co-ops Use Football Season
to Connect with Members**

Annual Meeting Set For September 13

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held July 21 at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present except for Mark Sumption who was attending a meeting at East River Electric Power Cooperative. As the first order of business, the Board approved the June 20, 2017, minutes and June expenditures. The Board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management including details on financial, operations, member services and communications.

Directors viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative video report. General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC Meeting which she attended July 5, 2017, in Madison and the Basin Member Managers' Conference which she attended along with Manager of Marketing/Member Services Russ Ulmer July 18-20, 2017, in Deadwood. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Mike McHugh and Director Nolan Wipf reported on the SDREA board meeting which they attended June 29-30, 2017, in Pierre.

MANAGER'S REPORT

General Manager Char Hager's report to the board included the following items:

- Update and discussion on development projects and activities taking place in the community and our service area.
- Brief update on Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) revolving loan fund activities.
- Legal and legislative report with General Manager Char Hager reporting on the SDREA Legal Seminar in which she attended along with Attorney Harvey Oliver, July 11-12, 2017, in Oacoma.
- Discussion on staff preparation and details of the Northern Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting, September 13, 2017, in Aberdeen.
- Informed directors of the 15th Annual Line Patrol Charity Ride, September 8-9, 2017, at Watertown, SD, hosted by Codington-Clark, H-D and Lake Region Electric Cooperatives.
- Reminder for directors attending the 2017 East River Annual Meeting, September 6, in Sioux Falls.
- Informed directors of the 2017 Mid-West Electric Consumers Association Annual Meeting, December 12-14 in Denver, Colorado.
- Informed directors of the 2018 NRECA Annual Meeting, February 25-28, in Nashville, TN, for those who would be eligible to attend.
- Calendar review of upcoming meetings and events.

BOARD REPORT

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 23, 2017.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$4,951.72.
3. Approved Work Order Inventory #17-06 for \$90,797.01 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
4. Appointed the Election & Credentials Committee for the 2017 Northern Electric Annual Meeting. Compensation was set at \$100 plus mileage.
5. Authorized board attendance to the 2017 Basin Electric Annual Meeting, November 8-9, in Bismarck.
6. Approved resolution authorizing the Amendment and Restatement of the Retirement Security and/or 401(K) Pension Plan.
7. Approved annual general capital credit retirements and annual special capital credit retirements for members age 70 and over. Estimated retirements will not exceed combined total of \$400,000.
8. Approved Board Resolution for the REED, Inc. loan application by Tulare Country Meats.
9. Approved an increase to the PCA of \$0.005 cents per kWh, the removal of the water heater credits on rate BR28, and authorized the addition of a \$3 monthly metering charge for heat submeters on rates BR10, BR11, BR12, BR17, and FR10.
10. Authorized the addition of Safe Deposit Box and Authorizations.

For questions on any of these matters, please ask your cooperative manager, staff or director.

Financial Report		June 2017	June 2016
kWh Sales		21,082,370 kWh	20,986,048 kWh
Electric Revenues		\$2,154,472	\$2,036,493
Total Cost of Service		\$2,124,294	\$2,046,410
Operating Margins		\$30,178	(-\$9,917)
Year To Date Margins		\$30,111	\$303,946
Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill			
June 2017	1,306 kWh	\$158.94	.1217 per kWh
June 2016	1,390 kWh	\$159.44	.1147 per kWh
Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 85.0% of NEC's total cost of service.			

Northern Electric Cooperative Connections

(USPS 396-040)

CEO/General Manager

Char Hager
info@northernelectric.coop

Board of Directors

Mike McHugh, **President**
Donna Sharp, **Vice President**
Randy Kienow, **Secretary**
Wayne Holt, **Treasurer**
Fran Esser
Victor Fischbach
Glen Larson
Mark Sumption
Nolan Wipf

Harvey Oliver,
NEC Attorney

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Russel Ulmer, Manager of Member Services/Marketing
Derek Gorecki, Manager of Information Technology
Mike Kelly, Operations Manager
Cathi Podoll, Chief Financial Officer
Kay Albrecht, Executive Secretary
Ben Dunsmoor, Communications Director
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NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Northern Electric Cooperative, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427. Families subscribe to Northern Electric Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Northern Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

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www.northernelectric.coop

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-529-0310

Design assistance by SDREA and TDG Communications



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Editor's Column

Annual Meetings Matter

September in South Dakota

means back to school, football, and getting ready for harvest. But, around the Northern Electric office it also means preparing for the annual meeting.

An annual meeting is what makes an electric cooperative different from other utilities. The annual meeting is the chance for cooperative members to gather in one place and hear updates about their co-op. It is also a time for members to elect their representatives to the Northern Electric Board of Directors. Those board members attend monthly meetings throughout the year and make decisions about co-op operations on behalf of the membership.

On September 13, Northern Electric will hold its 70th annual meeting at the Aberdeen Civic Arena and Theatre in downtown Aberdeen.

The meeting is open to all Northern Electric members and their families. Registration and a free buffet meal of roast beef and fried chicken starts at 5:00 p.m. and the business meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. in the theatre. Prizes, giveaways, and energy efficiency displays make the meeting fun and informational. The 2017 Annual Report has been inserted into this issue of *Cooperative Connections* to provide you with an update on co-op activities over the past year and give you a glimpse at the topics that will be discussed at the meeting.

Northern Electric members will also vote for three board of director positions during this year's annual meeting. Randy Kienow, who represents District 6, and Vic

Fischbach, who represents District 7 are running unopposed for another three-year term and will be elected automatically that night.

The District 4 seat which includes members who live northeast of Aberdeen in the Columbia and Claremont areas will be electing a new director. Board President Mike McHugh has reached his term limit of serving three consecutive three-year terms and his seat is vacant. Josh Larson of Columbia and Tanya

Torguson of Bath are running for the open seat. Profiles of both candidates and voting information can be found on page 6-7 of this issue of *Cooperative Connections*. Only members who live in District 4 can vote in the election during the annual meeting on September 13. To find out if you live in District 4 you can call the Northern Electric office

at 605-225-0310.

