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WILTON PUBLIC SCHOOL/ICON ARCHITECTS

McLean Electric Cooperative and its industry partners, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, CoBank and the North Dakota Rural Development Finance Corporation, contributed \$15,000 to the Wilton School Foundation supporting education in the school district. This is an architect's rendering of the new building.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY: strengthening education

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Rural North Dakota and McLean County are like much of rural America. For many, the local school is the center of the community; it's the heart of a town.

"A school is one of the pillars of a community. Without a school, a community will struggle," McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle says.

Schools can be a major determining factor on whether or not a family will move to a community.

Or whether or not they will leave.

When a school thrives, an entire community can thrive, including the broader definition of a community

stretching beyond a town's borders. It's an advantage to the MEC service area to be able to support and maintain adequate student-teacher ratios, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) opportunities, and even extracurricular activities, which teach students about teamwork, commitment to oneself and others, and the success hard work can bring, Doyle describes.

It takes large dollar amounts, though, to maintain, sustain and grow school districts. Large-scale projects, such as building expansion or renovation, require a commitment on the part of district patrons when they vote to approve multi-million dollar funding projects.

Sometimes, though, a large-scale project, such as

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what the Wilton Public School District is currently undertaking – an \$11 million classroom and cafeteria expansion and renovations – can open funding avenues to provide even more opportunities in the future.

MEC, in conjunction with its electric cooperative industry partners, Basin Electric Power Cooperative’s (BEPC) Charitable Giving Program, CoBank’s Sharing Success and North Dakota Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC), recently contributed \$15,000 to the Wilton Public School Foundation to assist the organization in meeting its funding goals.

“We’re very thankful for the support. Any donation we get will help us pay back the loans,” Wilton Public School Superintendent Andrew Jordan says.

While the bond measure approved by Wilton’s school district voters covers \$8.97 million of the project costs, escalating construction prices and material supply issues pushed the figure to \$11 million, Jordan describes.

The Wilton school board secured \$2 million from North Dakota’s Coal Development Fund, a 2% low-interest loan through the Bank of North Dakota, for the

difference, Jordan continues.

The board also voted to establish the Wilton Public School Foundation, allowing businesses and individuals to make tax-deductible contributions supporting the project.

Establishing the foundation helps meet the short-term need of paying construction project costs, but can also provide long-term benefits, Jordan adds, by potentially generating funds for student scholarships and other needs.

MEC’s board of directors reviewed the Wilton School District’s funding request and, as is done with all similar large-scale requests, considered several factors before voting to reach out to its partners for their charitable support.

Not all projects – large-scale or smaller endeavors – fit criteria for MEC funding, Doyle adds. Its board of directors considers several factors, such as community impact, community need and whether or not a request fits and is appropriate in MEC’s role as an electric cooperative.

Wilton school continues to grow

The number of students in the Wilton Public School is growing and the trend will continue.

Student enrollment increased 20% for the 2023-24 school year, compared to 2013-14. While it’s good to have more students, it means a growing community. For the school, it meant nine elementary and 11 high school classrooms and its cafeteria were below N.D. Department of Public Instruction space recommendations in 2024.

It also meant splitting three elementary classrooms in the 2023-24 school year and having fifth- and sixth-grade students in the high school area. A portable classroom was also in full use.

More students and staff means less space and a more challenging learning environment, so the Wilton school board decided to tell the story to its patrons, asking them to support an \$8.97 million expansion project.

They did so with a 61% majority vote. Wilton Public School Superintendent Andrew Jordan

said the school board appreciates the support from its patrons, as they recognize the need for the upgrades.

“We tried to do a good job of telling our story,” he added.

Securing \$8.97 million project support allowed the board to secure a loan from the Bank of North Dakota to start construction.

Original construction costs increased to \$11 million with inflation and material supply issues when the project went out for bids. However, the school board secured a \$2 million loan through the Coal Development Fund, allowing the project to proceed. Construction began in the spring of 2024, with completion slated for May 2025.

