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The Level 3 electric vehicle charging station at the Totten Trail Bar & Grill is a partnership of McLean Electric Cooperative and the Totten Trail Bar & Grill. Left to right are **Lucas Schaaf**, MEC engineering manager; **Tim Aman**, Totten Trail Bar & Grill owner-operator; and **Mark Doyle**, MEC general manager/CEO.

McLean Electric helps advance electric vehicle charging opportunities

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) is taking a lead in meeting charging station needs within its service area, as electric vehicle alternatives gain interest across the nation and North Dakota.

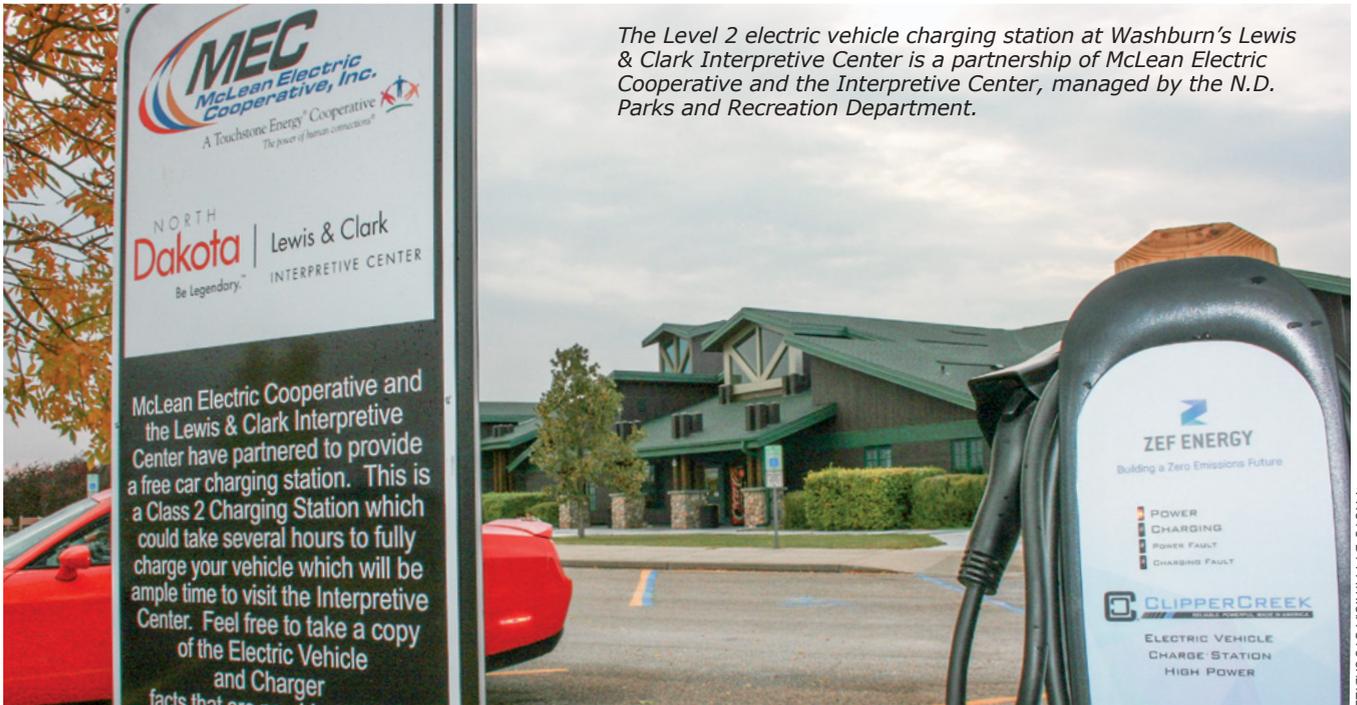
The cooperative partnered with two of its consumer-members – the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, Washburn, and the Totten Trail Bar & Grill along Lake Audubon – to install

two electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in 2020.

