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PHOTOS BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Once expansion of Highway 83 Lawn & Leisure is complete, owner Russell Gohl plans to expand the line of clothing available in the store, including this line of sweatshirts designed for the store's clothing line.

## Working together to create a vision

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

**M**cLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) has long had a philosophy that everyone benefits when a business or farm in the region thrives and grows.

It doesn't matter if it takes place inside city limits or in the country, or if it's an individual, a family or a business – large or small. When McLean County grows, MEC supports the concept that everyone grows and benefits, as well.

Russell Gohl's business is one of McLean County's latest examples of how a cooperative and a member-owner can work together to grow the region's economy. It began simple enough: Gohl wanted to find property to construct a storage building for his boat and camper.

What the retired Lake Audubon homeowner found was a project that morphed into construction of a large

building and a retail business venture.

Gohl's vision for a storage building took a different twist when he decided to open a business selling necessary merchandise typically not readily available. Then, a neighboring business owner sold his store's fishing equipment inventory.

"One thing led to another," Gohl admits.

He added a line of Toro lawn mowers, employed small engine mechanics to offer repair services, a full line of materials used in the welding and metal works industry, camping supplies, power tools and a litany of other merchandise.

Gohl worked with MEC throughout his evolving vision for the property. MEC provides electricity to his business, Highway 83 Lawn & Leisure, and other adjacent homes and businesses near the intersection of Highway 83 and



Highway 83 Lawn & Leisure owner **Russell Gohl** stands next to the solar control panel regulating the solar energy coming into the building from its 300 roof-mounted solar panels.

### Highway 37.

MEC's General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle complimented Gohl for his efforts in working closely with MEC throughout the construction and evolution of his business.

"It's important to visit with your electric cooperative to review the feasibility of bringing in a service," Doyle described. "Russ did that. He came to us and talked about the scope of his vision, and as his business evolved and grew, he worked with McLean Electric."

Almost a year later, Gohl continues to find himself immersed in what both he and his wife nicknamed his "retirement hobby" – an ever-expanding retail and manufacturing company.

"We're trying to make this a farm-and-ranch store," he explained, offering products for farmers, ranchers, rural homeowners and just about anyone heading north and south on Highway 83 – or any other direction. He offers the kind of quality merchandise people need, but can't find in some stores, especially big box stores.

Things like fencing materials. Things like work clothing. Gohl plans to expand his existing clothing line of custom-designed sweatshirts and carries Carhartt workwear and boots.

By the spring of 2022, his plans also include a name change to better reflect the diverse retail store offerings – something along the line of "Highway 83 General Store,"



An entire shelf of nuts and bolts lines one display panel in Highway 83 Lawn & Leisure, which opened April 2, 2021.

he suggested.

As the retail portion of the building evolved, Gohl began construction on another building in the fall of 2021. Part of the new building will house warehouse merchandise previously in the north section of the main building. Then, the previous warehouse portion in the existing store will become what Gohl has nicknamed “the Toro Room,” offering a full line of Toro outdoor equipment.

When Highway 83 Lawn & Leisure opened April 2, 2021 – he didn’t want to open April 1 – Gohl said his Toro sales representative anticipated the store would sell approximately five Toro zero-turn riding mowers. After selling 28 mowers, the representative told Gohl he wasn’t sure they could fill additional orders. The store already sold so many mowers, the company didn’t know if it could meet the additional demand.

The current showroom lined with Toro mowers, Green Mountain Grills and other equipment will accommodate the expanding retail product line, Gohl described, with an area in the main store expanding for clothing and additional merchandise.

The new building just south of the existing facility, tentatively scheduled for completion in the spring of 2022, will house a new manufacturing and welding business, and serve as a warehouse.

Gohl designed and patented special equipment specifically used in the sewer and water industry. The products will be exclusively manufactured in the new building. In addition, standard welding services will be available, along with new steel sales.

He isn’t stopping there. The company will also manufacture a cathodic cement clamp used specifically in the water industry. Gohl’s original idea was to work with the Chicago-based company already manufacturing the clamp. But like his retail store, that idea evolved.

“I essentially bought the company out in Chicago and I’m moving it here to Garrison,” he explained.

Plus, he will manufacture sprayers for Toro riding equipment, along with Gohl’s patented design for a tempered auto glass window and frame for golf carts, enabling their year-round use.

