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The 2017 annual Pie Day brought a smile to McLean Electric Cooperative General Manager/CEO **Marty Dahl** as he received his ice cream topping. The 2018 Pie Day takes place from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 16 at the Garrison city auditorium, as a way for local cooperatives to say "thank you" to their members.

Celebrate Co-op Month with area cooperatives, pie and ice cream

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) and other area cooperatives will celebrate National Co-op Month with a slice of pie and ice cream.

And everyone is invited to join them.

McLean Electric, Farmers Union Oil-Garrison, CHS-Garrison, Great River Energy and RTC (Reservation Telephone Cooperative), host their annual Pie and Ice Cream Social Oct. 16 as a "thank you" to their community members in celebration of Co-op Month.

Pie – two kinds - and ice cream will be served from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 16 at the Garrison city auditorium on Main Street, It's a way to share a slice of Americana and celebrate National Co-op Month at the same time. ■



The ambulance district received the Southwest Region Award at the annual North Dakota EMS conference in the spring of 2018.

'We're a family'- Garrison-Max Ambulance District

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

As a child, Jody Gullickson, Max, recalls watching an ambulance heading down their road. She thought to herself, "Oh, I want to do that." Her childhood vision became reality when she was invited to take a first responder course in 1990, becoming an emergency medical technician (EMT) in 1996.

As a child growing up in Tioga, Amanda Melby's father volunteered as an EMT. She followed suit. "I took the EMT course when I was in high school," she described.

Fast-forward a few years: Amanda is now a paramedic and co-manager, along with Craig Comes, of the Garrison-Max Ambulance District.

Jody serves as the ambulance district's Max coordinator, with the ambulance in Max serving as a district substation.

Rural ambulance districts are the heart of rural North Dakota. Volunteers provide critical services throughout their area, Melby described, which is especially important because many rural ambulance districts still rely on trained volunteers.

The Garrison-Max Ambulance District and the patrons it serves are fortunate in many ways, Melby described. For example, Garrison has CHI St. Alexius Garrison Hospital and medical staff in the community, along with funding for four full-time

paramedics and six full-time EMTs. "We (full-time staff) have over 100 years of experience," she added.

Meld that expertise with volunteers such as Gullickson and others from the Garrison and Max areas and the blend of trained professionals and volunteers means "no call goes uncovered," Gullickson emphasized.

The district serves a huge area, extending west beyond the community of White Shield and north nearly to N.D. Highway 23 – more than 2,000 square miles, Melby added. It also encompasses several miles of U.S. Highway 83. It means a lot of miles to cover and the potential for numerous highway accidents. Lake Sakakawea is also within its service area.

"This population (Garrison area) doubles or triples in the summer. ... There's more chance for injuries," Melby described.

Yet because the communities work together, patrons within the district always have an ambulance on standby. The district provides 24-hour per day staffing and is 100 percent licensed with basic life support with advanced life support capabilities. "For this area, I think it's pretty unique," Melby added.

In addition to serving its district, the Garrison-Max Ambulance District has mutual aid agreements to assist ambulance services based in area communities in the event they need to do an "intercept," where the Garrison-Max ambulance meets another district's ambulance to assist in transferring a patient.

The Ryder-Makoti ambulance district was split among Parshall, Minot and Garrison-Max when that ambulance district dissolved, Melby explained.

The Garrison-Max district averages about 660 ambulance runs annually, a combination of emergency calls and patient transfers to hospitals in Garrison, Minot,

Bismarck or elsewhere.

All patient transfers require at least four people, Melby described. “We have to have at least a minimum of an EMT to stay back here (in Garrison).” At least two people go on a transfer, while two people are physically on call at the ambulance district, she added.

What makes the ambulance district work successfully together is “it’s one community helping out another community,” Gullickson suggested. “We are family. The Garrison-Max ambulance volunteers and paid staff are family.”

Currently, one of the family members is answering another call – Luke Zabka, a paramedic from Max, serves in the North Dakota National Guard and is deployed in Afghanistan. He returns in February, Gullickson said.

In the meantime, Gullickson and the Max team of volunteer drivers – along with the Garrison staff and volunteers – continue serving the area.

Even though the Garrison-Max Ambulance District is fortunate to have a paid full-time staff, Melby and Gullickson agree the need strongly exists for additional volunteers, primarily in the role of drivers. Volunteers are trained in CPR and paid for ambulance runs. “Because they’re still taking time away from their jobs and family,” Melby added.