MEC Engineering Manager Lucas Schaaf said the Level 2 slow-charge station at the Interpretive Center became operational in early summer 2020. The cooperative purchased and installed the station, with the Interpretive Center providing free charging to users. The Totten Trail Level 3 fast-charge station is slated

to become operational in late 2020, he added. The N.D. Department of Health provided an 80 percent cost-share grant to assist in that unit's installation.

Providing the two charging stations is an opportunity for McLean Electric to take the lead in servicing not only Highway 83 travelers, but recreational users and vacationers in the region and its own consumer-



The Level 2 electric vehicle charging station at Washburn's Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center is a partnership of McLean Electric Cooperative and the Interpretive Center, managed by the N.D. Parks and Recreation Department.

PHOTO BY PATRICIA STOCKHILL

members, General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle described.

Highway 83 is a major nationwide travel corridor, but there wasn't any way to charge an electric vehicle directly along the corridor until the stations became available. It helps meet a need and fill a demand while benefiting local organizations and businesses, Schaaf added. People can tour the Interpretive Center or enjoy amenities at the Totten Trail while their vehicle charges.

It's also an opportunity to promote the use of electric vehicles and educate people about them. In addition, McLean Electric provides electricity to both charging stations.

"It's important to contribute to North Dakota as a whole in its Highway 83 designation as an important EV corridor," Doyle added. The charging stations are a proactive example of an electric cooperative rising to meet changing energy demands.

While most EV users will slow-trickle charge their vehicles at home – often in the evening and early

morning hours until it shuts off at full charge – charging stations available for public use help fill the gap so vehicles can charge on longer trips, such as from Minot to Bismarck and vice versa.

How often electric vehicles require charging varies on the vehicle type and age, battery size and other factors – similar to how gasoline or diesel-powered vehicle mileage varies. Newer electric vehicles typically offer better mileage, Schaaf explained, depending on battery size.

Typically, many of today's electric vehicles can go 3 to 4 miles per kilowatt-hour or about 21 to 28 miles per hour of charge on a Level 2 charging platform.

The Level 3 charging station required three-phase line and because it's faster than Level 2, EV users could see about 150 to 200 miles per hour of charge, assuming about 3 to 4 miles per kilowatt-hour, Schaaf continued. The Totten Trail charging station costs 25 cents per minute and is credit card capable, just like standard gas or diesel credit card pumps, Schaaf described.

One important factor in the success of electric vehicle usage – and their electric energy sales – is the availability of charging stations in more rural areas of the country. The two new stations MEC partnered to establish help advance that network, Doyle added.

The cooperative monitors the usage of the stations. Initially Schaaf said that will likely be light for a couple of major reasons: The number of electric vehicles is still limited in North Dakota – in part because of the lack of charging networks across the state – and the COVID-19 pandemic slowed summer travels.

But as EV charging networks expand and electric vehicle technology advances, EV will likely be an increasing option for vehicle owners, and electric energy providers such as MEC and its consumer-members. MEC will look for other opportunities to continue leading the way in meeting EV usage demands and ways to partner with other entities to advance the electric vehicle potential, Doyle concluded. ■

Little Lunches program makes big impact

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL



Dawn Kolden, rural Garrison, is surrounded by Little Lunches Backpack Program food for Garrison Public School students in need. Kolden's daughter, Kimberly, initiated the program after learning about the extent of child hunger during FFA and 4-H conferences in 2016. The backpack program works in conjunction with Camp of the Cross and the Garrison Area Resource Center and its food pantry, along with an array of volunteers and local business and organizational support.

She's kind of like Santa Claus, stealthy as she comes and goes, slipping packages of goodies to delight children.

This Santa Claus, though, isn't in a red suit and doesn't slip down a

chimney while a team of reindeer and a sleigh await. Nor are the bag of goodies full of toys and sweets.

Instead, the goodies are kid-friendly nutritious food items children of all school ages could make for themselves on a weekend

away from the brick-and-mortar learning of school.

The Little Lunches Backpack Program is all about addressing childhood hunger as close to home as one's hometown. In this case, it's the Garrison Public School. The cold, harsh reality is child hunger is relevant and it's here, even though people don't like to talk about it or admit it.