Voting for board members at an electric cooperative is important. The board of directors make strategic decisions for the co-op that impact day-to-day operations for the rest of the membership. The board of directors is in place to ensure the staff and employees of the cooperative are carrying out business in the best interest of its members.

Annual meetings can be a fun time to share a free meal and stories with your friends, neighbors, and fellow co-op members. There is also important business that takes place at an annual meeting. It is why I hope to see you at the 70th Northern Electric Annual Meeting on September 13.



Ben Dunsmoor
Communications Director

Back To School Electrical Safety

As many prepare for this upcoming school year, we want to share some electrical safety tips that are useful for students of all ages.

Elementary School Students

Electricity can be exciting and interesting to learn about, but it is important that kids learn about electrical safety.

Remind your children of the following tips:

- Never throw shoes onto power lines, and definitely don't try to get them off of the lines.
- Writing utensils and other supplies like paperclips should never be placed in or near electrical outlets, even if you think the outlet isn't working.
- Make sure your hands and the area around you are dry before plugging something in. This is especially important in science labs where there are usually several sets of sinks, an eye wash, chemicals, etc.
- When unplugging things from an electrical outlet, always hold the plastic base to pull the plug out. Never yank it out by the cord.

Middle/High School Students

- If you've just received the privilege of driving to school with your newly-obtained driver's license, pay close attention on those morning and afternoon drives for utility crews at work. Should you be involved in an accident involving a power line or pole, assume live electricity is outside of the car and use extreme caution.
- Always steer clear of pad-mount transformers – the big green metal boxes. All electrical equipment on school property should be avoided due to the possible dangers of electrical shock.
- Always be cautious in science classes, specifically the ones with labs. Sinks, eye washes, chemicals – it's likely your hands or the area near you will be wet. Keep everything dry and use

caution when plugging in equipment.

College Students

- Get in the habit of unplugging what's not in use. It's common practice, unfortunately, for college kids to load up electrical outlets and power strips with electronics and appliances. Many dorm and apartment rooms are fairly small there isn't much room to spread these out. Many campus housing options are dated and aren't equipped to handle today's amount of electricity usage.
- Use only approved electrical products with the mark of a recognized certification agency.
- Choose a power strip with a heavy-gauge cord that are approved by a recognized certification agency.
- Replace frayed or damaged extension cords with new ones.
- Keep extension cords out from under carpet, rugs or furniture as this could damage the cord and also present a fire hazard.
- Keep flammable materials such as books, paper and clothing away from heaters, stoves and other heating sources.
- Never leave cooking appliances unattended.
- Plug portable heaters and air conditioners directly into the outlet. If an extension cord is needed, to prevent overheating and risk of fire, use only one that is rated for this purpose to ensure that the cord can handle the electrical current.
- Never remove the third prong from an electrical product. The third prong is the grounding device and is a critical safety feature.
- Keep gadgets and cords away from bedding and curtains. The heat from a laptop charger or mini-fridge can start an electrical fire if left in contact with flammable material for too long.
- Avoid overloading outlets or circuits as this can cause overheating that may lead to fire.

Source: www.twielectric.com/recent/school-electrical-safety/



Editor's note: As part of his senior experience project, Connor Guenot, a New Underwood High School senior, gave an electrical safety demonstration to the second-grade class at New Under-

Kids' Corner Safety Poster

"Don't put your finger in an outlet."

Paeton Thin Elk, 8 years old

Paeton is the child of Samantha Janis, New Underwood, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

wood Elementary School with a goal of teaching the kids about electrical safety in their daily lives. After the presentation, the kids made safety posters summarizing their learning experience. Above is one of the posters that was drawn.

Garden Goodness



Zucchini Cobbler

- 8 cups chopped, seeded and peeled zucchini
- 2/3 cup lemon juice
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg

- Crust:**
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
 - 2 cups sugar
 - 1-1/2 cups cold butter, cubed
 - 1 tsp. ground cinnamon

In a large saucepan over medium-low heat, cook and stir zucchini and lemon juice for 15 to 20 minutes or until zucchini is tender. Add sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg; cook 1 minute longer. Remove from heat; set aside. For crust, combine flour and sugar in a bowl; cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir 1/2 cup into zucchini mixture. Press half of remaining crust mixture into a greased 10x15-inch baking pan. Spread zucchini over top; crumble remaining crust mixture over zucchini. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake at 375°F. for 35 to 40 minutes or until golden and bubbly. Yield: 16-20 servings.

Jean Osterman, Wheaton, MN

Saucy Chicken and Asparagus

- 1-1/2 lbs. fresh asparagus spears, cut-up
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 T. cooking oil
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp. curry powder
- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

Place asparagus in a greased 9-inch square baking dish. Brown chicken in oil; season with salt and pepper. Arrange chicken over asparagus. Mix soup, mayonnaise, lemon juice and curry powder. Pour over chicken. Cover and bake at 375°F. for 40 minutes or until chicken is tender and juices run clear. Sprinkle with cheese. Let set 5 minutes before serving.

Shirley Miller, Winfred

Refrigerator Pickles

- 7 cups sliced, unpeeled cucumbers
- 1 cup sliced onion
- 2 cups sugar
- 1-1/4 cups vinegar
- 1 T. non-iodized salt
- 1 T. celery seed

Layer cucumbers and onions in pint jars. Dissolve sugar, vinegar and salt over low heat. Stir in celery seed. Pour over cucumbers. Refrigerate 2 days; will keep for months in refrigerator.