Gohl admits he didn’t envision the growth when he began his business venture. But for the designer, developer and someone with ideas and visions, the ideas kept coming and growing.

He anticipates hiring at least eight to 10 new employees for the additional manufacturing, welding and industrial sales facility. Currently, Highway 83 Lawn & Leisure employs two full-time small engine mechanics and three retail employees, including Gohl.

Throughout the business evolution, Gohl always keeps energy conservation in the forefront. The building is built with 2x8-inch glulams, with 3 inches of sprayed-in foam and 5 inches of cellular insulation in every wall, not just exterior walls. The attic features 3 feet of fiberglass insulation. All lighting features energy-efficient LED.

In addition, 300 solar panels are on the roof and run the entire south half of the building to provide up to 100,000 kilowatts (KW) of electricity for a 480-volt, three-phase line.

The entire building typically doesn’t use more than 40 amps of electricity in the summer when it’s sunny, Gohl explained. Extra electricity could be available for MEC to purchase. MEC is exploring ways to work with renewable energy interests “in a mutually beneficial relationship,” Doyle added.

In the winter, Gohl uses all of the electricity the solar panels produce, and he purchases electricity from MEC. He monitors his solar generation in real-time on a computer control board in the building.

The new manufacturing and welding facility will also have a 125-KW solar system with panels on its roof, Gohl described.

Originally from Michigan, Gohl came to North Dakota when he served in the U.S. Air Force at the Minot Air Force Base. After leaving the military, he started a construction company, which evolved into working with the infrastructure at North Dakota’s three military facilities. It was the need to maintain that water and sewer infrastructure that led to his design and patent for the cleaning equipment his company will now manufacture.

One thing led to another and in the coming months, McLean County will enjoy the benefits of additional economic growth through the vision of a retired cabin owner living along Lake Audubon. ■



*A wall of materials used in the welding and metalworking industry is displayed at Highway 83 Lawn & Leisure, located a mile north of the Highway 83 and Highway 37 intersection. Owner Russell Gohl is planning a name change for the store to better reflect its broad array of merchandise, tentatively “Highway 83 General Store.”*



PHOTOS BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Season Parlier's soy candles are hand poured using a cold-processing method.

## A tale of taste, aroma and two businesses

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL



**Season Parlier**, rural Garrison, shows what is perhaps her favorite aspect of her home-based business, Dakotahomestead: her array of handmade candles. She uses a cold-processing method with tallow because of the softness and moisturizing skin benefits.

**T**eresa Souza emphatically denies possessing any artistic talent.

However, it's unlikely clients purchasing her stunning cakes, cupcakes and other desserts would agree.

Souza's friend, Season Parlier, probably would suggest that she, too, is shy in artistic talent.

It's equally unlikely Parlier's customers purchasing her delectable cheesecakes and baked goods would agree with her, either.

Both rural Garrison women turned their love of baking into businesses. In addition, Parlier is passionate about making scented soy candles and homemade soaps, art forms themselves.

Souza started her home-based business at the urging of her husband, John. She sent him on his long morning commutes to work with such an array of delicious baked goods that they became popular when shared among his co-workers. He urged Teresa to turn her love of baking into a business.

Teresa's Treats launched seven years ago, Teresa described.

“It started with cakes and cupcakes and branched out,” she continued.

Parlier’s home-based business, Dakotahomestead, began about five years ago, she described. It grew from her love of baking and an interest in making scented candles and soaps.

She started selling her candles and soaps online, adding small vendor shows and farmers markets as time allowed between her family – husband, Shane, son, Javier, and daughter, Scarlett, who is in college aspiring toward veterinary school. In addition, Season is also a nurse at CHI St. Alexius Garrison.

Teresa blends her business with their four children’s activities – Johnathan, Morgan, Anthony and Jordan. The Souzas moved to rural Garrison 10 years ago from California, while the Parliers came to the area eight years ago from Maryland. Both live near Lake Sakakawea and are McLean Electric Cooperative member-owners.

The two ladies met through vendor shows and farmers markets, developing a friendship and recognizing their businesses complemented each other. For the last couple of years, they’ve worked together to host their own vendor shows in Garrison, either on Main Street’s Cubby Hole or Coffee & Co. located on the east edge of Garrison along Highway 37.

“We try to do it once a month,” Season added. “Except for January because everyone is on a diet after Christmas,” Teresa said with a smile.