The bags containing a small cereal, juice and oatmeal packets aren't bright red and decorative, either. Instead, they're inconspicuous plastic grocery bags. It's done that way, explained co-founder Dawn Kolden, rural Garrison, so it doesn't draw attention to the fact that a student is facing the real prospect of not having enough food to eat when school isn't in session on weekends.

Other Little Lunches Backpack items often include a granola bar, meat stick, fruit snack, a variety of fruit, and two kid-friendly easy-to-make meals – like Ramen noodles or mac-and-cheese packets, for example.

"We're trying different things," she added. In addition, items are purchased locally to support the same local businesses that support Little Lunches.

The items are slipped into the bottom of students' backpack while they're in class at the elementary school or discretely set in the high school office for older students to take at their discretion.

The Little Lunches Backpack Program is the creation of Dawn and her daughter, Kimberly, a Garrison High School and Minot State University elementary education graduate. Kimberly was active in 4-H and FFA while attending

Garrison High School and was FFA president her senior year.

Kimberly attended two conferences in 2016 that awakened her to the extent of childhood hunger across the United States – even right here in North Dakota and even closer to home in McLean County.

Yes, childhood hunger is real. Extremely real.

Kimberly got that rude awakening while first attending a 4-H conference in Fargo where participants helped pack lunches for Valley City schools through the “Backpack Buddies” program in conjunction with the Great Plains Food Bank.

Later, she had the issue driven home even more during a national FFA conference in Washington, D.C. Students were randomly grouped based on their “economics,” Dawn described. Groups of children in the “poor” group received little or nothing to eat at the nightly banquet (although they ate their full banquet meal later). “Middle class” students received what many would consider a typical evening meal. “Upper class” students received the full banquet setting.

For Kimberly, Dawn described, randomly placed in the middle class group, the dinner was typical. But for others, their meal – or lack thereof – drew tears and fears of not being able to eat or being disappointed that it was beneath their standards for what was their usual meal at home.

“She called me that night and said, ‘Mom, we need to do something.’” Dawn described.

So mother and daughter researched how they could bring a similar program to the Garrison area. It became Kimberly’s FFA and 4-H projects and they worked to launch the program within months

after she attended the conferences. As FFA president, Kimberly approached Garrison High School FFA Advisor Glen Huettl, asking if FFA members could pack backpacks at FFA meetings.

So they did.

Essentially, Kimberly and Dawn’s Little Lunches Backpack Program is modeled after Backpack Buddies. But without having yet garnered nonprofit status, donations weren’t tax-deductible.

Now the program is sponsored by Camp of the Cross, allowing for 501(c)3 tax-deductible contributions to be made to Little Lunches Backpacks.

“Camp of the Cross adopted us,” Dawn said with a smile.

Once the Garrison Area Resource Center launched in early 2020, it also helps facilitate the program.

Little Lunches Backpacks quickly gained momentum with the initial backpacks distributed by the fall of 2016. The number of backpacks at both schools varies even week-to-week. Dawn slips them deep into the bottom of participating students’ backpacks as they hang outside each classroom on their coat hooks.

And then she takes another group of backpacks to the high school.

Dawn distributes them every Friday or on the last day of school for the week in the event of a holiday or shortened school week.

“When school lunches and breakfasts aren’t available, it’s something to help them get through the weekend,” she explained.

Funding for the program in its early stages came simply with Kimberly and Dawn asking for help, approaching organizations, businesses and churches while explaining the program’s goals and local need. Garrison High School’s FFA members and local 4-H clubs stepped up immediately, Dawn

added, and other entities followed, including the Camp of Cross and its board’s vital support.

Volunteers also help fill backpacks, Dawn added.

The number of backpacks filled varies from week-to-week and throughout the year as students move in and out of the district and family needs change for whatever circumstance.

Dawn delivered about 100 backpacks monthly when the program initially launched. “Right now (late September), I’m serving 44 kids in our school,” she added.

“There are no questions asked,” she emphasized. Instead, there is a simple, nondescript sign-up sheet at both schools. Parents or students can sign up. Teachers and school administrators can enroll a child or family in need. Or anyone in the community can enroll a child or family.