Jane Ham, Rapid City

Cheesy Vegetable Spaghetti Pie

- 8 oz. spaghetti
- 1 T. olive oil
- 2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced green bell pepper
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced onion wedges
- 1 1/2 cups thinly sliced zucchini
- 1 (14.5 oz.) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 tsp. McCormick® Rosemary Leaves
- 1 tsp. McCormick® Garlic Powder
- 1 tsp. McCormick® Oregano Leaves
- 1 tsp. McCormick® Thyme Leaves
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 8 eggs
- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. shredded mozzarella cheese (2 cups), divided

Cook spaghetti as directed on package. Drain well. Meanwhile, heat oil in large ovenproof skillet on medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, bell pepper and onion; cook and stir 5 minutes or until tender. Add zucchini, tomatoes, rosemary, garlic powder, oregano, thyme and salt; cook and stir 10 minutes until most of the liquid has evaporated. Beat eggs in large bowl. Add spaghetti and 1 cup of the cheese; mix well. Stir into vegetables in skillet. Cook on medium-low heat 5 minutes or until bottom is set. Sprinkle with remaining 1 cup cheese. Bake at 350°F. for 8 to 10 minutes or until center is just set and cheese is melted. Cut into 8 wedges to serve.

Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 306, Total Fat 14g, Sodium 500mg, Cholesterol 234mg, Carbohydrates 27g, Dietary Fiber 3g, Protein 18g

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Sweet and Sour Onions

- 4 large onions
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/4 cup boiling water
- 1/4 cup sugar

Slice or chunk onions in baking dish. Mix remaining ingredients. Pour over onions. Bake at 300°F. for 1 hour or until onions are cooked through.

Elaine Rowett, Sturgis

Pepper Salad

- 1 small sweet onion
- 1 red pepper
- 1 yellow pepper
- 1 green pepper
- 1 orange pepper (when in season)
- 4 large tomatoes
- 1 pkg. Good Seasons Zesty Italian Dressing
- 1 (16 oz.) bottle Kraft Italian Dressing

Cut onion and peppers into 1-inch chunks. Marinate in Italian seasonings and dressing several hours or overnight. Add chunked tomatoes just before serving. May add sliced black olives if desired.

Caroline Bochman, Tyndall

Please send your favorite garden produce, pasta or slow cooker recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2017. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

District 4 Director To Be Elected At Annual Meeting

Two candidates filed valid petitions by the July 14 deadline to run for the District 4 seat on the Northern Electric Cooperative Board of Directors. The seat is left vacant by Board President Mike McHugh who has reached his term limit of serving three consecutive three-year terms.

Josh Larson of Columbia and Tanya Torguson of Bath will be the two

candidates on the ballot. Voting will be held from 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. during the Northern Electric Annual Meeting on Wednesday, September 13 in the Aberdeen Civic Arena at 203 S. Washington Street, Aberdeen, SD.

Only members who live or run a business or organization within District 4 can vote in the election. Only one member per membership can cast a

vote in the election regardless of the number of accounts. For example, either a husband or a wife who have a joint membership can vote in the election but not both.

Results will be tabulated by a Credentials Committee selected by the Board of Directors and announced during the business meeting September 13.



Josh Larson

Josh Larson says a desire to give back to his community is what led him to run for the vacant District 4 seat on the Northern Electric Board of Directors.

“I want to understand where our power comes from and keep our rates as reasonable as possible while serving the community,” Larson said.

Larson works at Larson Livestock, a family farm/feedlot that includes his father, uncle, and grandfather. Larson has already turned to his family to ask for advice about serving the members of Northern Electric Cooperative. Larson’s father, Ray Larson, served on the board from 1999-2008.

“He said he enjoyed being on the board and learned a lot from it,” Larson said.

Josh Larson also serves on the South Dakota Cattlemen’s Foundation Board, the Moccasin Creek Board of Directors, and he is a trustee at Saint John’s Lutheran Church in Columbia.

Larson graduated from Groton High School and SDSU where he majored in animal science.

He and his wife Desa live near Columbia with their sons, five-year-old Easton and two-month-old Bryton.



Tanya Torguson

Tanya Torguson wants to be an advocate for her neighbors who live in District 4. It is the reason she filed a petition to run for the vacant seat on the Northern Electric Board of Directors.

“I just want to be a voice for the constituents and the people who live in my district,” Torguson said.

Torguson is a crop adjuster for Rural Community Insurance Services (RCIS) and lives a few miles north of Bath. Torguson grew up in Andover and worked on the family farm before moving to Brown County. Torguson is also a partner of Wolff Family Genetics which raises and sells show pigs to 4-H families in five different states.

She says she is also running for the Northern Electric Board of Directors to keep an eye on rates.

“To learn more about the rising costs of electricity and the regulations,” Torguson said.

Torguson is a past president of the Day County Crop Improvement Board, she has served on the SDSU Northeast Research Farm Board, is a member of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church Council in Groton, and a member of the Groton chapter of Eastern Star.

Torguson graduated from Groton High School and received a degree in agronomy from South Dakota State University.

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the members of Northern Electric Cooperative, Inc., will be held at the Civic Arena and Theatre in the city of Aberdeen, State of South Dakota, on the 13th day of September, 2017. Registration and a meal will start at 5:00 p.m. and the business meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. to take action on the following matters:

1. Reports of officers, directors and committees.
2. Election of three directors.
3. Any other business that may arise.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that although directors for Districts 6 and 7 will be elected by the membership at the meeting, paper ballots will only need to be cast in the District 4 election. Incumbent directors Randy Kienow (District 6), and Victor Fischbach (District 7) are the only eligible candidates for their districts. Since no other nominations can be submitted, Kienow and Fischbach will be automatically elected at the annual meeting. An election for candidates in District 4 will be held from 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. prior to the business meeting