Much as the dedication to community is part of the rural electric cooperative philosophy, the Garrison-Max Ambulance District – and the entire team of ambulance employees and volunteers throughout McLean County – exemplify the sense of community that is the heart of the fabric of rural North Dakota, McLean Electric Cooperative General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl added.

A seven-member board of directors guides the ambulance

district’s operation. The state of North Dakota assists in funding ambulance districts, but Melby admitted funding can be still challenging.

Given its broad service area and number of runs associated with the large region it serves, the district is researching its long-term goals to address building issues it faces,

having outgrown its current facility, Melby described, in addition to replacing an ambulance.

The ambulance district received the Southwest Region Award at the annual North Dakota EMS conference in the spring of 2018, Gullickson added, a tribute to work of its family of staff and volunteers. ■

Volunteers urged to become educated

Become educated.

That’s one of the best things people within the Garrison-Max Ambulance District’s service area – or any ambulance district - can do to help, district co-manager, Amanda Melby, suggested.

Whether it’s taking a basic first aid or CPR course for one’s own personal information or advancing to become certified in an array of advanced emergency medical training as a future employee, the Garrison-Max Ambulance District encourages education.

Several staff members are certified to teach courses, Melby continued. “We have people from Minot and all over who come and take classes from us.” Some courses, such as basic CPR, don’t require a minimum class size.

Other courses are extensive. For example, an EMT course takes about eight to 10 months to complete. Other courses include advanced cardiac life support, pediatric advanced life support, pre-hospital trauma life support, emergency vehicle operators course for ambulance and fire department drivers, or first aid.

In addition, “we like to go into the schools and teach CPR to teachers, coaches and kids,” Melby added.

The ambulance district is in the process of attaining Cardiac Ready Community status, which focuses on cardiac issues, such as blood pressure screening and location of AEDs (automated external defibrillator). “It’s a community effort and typically takes eight to 12 months to complete,” Melby explained. All of the community’s emergency services need to meet a standard criteria, as well as the community itself.

Volunteers and community awareness are a huge part of the Garrison-Max Ambulance District. Volunteers are always in demand and greatly appreciated as part of the family of residents that serve the district, whether as a member of the board of directors, paid staff, or volunteer. Simply call the ambulance garage, 701-463-2178, for more information about courses.

“We are family. ... It’s a good feeling,” Gullickson concluded.

McLean Electric Cooperative lineworker **Nathan Ruud** checks tire pressure prior to leaving cooperative headquarters for the day – all part of reinforcing safe driving on and off the road.



Driving safety home

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) lineworkers log thousands of miles each year, yet it's no accident the cooperative earns accident-free driving recognition.

The cooperative participates in a North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) annual safe driving certification course, explained MEC Operations Manager Keith Thelen. The class helps drive home safe driving awareness for all MEC employees, he added. It also saves the cooperative money through lower insurance rates.

The course is nationally certified. "It goes over all of the do's and don'ts of driving safety," Thelen described. North Dakota rural electric cooperatives and NDAREC also track the number of miles employees drive without an accident – of any type – and that is how McLean Electric earns its safe

driving awards.

McLean Electric lineworker Nathan Ruud is also the line crew safety coordinator. The emphasis on safe driving reaches beyond the workplace, he said. "I know I feel naked without my seatbelt. And I always make sure my family wears them," he added.

However, McLean Electric doesn't stop at just having its employees attend a safe driving class in its efforts to emphasize the importance of safe driving. Texting while driving is illegal in North Dakota, but it's also part of the cooperative's policy handbook – texting and driving is prohibited at all times in MEC vehicles, Thelen continued.

Also, in the event anyone has any type of driving accident, it's reviewed and analyzed to identify what could have and should have been done differently to prevent or avoid the accident.

Another example of driving home

safe driving is all employees are trained that when two people are in a vehicle, both look both ways for traffic, Thelen described. That is also a rule Ruud applies in his personal driving – he and his wife, Darlene, both watch for oncoming traffic when they're riding together. The employee training helps reinforce defensive driving at all times, Ruud added.

Safe driving goes beyond drivers and passengers, as well. Lineworkers also inspect every vehicle before leaving. For examples, tires and lights are inspected prior to every trip.

Lineworkers drive an average of 153,260 miles annually, logging more than 510,000 miles without an accident of any type, Thelen said.