At this time, Little Lunches Backpacks isn’t able to provide specialty diet items, such as gluten-free or food allergy alternatives. It’s simply not logistically possible on the local scale, as much as organizers would like to be able to accommodate those needs.

Little Lunches Backpacks will also be available at the Garrison Area Resource Center Food Pantry (back door of the former Lazy J’s on Main Street) on food basket distribution day, the fourth Thursday of each month, as another option for children to obtain their food items.

Backpack food was distributed every two weeks through May at the GARC Food Pantry during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Garrison schools were closed.

“We just decided anybody under 18 (could get a backpack),” Dawn explained.

In a perfect world, Dawn wishes there wasn’t a need for Little

Lunches Backpacks. She's not alone, for it's probably in the hearts and minds of every volunteer and donor as they slip a small packet of beef sticks in a plastic bag, write a check and drop it off at a bank, or put a box of ever-popular mac-and-cheese in a cardboard box labeled "Little Lunches Backpack Program."

But this isn't a perfect world and the need exists. Statistic after statistic verifies the problem is in everyone's backyard. Garrison Public School Elementary Principal Shelly Fuller knows the statistics pertaining to Garrison, so she isn't surprised by the number of backpacks distributed

throughout the school year. She believes that number would surprise many area residents.

"(Childhood hunger) is a silent issue," she added.

More often than not, people – especially strong and hardy North Dakotans – tend to not want others to know their situation, for whatever reason.

Pride often runs strong and deep. "It's hard to ask for help, it's really hard to ask," Dawn whispered.

Yet people want to help when they begin to realize the extent of the issue, Fuller added, and the Little Lunches Backpack Program

is an opportunity to help alleviate the problem close to home. The program fills the gap for students in need when reduced or free meal plans aren't available, such as on weekends.

Even though child hunger tends to be that silent issue – even locally – sometimes Santa hears those unspoken pleas and comes in a form of a woman dressed in jeans, a T-shirt or sweater, and carrying inconspicuous grocery bags of nutritional goodies for a child just to make it to Monday and the next school meal. ■



Food selected for the Little Lunches Backpack program is geared so children can easily make something easy to eat or grab a quick and healthy snack.

How to help

Contributing to the Little Lunches Backpack Program is easy, described coordinator Dawn Kolden.

Garrison State Bank and Krause's Market both have accounts set up for people to donate cash or checks. The Little Lunches Backpack Program is a federally recognized 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, so donations are tax-deductible.

In addition, food totes are available in several Garrison

businesses and churches, where people can place nonperishable items. Local organizations such as 4-H clubs and churches also periodically conduct food drives on behalf of the program, Kolden added, so people can donate at the time.

Contact Kolden, 701-898-1227, or more information about Little Lunches Backpack Program. ■

FIRE PREVENTION

IT SAVES LIVES

PREVENTION: IT SAVES LIVES. Installing smoke alarms on every level of your home, testing them regularly, and replacing smoke alarms every 10 years are some of the steps you can take to keep your family safe.

PREVENTION



AFCI Breakers and Outlets can prevent **50%** of residential home fires.



Each year **2,400 children** in the US are treated for injuries caused by outlets. **1/3** of parents do not have outlets childproofed. Install **Tamper Resistant Receptacles**.



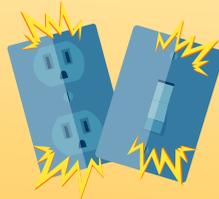
470,000 counterfeit smartphone batteries were recalled in one year due to burn and **fire hazards**. Purchase electronics at reputable retailers.



3,300 home fires originate from **extension cords** each year. Heavy reliance on extension cords is a sign to have more outlets installed.



The **CPSC** found **47%** of electrocutions could be prevented with **GFCI protection** in homes.



Frequently **tripped circuit breakers** or blown fuses and cracking, sizzling or buzzing from outlets can be signs of an overloaded circuit. **47,700 home fires** in the US are caused by electrical failure or malfunction each year.