2017 Northern Electric Board of Director Candidates

DISTRICT 4

Josh Larson
Columbia, SD

Tanya Torguson
Bath, SD

DISTRICT 6

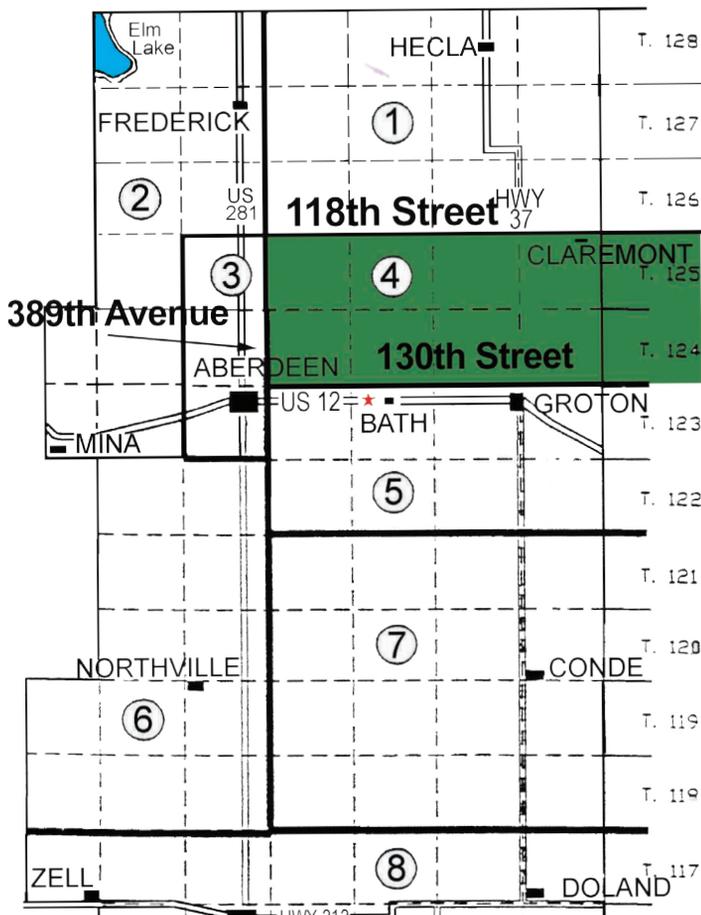
Randy Kienow
Aberdeen, SD

DISTRICT 7

Victor Fischbach
Hitchcock, SD

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the Secretary has posted such nominations in the principle office of the Cooperative.

Randy Kienow, Secretary



District 4 Election Information

- Voting for the vacant District 4 Board of Directors seat will begin at 5 p.m. on September 13 at the Aberdeen Civic Arena and Theatre.
- Only members who live in District 4 can vote.
- District 4 is bordered by 118th Street to the north, 389th Avenue to the west, 130th Street to the south and the Brown/Day county line to the east.
- District 4 includes members who live around Columbia, Claremont, and the Prairiewood Village by the Moccasin Creek Country Club.
- Members in District 4 will receive a ballot when they register at the Northern Electric Annual Meeting beginning at 5 p.m. on September 13.
- Voting will take place between 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on September 13.
- Results of the election will be announced during the business meeting which begins at 6:30 p.m.
- Call 605-225-0310 for questions about the election or your voting district.

A Co-op Twist to Football Tailgating

WHEN THE FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS GLOW ON HIGH school football fields this fall, many electric cooperatives take the opportunity to reach out to their members.

Since 2009, Grand Electric Cooperative in Bison, S.D., along with its telephone cooperative arm, West River Cooperative Telephone Co., have made the rounds at area high school football games to meet their members face-to-face.

“We started our tailgate parties in 2009, but prior to that, we hosted “block parties,” which were held at noon,” said Rachel Eggebo, marketing/tech specialist for the two cooperatives. She believes the block parties were started around 2003.

“We wanted to get out and converse with our members face-to-face rather than over the phone,” she said.

“We started our tailgate parties because we realized not everyone could leave at noon to attend the block party. And, we wanted to communicate with our youth as well as our members,” Eggebo continued.

So, armed with hotdogs, chips, ketchup and the rest of the fixings, co-op employees and directors made the rounds at high school games in northwestern South Dakota. This fall, the co-ops will make games in Lemmon, Buffalo, Faith, Newell and Bison. The grills churn out food about an hour

Brenda Kleinjan



before game time, which varies by town and timing in the season.

Adding a t-shirt gun to the mix just adds to the tailgating fun.

“The interaction has been great for both our members and employees. Community involvement is a big part of our organization,” said Eggebo.

To the south, West River Electric Association, headquartered in Wall, also uses area football games as a way to connect with members.

The co-op hosts member appreciation days in some of its communities, but was looking for an inroad into the New Underwood area east of Rapid City, S.D.

“We didn’t have anything in our New Underwood area. We started doing an appreciation day there, but we weren’t getting the younger crowd there,” said Veronica Kusser, manager of member services.

In 2013, the cooperative decided to host a tailgate party before the Wall/New Underwood game.

“We chose to do the Wall/New Underwood game because we serve both communities,” said Kusser.

“We really got to meet the parents with kids – that age group that you have the toughest challenge to get hold of,” she said.

The 2016 game between the Tigers and the Eagles was held in Wall.

“We set up tables and tents and served right at 1,000 hamburgers and hotdogs in a two-hour time frame,” Kusser said.

The cooperative was also able to hand out Operation Round Up® checks to various organizations during the game.

“We gave out our ORU funds at halftime of the football game – it really allows spotlight on involvement in community,” Kusser said.

“We’re just there to visit with our members. At our appreciation events we’re promoting our different programs but at the football game, we’re there just to show our commitment to the community and our support to the younger generations,” said Kusser. “It gives them an opportunity to see that we are in their community.”