Christmas is their busiest time, but Valentine’s Day, Mother’s Day, family gatherings, birthdays and graduation requests also find them filling special orders. This year, Teresa isn’t taking graduation cake orders, however, because she will be busy with Morgan’s graduation from Garrison High School in late May.

Teresa feels she’s probably best known for her creative special occasion theme cakes, including the most popular flavor, marble.

“But I like doing the cookies,” she admitted. Another popular item is trail mix drizzled with white chocolate.

“To me that’s the favorite thing that I bake – and they’re not baked,” she described.

Another favorite aspect of her work is when a customer provides her with a theme and cake size, allowing her creativity to flow. She begins with an idea and her artist palette becomes frosting, decorating tips and spatulas.

“Give me a flavor, theme and size,” she laughed, and she’s ready to put her imagination to work.

The talent isn’t derived from sitting in a class. Instead, Teresa has her favorite recipes, is a huge fan of YouTube to learn from demonstrations, and Googles the internet for different ideas. But tried-and-true Betty Crocker is by



**Teresa Souza**, rural Garrison, with a Christmas bundt cake. Souza’s business, *Teresa’s Treats*, began after her husband suggested she started selling her baked goods because they were so tasty.

far her favorite. “I love my Betty Crocker,” she smiled.

While Teresa starts with recipes, it’s the end product that is a work of edible art – everything from birthday cakes to chocolate-dipped chocolate chip cookies on a stick.

Like Teresa, Season is a self-taught baker and candle and soap maker, learning the art of soap and candle-making by reading books, from the internet, and what may be the most important – learn by doing through trial and error.

“Until I’m satisfied with the end result,” she added. Rather than pouring warm soap into molds, Season uses a cold processing method, “because it’s really good for your skin,” she explained.

Working with a variety of fragrances and essential oils not only allows for her creativity to flow, but it’s also more challenging.

“Different essential oils can influence setup and the end product,” she described.



Season Parlier's logo for her Dakotahomestead business reflects her passion for their "homestead" and hobby farm animals. The Parliers live near Garrison.

That's part of the art form of soap and candle making, just as perfecting the art of homemade sourdough bread, cinnamon rolls or an array of flavored cheesecakes is a culinary art form.

Teresa and Season are making a business out of doing what they love to do. Both are happy with the direction their talents are taking them.

"You don't want to stop the fun," Teresa said. "I want this to always be fun and never work."

Season agreed, although she has some ideas she's bouncing around for her business and family homestead. Shane, a builder by trade, crafted their home, followed by their barn. They added a few cows, a chicken, dogs and cats, starting from scratch on their piece of prairie.

"So, we have a small little homestead," she smiled.

And as it turns it, their new residence in rural North Dakota became a name for her business, along with melding their barn and farm animals into her logo design. Someday, Season might expand the retail aspect of her candle, soap and related items, which are popular gifts, with the barn's atmosphere. But she's always mindful of balancing the fun of what she does with family and her nursing career.

For both women, their home-based businesses are about doing something they love at the level they enjoy. Perhaps best of all are the relationships established over the years with many of their customers.

"The relationships I've made ... or getting to know people," Teresa smiled. "That's the best part." ■



## Find the products:

To purchase Teresa's Treats and Dakotahomestead candles, soaps and bakery items:

- Visit their pop-up stores in Garrison. Dates, times and locations are on their Facebook pages.
- Check out local farmers markets and vendor shows in the region throughout the year.
- Teresa Souza takes orders through Facebook Messenger, although she doesn't make decorated cakes in the heat of the summer – transporting them in the summer could melt the cake frosting, she explained. Orders should be placed two weeks before the event.
- Season Parlier's scented soy candles and cold-processed soaps are also available at Market on 4th in Minot and online from Etsy, [dakotahomestead.etsy.com](http://dakotahomestead.etsy.com).
- Contact Parlier via Facebook, [www.Facebook.com/dakotahomestead](http://www.Facebook.com/dakotahomestead).
- While most customers pay with cash or checks, both Season and Teresa accept credit card sales. ■

## What is a kilowatt-hour?

Whether it's via an app or on paper, the most apparent part of your electric bill is that bottom line – how much your electricity costs. Your electricity is billed at a rate per kilowatt-hour