Those statistics are no accident – safe driving is part of the cooperative's daily routine and it shows in their safe driving record. ■

JUNE 15-21, 2019

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

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ESSAY QUESTION:

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

CHECK OUT THE ESSAY-CONTEST GUIDELINES AT
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HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS



It's time to decorate your yard and home as ghosts and goblins plan their invasion of the neighborhood looking for treats.



As you light Halloween night with elaborate decorations, McLean Electric Cooperative recommends some important safety tips:



COSTUMES THAT GIVE A SCARE...

Halloween is thrilling for kids and they are often distracted and excited while participating in the festivities. However, some decorations, such as candles, can be potentially dangerous. Be sure to choose decorations, costumes, and accessories that are made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant or non-combustible materials.



A HAUNTED HOUSE

Before you decorate, inspect each electrical item and discard any with damaged wires. If you're using electrical products outside, make sure they are marked "for outdoor use." Keep electric cords out of high-traffic areas, where they can be a tripping hazard to trick-or-treaters. And be sure to plug all outdoor decorations into circuits protected by Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) to prevent electric shock.



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power your life.**

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

Celebrate Co-op Month!

By providing the electricity that powers your home, farm or business, cooperatives play a role in your daily life. As we observe Co-op Month in October, electric cooperative members should be proud of the success of the cooperative business model and the spirit of cooperation these organizations promote. Cooperatives are a true example of grassroots involvement, because cooperatives are owned and controlled by those they serve.

Look across North Dakota's landscape and you'll notice cooperatives improve our quality of life everywhere. Electric cooperatives bring light to our lives, cool our food and heat our homes.

So, when you turn on a light, or power up your computer, remember your electric cooperative is standing behind you each and every day.

Co-ops are community-led

October is National Co-op Month, which is the perfect time to highlight the many ways electric cooperatives are unique.

Cooperatives are locally governed, looking out for the long-term needs of their consumer-members.

Co-ops are a catalyst for good

Electric co-ops are a catalyst for good in their communities. Co-ops engage their consumer-members to do things that might otherwise be impossible or difficult, like more than 75 years ago when electric co-ops brought power to areas where other utilities did not find it economically feasible.

Cooperatives exist to meet a need that was previously unmet in the community, and they are ever striving to anticipate and plan for the future

needs of their consumer-members.

Electric cooperatives often partner with local groups to bring economic opportunity to their local community. It is this facilitation role that is often the most valuable strength of the co-op.

The co-op business model is unique. It is pragmatic, mission-oriented and puts people first. Co-ops strive to be a trusted voice in their communities. Co-ops have earned that trust because, while not perfect, they always have their members' best interest at heart and are determined to enrich the lives of those living and working in the communities they serve – now and in the future. ■



Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives of North Dakota

Lucas Schaaf joins McLean Electric Cooperative as engineering manager

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL



Lucas Schaaf joined McLean Electric Cooperative as engineering manager in July.

Lucas Schaaf fully recognizes the value of electricity to the farm – especially when a 100-year blizzard event knocks out power for weeks.

Schaaf grew up on a small grain and cattle farm near Glen Ullin, and is McLean Electric Cooperative's (MEC) new engineering manager.

A 2015 North Dakota State University electrical engineering graduate, Schaaf was in high school when one of the most severe blizzards in the past century hit Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative's service area. It

helped him develop an appreciation for rural electric cooperatives, which led him to take a position with Minnkota Power Cooperative in Center, where he worked until joining McLean Electric in July 2018.

One of the things that drew Schaaf to McLean Electric was his familiarity with rural electric cooperatives at the grassroots level. "I like the cooperative's model. ... I like being closer to the distribution, the end user," he explained.

For now, Schaaf is commuting to McLean Electric's Garrison headquarters, but is looking at area housing. A love of the outdoors and hunting also drew him to the region. Plus, he still helps out on the family farm and it's a nearby drive to see family and pitch in on weekends.

Schaaf is excited about the role he will play with McLean Electric, working with Staking Engineer Cara Bauer and GIS/Computer Systems Coordinator Austin Dillard on new services, analyzing system status and upgrades, as the cooperative increasingly transitions to underground cable instead of overhead power lines. He will also help address producer's irrigation electrical needs as well as pole structure on existing overhead lines.

The electrical industry faces an array of challenges, Schaaf added, but he is excited about the opportunity to address those challenges for consumers. ■

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