The co-op also makes a donation to the local

Left: Ann Ulrich of Faith arm wrestles Grand Electric Cooperative’s Steve Senn while GEC board president John Long looks on during the tailgate party hosted by GEC and WRCTC before a Faith football game in 2016. Also pictured are employees Bonnie Sander and Colle Nash. **Right:** Directors and employees of West River Electric Association in Wall served 1,000 hot dogs and burgers to fans attending the Wall Eagles/New Underwood Tigers football game in October 2016.

school’s concession stand to offset any decrease in sales the stand may see.

“We wanted to show that we care, that we appreciate them,” Kusser said.

This year, the two teams face off on Aug. 18, so WREA was already planning its tailgate in the early summer.

In northeastern South Dakota, FEM Electric Association in Ipswich starts the school year off with a truckload of bottled water.

For the last eight to 10 years, the co-op has ordered bottled water labeled with the co-op’s logo and one of four safety messages.

Each of the six schools in their service area are given about 60 cases of water which they can then sell at concession stands, use at school functions or however they see fit.

“Several schools sell it at sporting events – it’s pure profit for them,” said Scott Moore, FEM’s general manager. “We’re getting our name out there, but more importantly, we’re getting a safety message into the hands of those holding a bottle.”

The co-op also makes an appearance at basketball games between its area schools.

At select games, boxes of Cracker Jacks snacks, with a co-op sticker on them, are tossed out into the crowds.

“That’s really gone over well,” Moore said.



Above: West River Cooperative Telephone Company area journeyman combination technician Bill Anders checks the aim of his son, Zack, as a t-shirt gun sends a prize flying at a Harding County Ranchers game back in 2012.



Wireless Manager Retires

From TV to Internet, Mark Fischer Reflects on 31-Year Career

by **Ben Dunsmoor**

When Northern Rural Cable Television (NRCTV) hooked up its first TV subscriber Mark Fischer was there to see it. When Northern Electric Cooperative closed the deal to sell its wholly-owned subsidiary to Northern Valley Communications (NVC) in July, Mark Fischer retired as the Manager of Wireless Services.

For more than 30 years Northern Electric Cooperative members have come to know Fischer as he worked for the co-op's subsidiary from a first-in-the-nation start-up TV service to an internet service provider that had more than 1,600 customers.

Fischer started working at Northern Electric on October 14, 1985, when former general manager Dennis Hagny gave him a job in the accounting department setting up new electric accounts and handling change of tenant requests. Fischer was not unfamiliar with co-ops because his father had a 41-year career at FEM Electric Association in Ipswich.

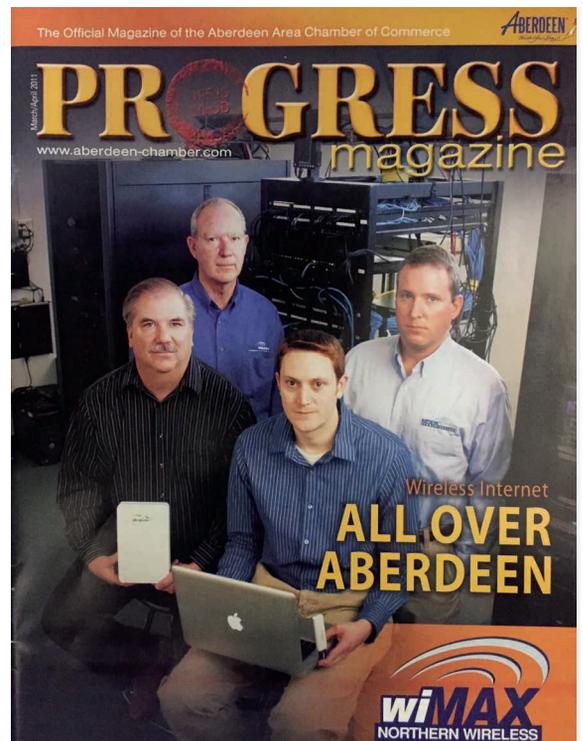
Not long after he started working for Northern Electric Fischer says Hagny approached him to see if Fischer would be interested in working for a new subsidiary – NRCTV. The co-op, after surveying its members, was going to start offering a cable TV package. On December 1, 1988, NRCTV was launched as the first rural electric cooperative wireless cable television system in the nation.

“When it started there were people



Above: Mark Fischer pictured on his last day before retirement. Fischer worked for Northern Electric Cooperative from 1985-2017.

Right: A magazine cover from the spring of 2011 advertises the Northern Wireless wiMAX product. Pictured from left to right are Mark Fischer, retired Northern Electric General Manager/CEO Jim Moore, former Northern Wireless Support Technician Jeremy Bostian and Manager of Information and Technology Derek Gorecki.





Above: Mark Fischer receives a plaque from Northern Electric General Manager/CEO Char Hager during the 2015 annual meeting for his 30 years of service with the cooperative.

equipment,” Fischer said. “They (the co-op) just wanted to provide members a quality cable package at an affordable price.”

In the late 1980’s cable companies did not have lines that reached out into the country and satellite service was expensive. Northern Electric launched NRCTV to provide its members a more affordable and dependable product, much like when the co-op first brought electricity to rural areas. NRCTV used antennas and wireless microwave signals to offer a package of eight basic channels in 1988 for \$10 a month. Eventually, the subsidiary got to the point where it was offering more than 30 channels to members. Fischer remembers other co-ops in South Dakota following NRCTV’s lead.

“We were the first rural electric cooperative in the nation to do it followed by Sioux Valley Wireless in Colman and North East TV in Watertown,” Fischer said.

As the subsidiary and channel lineup grew the demand for a different service was emerging in northeast South Dakota. Northern Electric members were now looking for internet service and in 1996 NRCTV also became an Internet Service Provider (ISP).

“It was the same thing. We saw a need there and started providing dial-up internet,” Fischer said.