### What is a kWh?

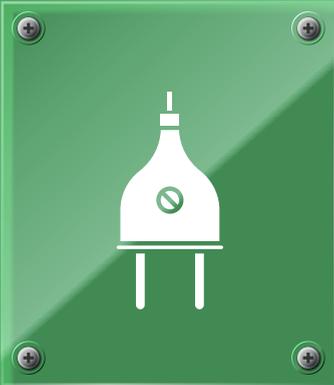
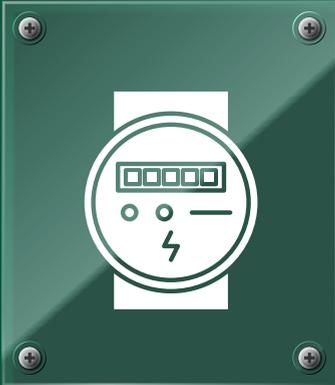
A kWh is an amount of electricity used during one hour. One kWh is equal to the power consumption of 1,000 watts, or 1 kilowatt, for one hour.

For example, a 100-watt light bulb used for 10 hours is equivalent to one kWh.

(kWh), and managing how much electricity you use is tied to that measurement. If you want to better manage your electric bill, it helps to know what kWh means.

One watt is a small amount of power. Some devices require only a few watts to operate, while other devices require larger amounts. An appliance's label will state how many watts it uses.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

KILOWATT	KILOWATT-HOUR
	
Power required for the appliance to work	Energy used each hour the appliance is on

<h3>HOW MUCH ELECTRICITY DOES AN AMERICAN HOME USE?</h3> <p>In 2020, the average annual electricity consumption for a U.S. residential utility customer was</p> <p><b>10,715 kWh</b> or an average of about</p> <p><b>893 kWh</b> per month.</p>	<h3>WHAT CAN I DO WITH 1 KWH?</h3> <p><i>(based on U.S. average electric rates)</i></p> <table border="1"><tbody><tr><td><b>89</b> slices of bread toasted</td><td><b>18</b> hours of refrigerator use</td></tr><tr><td><b>12</b> pots of coffee brewed</td><td><b>3</b> loads in the washer</td></tr><tr><td><b>276</b> charges for your cellphone</td><td><b>20</b> hours on your laptop</td></tr></tbody></table>	<b>89</b> slices of bread toasted	<b>18</b> hours of refrigerator use	<b>12</b> pots of coffee brewed	<b>3</b> loads in the washer	<b>276</b> charges for your cellphone	<b>20</b> hours on your laptop
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## McLean County community calendar:

# Events and activities to see and do

### McLean County community food pantry February distributions:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood:** 4-6 p.m. Feb. 3 and 10 a.m.-noon Feb. 19, 208 Lincoln Ave. Like us on Facebook, Community Cupboard of Underwood, for food pantry distributions, thrift store and other information.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** Feb. 24, noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., former Lazy J's building back door.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** Feb. 21, 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. Feb. 10 and 10 a.m.-noon Feb. 26, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone; full food distribution, 4-6 p.m. Feb. 17, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

Area food pantries often experience high needs for these items: baked beans, pork and beans, canned fruit, tuna, chicken, cereal, oatmeal, granola and breakfast bars, juice, mac and cheese, hamburger and tuna helper, pancake mix, syrup, pasta, pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice side dishes, soups and household items such as body wash and soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner, toilet paper, toothpaste

and toothbrushes. Contact local food pantries for drop-off information or a list of additional needs in your community.

### February activities:

- **Feb. 14:** Happy Valentine's Day.
- **Feb. 17:** Blood Drive, Garrison City Auditorium, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
- **Feb. 19:** Garrison Fire Department annual buffalo feed, serving 4:30-8 p.m. with dance beginning at 8:30 p.m. Music provided by Briana and The Outsiders.
- **Feb. 19:** Full Snow Moon Candlelight Hike, Fort Stevenson State Park, 6 p.m., with lighted candle luminaries along the trail. Meet at the visitor center to cross-country ski, snowshoe or hike the trail with a special 7:30 p.m. light photography performance by artist Johnathan Campbell. Contact the park, 701-337-5576, for more details.
- **April 1:** Operation Round Up grant application deadline. Visit McLean Electric Cooperative's website, [mcleanelectric.com](http://mcleanelectric.com), and click "Grants and Scholarships" or contact Communications Manager Sonja Moe, 701-463-6700, for details.

*Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County are encouraged to contact Patricia Stockdill, [stockdill.patricia@gmail.com](mailto:stockdill.patricia@gmail.com), or telephone 701-337-5462, to submit their community events.* ■

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