DETECTION



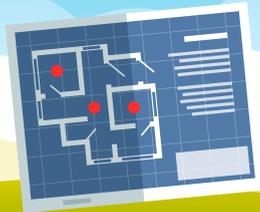
SMOKE ALARMS: REPLACE EVERY 10 YEARS



BATTERIES: TEST MONTHLY, REPLACE YEARLY



2/3 of **fire deaths** occur in homes with no, or nonfunctioning, smoke alarms.



Have **at least one smoke alarm** on every floor, outside each sleeping area, and in every bedroom.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ELECTRICAL FIRE PREVENTION VISIT WWW.ESFI.ORG

Clearing snow brings risks

When winter wraps us in a blanket of snow, we grab a shovel or start the snowblower. But big snowstorms – and even everyday snowfalls – bring a risk of injury or death by shoveling.

So, why so many deaths? Shoveling snow is just another household chore, right?

Not really, says the American Heart Association. While most people won't have a problem, shoveling snow can put some

people at risk of heart attack. Sudden exertion, like moving hundreds of pounds of snow after being sedentary for several months, can put a big strain on the heart. Pushing a heavy snow blower also can cause injury.

And, there's the cold factor. Cold weather can increase heart rate and blood pressure. This is true even in healthy people. Individuals over the age of 40 or who are relatively inactive should be particularly careful.

The National Safety Council recommends the following tips to shovel safely:

- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow and stretch before you begin.
- Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it's lighter.
- Push the snow rather than lifting it.
- If you do lift it, use a small shovel or only partially fill the shovel.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion.
- Know the signs of a heart attack, and stop immediately and call 911 if you're experiencing any of them; every minute counts.
- Don't pick up that shovel without a doctor's permission if you have a history of heart disease. A clear driveway is not worth your life.

Snow blower safety

In addition to possible heart strain from pushing a heavy snow blower, be safe with tips from the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, including:

- If the blower jams, turn it off.
- Keep your hands away from the moving parts.
- Be aware of the carbon monoxide risk of running a snow blower in an enclosed space.
- Add fuel outdoors, before starting, and never add fuel when it is running.
- Never leave it unattended when it is running.

Playing on a huge snow pile

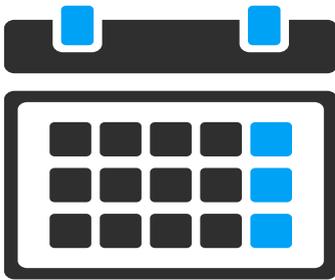
Kids love sliding down huge piles of snow in the wintertime. But sometimes, the snow pile is near or even directly underneath power lines, and they could get too close to the lines.

It's important to pile cleared snow a good distance away from the lines. As soon as kids see a big pile of snow, they want to slide down it, and they could get too close to the lines.

Assume power lines are energized

Assume all power lines are energized and stay clear of any downed or damaged power lines. ■





McLean County community calendar:

Events and activities to see and do

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean Electric Cooperative celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2021, delayed due the COVID-19 pandemic. Please follow our website, Facebook page and your *North Dakota Living* local pages for details and the date so we can celebrate together in the coming year.

McLean County food pantry distributions:

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

PLEASE NOTE THAT SCHEDULED EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS. PLEASE FOLLOW HEALTH GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTACT EVENT SPONSORS FOR DETAILS AND UPDATES.

Tentative November events:

- **Nov. 27-29:** Dickens Village Festival Geocache Ornament Exchange, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison. GPS coordinates published every Friday of the festival. Participants are encouraged to bring an ornament to exchange – find a geocache, take an ornament and leave an ornament for the next participant to find. Contact the park, 701-337-5576, for details.
- **Nov. 27-29:** Dickens Village Festival featuring lighted parade, daily entertainment, Main Street food carts, vendor show, Charles Dickens theater production and more, Garrison. Go to the website, www.dickensfestival.com, for details.

Tentative early December events:

- **Dec. 4-5:** Dickens Village Festival featuring lighted parade, daily entertainment, Main Street food carts, vendor show, Charles Dickens theater production, and more, Garrison. Go to the website, www.dickensfestival.com, for details. ■

McLean County organizations and communities can contact Patricia Stockdill, (stockdill.patricia@gmail.com) or telephone 701-337-5462 to submit community events.

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