Technology began to evolve quickly and just five years later NRCTV started offering broadband internet known as WOWnet. As the demand for WOWnet service grew, interest in TV declined because of greater competition from cable and satellite providers moving into the area. In 2005, NRCTV changed its name to Northern Wireless Communications and in 2010 it dropped TV service and started offering broadband internet exclusively.

Fischer says it has been incredible to watch technology change over his 31-year career.

“Technology keeps improving every year. Things have changed more in the last ten years than the previous twenty before that,” Fischer said.

With the customers of Northern Electric’s subsidiary now receiving service from another local cooperative Fischer says he is ready to enjoy retirement. He plans to fish, travel, and spend time with his family.

As he looks back on his career, Fischer reflects on all the new and emerging services NRCTV and Northern Wireless provided to Northern Electric members.

“We provided our members requested services that they weren’t able to acquire elsewhere.”

And, Mark Fischer was there to see it all.

“Technology keeps improving every year. Things have changed more in the last ten years than the previous twenty before that.”

Killer Korn Camo

Langford man develops new camouflage pattern

SOMETIMES THE BEST IDEAS SHOW UP IN the strangest places. Just ask Jordan Deutsch, who came up with a new camouflage idea while farming.

Three years ago, during harvest season, Deutsch was sitting in a tractor cab, grain cart in tow, as he waited for the combine to make its rounds in the cornfield. That's where the idea to start Fallin' Fowl Camo was born.

"I was looking at the field and wondered why someone hadn't come out with a corn or cornfield camo pattern," he said. "I always felt other camo patterns were too dark and stuck out too much. I love Realtree and Mossy Oak for deer hunting and all that, but some of their newer waterfowl patterns don't look anything like where we hunt up here, like cornfields."

Once harvest was complete, Deutsch took the initiative to explore what options were available for an upstart to introduce a corn-themed camo pattern, which he named Killer Korn, to the waterfowl market.

"I checked with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and they told me to submit my ideas with some pictures to get the patent going," said Deutsch, who is 25 and returned to the Langford area to farm with his extended family after receiving an agriculture degree from Lake Area Tech in Watertown. "We took a bunch of pictures, picked three, and a graphic designer from the USPTO meshed them together. Then we tweaked it three or four times from there until we got it where I wanted it and put a patent on it."

Andrew Johnson
Farm Forum



Next steps

After receiving a patent on the Killer Korn pattern, Deutsch decided to also trademark his Fallin' Fowl Camo brand name.

"The next step was how to get the actual pattern onto clothing," he said. "That was the tough part."

Deutsch said some exhaustive online research finally led him to Jest Textiles, a New Jersey-based company that offered the printing and design services he'd need to screen the Killer Korn pattern onto material.

"I got in touch with them and sent them the file for my camo," he said. "They ran a sample, and once I got that back I wanted to tweak it a little bit more."

He said minor adjustments were necessary, as there were slight differences in color and size from how the pattern's image looked on a computer screen compared to how it actually printed on clothing. As a result, Deutsch altered the color and scale of his pattern several times prior to settling on a final design.

"As far as scale goes it really depends on the ground, but we averaged out what a corn ear would normally be," he said. "Some are 7 or 8 inches, and some really big corn is 13 inches. We settled on 9 to 10 inches and went from there, blowing up the husk size so it was lifelike and would mimic what actual corn looks like in a field."

Through the process, Deutsch said he also came to another important realization.

"There's corn from North Dakota all the way to Texas, and not all corn is the same," he said. "Some might have more green in it, while some varieties might be more red. Plus, corn in the fall has a totally different color than it does in spring after it's been sitting around all winter. I finally had to bite the bullet and settle on a design."

Long time coming

With the help of Jest Textiles, Deutsch had the Killer Korn camo pattern printed on some pants, hooded sweatshirts and beanies, and the first batches of his product started arriving in November and December.

It's been a long process for Deutsch, who said the idea for Fallin' Fowl Camo first took off in January 2014.

"Here it is, three years later, and I finally got it where I want it," he said. "Now that I have my product, I'm trying to figure out which direction to go. I don't want to go too far in the direction of selling it myself, but would rather have a licensing deal where companies can put it on whatever they want."

Deutsch said he's working on a potential partnership with Heavy Hauler Outdoor Gear, a company from Kingsley, Iowa, that specializes in waterfowl products.

"I've actually been working with Heavy Hauler and trying to work out a deal with them," he said. "They've put the pattern on a sample blind, blind bag and gun case, and we're working out the details. They make the Scheels-brand blinds along with some other products, and that was part of my dream, to invent something and see it in a store like Scheels or Cabela's."

For Deutsch, a camo pattern that looks identical to corn fills a vacant need in the waterfowling world. He also believes it could mean less work in the long run for duck and goose hunters who



don't take the time to properly stuff their blinds. Stuffing corn stalks and husks, wheat stubble and other vegetation into a layout blind's exterior to help it melt into its surroundings is necessary while field hunting, but Deutsch said some hunters fail to do it properly.

"Staying hidden is the key to waterfowl hunting, and I was sick and tired of people not stuffing blinds and ruining the hunt," he said. "That's why I came up with the pattern. I wanted something that blended in a lot better, because most of the time we hunt waterfowl in corn."

Where to find Fallin' Fowl Camo

RC Hunting Store in Aberdeen is selling Fallin' Fowl Camo hoodies and beanies from its warehouse as well as through its online business at rchuntingstore.com.

For more information on Killer Korn and other Fallin' Fowl products, go to [Facebook.com/fallinfowlcamo](https://www.facebook.com/fallinfowlcamo).

DID YOU KNOW?

Corn is a primary crop in the three counties near Fallin' Fowl Camo's Langford, S.D., base.

Marshall County:

- 58.9 percent of the county's landmass is cropland.
- 38 percent of that cropland was planted to corn in 2013 (120,000 acres)

Day County:

- 60 percent of that county's landmass is cropland (395,0007 acres)
- 33.9 percent of the cropland planted to corn in 2013.

Brown County:

- 77.9 percent of the county's land mass is cropland (854,000 acres)
- 43 percent (369,500 aces) was planted to corn in 2013.

2016 Annual Meeting Minutes

Unapproved Minutes For September 14, 2016

Pursuant to the notice to all members, the 69th Annual Meeting of the membership of Northern Electric Cooperative, Inc., was held in the Aberdeen Civic Arena and Theatre on the 14th day of September 2016, at 6:30 p.m. with registration commencing at 5:00 p.m.

More than 500 members and guests were served a buffet dinner before the business meeting. An electric products and services expo was also held.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Chairman Victor Gross called the meeting to order. The Chairman then called on Pastor Bret Bierman of Trinity Lutheran Church of rural Mansfield to deliver the invocation. Manager Char Hager and Chairman Gross then recognized guests, directors and officers of the board.

Secretary Donna Sharp declared a quorum was present, with the official registration being 203. She then gave a report on petitions for nominees. Sharp stated that petitions were received for the following Director candidates: District 2, Wayne Holt, Aberdeen; District 5, Donna Sharp, Bath, and District 9, Nolan Wipf, Hitchcock.

Chairman Gross called for the Secretary's report. Upon motion, the reading of the minutes of Northern Electric Cooperative's 68th Annual Meeting was waived and the minutes, as previously mailed to all of the members prior to this meeting, were approved as printed and mailed.

Treasurer Wayne Holt stated that the financial statements printed in the annual report represented an accurate reflection of the audited financial status of the Cooperative, as of December 31, 2015. The treasurer's report was approved as presented.

Chairman Gross called for any unfinished or old business. There was none. Gross and General Manager Char Hager began their presentation.

In combined President/Manager re-

ports, Gross and Hager stated:

A Legacy of Leadership and Service is the theme of this year's annual meeting as we take a brief look at the past and give you a preview of what is to come in the future.

This is our 69th Annual Meeting but Northern Electric Cooperative can trace its roots back 75 years ago. In 1941, nearly a dozen farmers in this area came together to form the James River Valley Association which would later change its name to Northern Electric Cooperative.

Even though the idea of rural electrification in this region started in 1941 the first farm wasn't electrified until 1945 -- after World War II.

That legacy of those first co-op leaders to bring power to rural northeastern South Dakota still lives on today in the members, board, and staff who ensure that the lights stay on every day.

A lot has changed since the first lights came on more than 70 years ago. In the late-1940's the average member used less than 200 kilowatt hours of electricity every month. Today, that average is nearly 4,000 kilowatt hours.

Today, electricity isn't a luxury as it was back in the 1940's -- it's a necessity. The demand for electricity continues to grow as our world and region become more connected.

And while the demand for energy grows -- rates have remained relatively low. In 1948, Northern Electric members were paying an average of six cents per kilowatt hour. Last year, our members paid an average of nine cents. That is only a three cent increase in the last 70 years.

However, as we previously announced in our August issue of Cooperative Connections rates for Northern Electric members will be going up in 2017. Basin Electric Power Cooperative -- which owns and operates the power plants in North Dakota where we get a majority of our electricity -- implemented a rate increase in August.

We are working to determine the exact impact on Northern Electric and our members for 2017.

What we do know at this time is East River Electric Power Cooperative which delivers the electricity to us through its system of transmission lines and substations is delaying that increase until January.

Tom Boyko the CEO and General Manager of East River Electric Power Cooperative -- joins us now to tell us about the increase, the current issues facing our electric cooperatives, and how East River is working to serve its members across the region.

While, East River crews have been busy upgrading the large transmission lines and substations in our area the Northern Electric Operations Department - led by Mike Kelly - has been working hard over the past year to upgrade the infrastructure that brings that power to your homes, farms, and businesses.

Northern Electric currently maintains nearly 3,000 miles of line, and in the past year, more than 53 miles of that line has been upgraded - or replaced.

Our crews have buried 42 miles of line in 2015 to increase reliability-especially during storms. In 2015, Northern Electric also built 49 new member line extensions and upgraded another 152 services to accommodate increased usage. Line crews also perform plenty of regular maintenance to safeguard deliveries on our electric system.

Our Accounting and Billing department underwent major changes within the last year. Our employees spent much of the year implementing new National Information Solutions Cooperative software.

The NISC software will help the cooperative meet external reporting requirements and give members greater access to their account information through a product called SmartHub.

SmartHub allows members to view their

electric usage and billing information online or on-the-go through a mobile app for iPhone and Android devices.

Our Member Services department has also been working hard to promote energy efficiency across our system-and monitor and maintain your load-management network.

Load management allows the cooperative to reduce rates for our members who have connected water heaters, air conditioners, or grain bins by managing the electric load at peak times.

Northern Electric Member Services Representatives are currently installing new load management devices for water heaters and air conditioners in the Frederick area.

The Member Services department has also been busy selling energy-efficient electric Marathon water heaters. We began selling the water heaters again at the beginning of the year and offer hundreds of dollars in rebates to members who install them and connect them to our load management system.

Over the past year, Northern Electric's wholly-owned subsidiary, Northern Wireless, has continued to grow. Northern Wireless is its own separate company with a separate budget from Northern Electric. Northern Electric dollars are not used to subsidize the Northern Wireless budget. Our wireless services department is managed by Mark Fischer and information and technology is overseen by Derek Gorecki with assistance from Jeremy Bostian and Benji Grajczyk.

Northern Wireless has expanded its reach into the Ipswich area and also added a tower near Miller. It now reaches close to 1,600 customers with high-speed wireless internet service.

Moving forward, Northern Wireless is currently working on outsourcing tech support so technicians will be able to help customers 24 hours a day. The implementation of this new service is scheduled to begin November 1.

At NEC we strive to communicate with you as members. We want to share energy efficiency tips, safety facts, and outage information with you. We continue to com-

municate to you through our monthly Cooperative Connections magazine, and have continued to grow our social media presence on Facebook in the past year. If you are on Facebook, you can like our page and get updates on the day-to-day operations of your cooperative.

We also aim to make our website a useful tool for our members. In June, Northern Electric became the first co-op in the country to offer a SmartHub login screen on our home page. This allows members to easily access their accounts online without having to remember another website address. All the information you need is at northernelectric.coop.

Every summer Northern provides an educational opportunity to both students and adults by sending groups to North Dakota to tour Basin Electric's power-generating facilities to learn where our electricity comes from. We also tour the Dakota Gasification plant and the Garrison Dam. During these trips there is plenty of time for socializing with other members, eating great meals, and enjoying the Bismarck area. We hope you will consider coming along next summer. Look in the Cooperative Connection magazine for more information in the coming months.

Now, it is time for some comments from one of our students who attended the rural electric Youth Tour this past summer.

Northern Electric sponsors one student every year to take the annual Youth Tour trip to Washington D.C. Sye Skjefte was the student Northern Electric sent this year. Skjefte is a junior at Warner High School and joins us tonight to talk about his experience in Washington D.C.

Hager mentioned that NEC is happy to provide educational experiences like the Youth Tour trip to our members.

At this time Gross recognized some employees for their years of service and introduced new employees. Doris Scheuffele, 25 years, Ben Peterson, 10 years, Robert Bernhardt, 10 years. Thank you for your years of service to Northern Electric Cooperative. We appreciate all you do.

Gross mentioned that after serving on the Northern Electric Board of Directors for the past nine years and serving

as your Board President for the last three years this will be his last Annual Meeting. He has reached his term limit of three consecutive three-year terms and will be officially off the board following tonight's election.

Hager mentioned that NEC would like to thank Vic for all his years of service to Northern Electric Cooperative by also presenting him a plaque to recognize him for his dedication to the co-op.

Hager mentioned that earlier this summer the Northern Electric Board of Directors selected Mark Sumption of Frederick to take over Vic's seat on the East River Board. Mark will continue to represent the interests of Northern Electric at the generation and transmission level as he serves in this new role.

Hager mentioned that she would like to thank all of the NEC employees for their hard work and dedication over the past year. We would also like to introduce you to some new employees we added since the 2015 meeting.

Tonight we welcome Sean Schwartz who joined us last fall as an apprentice lineman. Brian Hansen also joined the line crew at the beginning of the year as an apprentice lineman. There is also a new face in our dispatch department Aaron Nuhsbaumer came on board in December as an operations and dispatch aide. Please join me in welcoming these new employees.

Gross called for new business. Hearing none, called to take action on the election of directors. Corporate Attorney Harvey Oliver explained the voting rules and procedures of the election of directors and explained that there was no election. The District 2, 5, and 9 candidates ran unopposed and were declared elected by general consent.

Gross called for any other business to come before the meeting, there being none, He declared the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m. and thanked all for attending. It is important for you, the member-owners, to be informed and involved in your cooperative.

Employees Ben Dunsmoor and Kay Albrecht then conducted drawings for a number of prizes.

Regional Dateline

August 18-19

Southern Hills Music and Arts Festival, Custer, SD
605-440-0640

August 18-20

Black Hills Steam and Gas Threshing Bee, Sturgis, SD
605-490-2024

August 18-20

Riverboat Days, Yankton, SD
605-665-1657

August 18-27

Central States Fair
Rapid City, SD, 605-355-3861

August 19-20

Annual Threshing Bee
Rosholt, SD, 605-537-4426
www.rosholtthreshingbee.com

August 24-27

Kool Deadwood Nites
Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

August 24-27

Prairie Village 55th Annual Steam Threshing Jamboree
Madison, SD, 605-256-3644
www.prairievillage.org

August 26

Sizzlin' Summer Night Car and Motorcycle Show
Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-3441

August 26-27

Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival, Hot Springs, SD
605-745-4140

August 29-September 3

Mustang Rally, Sturgis, SD
605-490-1663



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Events of Special Note

August 23-27

Corn Palace Festival
Mitchell, SD, 605-995-8430

September 7-9

AAUW Annual Used Book Sale, Super City Mall
Thursday 6 to 9 p.m.
Friday 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Saturday 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Aberdeen, SD

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

August 31-September 4

South Dakota State Fair
Huron, SD, 605-353-7340

September 9

Sidewalk Arts Festival
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7397

September 15-16

NESD Celtic Faire and Games
Aberdeen, SD, 605-380-5828

September 2

20th Annual Southern Hills Triathlon, Hot Springs, SD
605-745-3494

September 9

Foothills Bud Light Bull Bash
Wessington Springs, SD
605-770-4370

September 16

SPURS Barn Dance, Supper and Auction, Big Red Barn
38815 130th St. Supper at 5 p.m. with homemade pie smoked meat and live auction to follow
Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-1099

September 3

Studebaker Car Show
Custer, SD, 605-673-2244

September 9-10

Harvest Festival, including Kuchen Festival
Delmont, SD 605-505-0535

September 7-10

State Senior Games
Sioux Falls, SD, Contact Howard Bich at 605-275-6891 or sdsrgames@gmail.com

September 9-10

Annual Grape Stomp Festival With the Wind Vineyard and Winery, Rosholt, SD
605-537-4780
www.withthewindwinery.com

September 8-9

Ribs, Rods & Rock n' Roll
Vermillion, SD, 605-624-2021

September 9-10

Quilt Show, Hill City, SD
605-574-2810

September 8-10

James Valley Threshing and Tractor Show, Andover, SD
jvthreshers@gmail.com

September 13

South Dakota Cooperative Hall of Fame Banquet
Watertown, SD, 605-945-2269