The project includes eight new classrooms and an expanded cafeteria, Jordan described. In addition, fundraising is underway for agricultural education and science facility renovations, with \$400,000 raised by late June, he added. ■



WILTON PUBLIC SCHOOL/ICON ARCHITECTS

An architect's rendering of the renovated Wilton school. Construction began in May for additional classrooms and other renovations. The school has increased student enrollment by 20% in 10 years, with district patrons approving a bond measure for expansion and renovations.

BEPC is a multi-state electric generation and transmission provider serving electric cooperatives such as MEC, while CoBank is a cooperative financial lending institution for MEC.

In addition to Basin Electric and CoBank's support, MEC and other electric and telecommunications cooperatives in North Dakota can receive funds for charitable projects through the RDFC, a North Dakota nonprofit organization comprised of the state's electric cooperatives, telecommunications cooperatives and the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, describes MEC Communications Director Sonja Moe.

Emphasizing the cooperative principle, concern for community, and sustainability are vital to the cooperative

mission, Moe explains.

"Giving back to the organizations that help keep our communities strong and growing is vital to MEC. Without charitable programs and nonprofit services, the communities where our members live and work would not thrive as they do," she adds.

MEC and its partners also supported Garrison Public School and Washburn Public School in their large-scale projects. Like Wilton's school district, they each received \$15,000 – \$3,000 each from MEC, Basin Electric and RDFC, and \$6,000 from CoBank's Sharing Success.

Garrison's grant helped fund additional materials for a vocational education/FFA facility and Washburn's grant supported its science classroom.

However, some funding requests – whether it's a school district or nonprofit organization – are more appropriate for programs such as Operation Round Up, Doyle suggests. Under that program, nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations can apply for grants for individuals in need or community organizations and programs – even something school-related.

More information about MEC's commitment to community is available on its website, www.mcleanelectric.com, or by contacting Moe at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922. ■

Co-op helps in small ways, too

McLean Electric Cooperative's (MEC) "commitment to community" supporting large-scale projects, such as Wilton Public School District's building expansion and renovation, underscore the "big picture" importance of education.

However, the cooperative helps in smaller ways, as well, supporting McLean County school districts by assisting school-based activities, projects or programs.

Every year, the cooperative and businesses throughout the county receive funding requests for a wide array of school activities, such as Future Business Leaders of America, post-prom activities,

athletic equipment fundraising and other needs, described MEC General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle.

Rather than review individual requests as they're received, MEC provides each district with a small amount of funds to support special projects of those types. Funds are budgeted annually, explained Doyle, based on historical requests.

"It pools our aggregate funds," he added, while fitting well within cooperative principles of community support. Plus, it helps school district officials and volunteers alike know they can rely on a small contribution supporting their efforts in providing a well-rounded education and educational opportunities. ■

Avoid HARVEST HAZARDS this fall

Power lines and other equipment are necessary to deliver electricity to hardworking farmers and ranchers, but those same power lines can also be deadly if not treated with respect.

Harvest means long hours, increased stress and tight schedules. But McLean Electric Cooperation urges farmers to watch for electrical hazards around the farm or ranch, especially during harvest season.

BE AWARE

- Be aware of overhead power lines and keep equipment and extensions far away from them.
- Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines on all sides. Sprayers can often reach as high as 12 feet in the air.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of a grain truck. It can be difficult to estimate distance, and a power line may be closer than it looks.
- Always lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level before moving or transporting them. Encourage folding and unfolding to be done well into the field, not at the field's edge, which could have power lines running next to it.

USE A SPOTTER

- Avoid moving large equipment alone. Have someone watch as you move equipment to ensure you are clear of power lines. Don't rely on auto-steer around power lines and poles.

REALIZE THINGS CHANGE

- If you have purchased new equipment, be aware of antennas or other attachments that may pose new hazards. A newer, bigger piece of equipment may no longer clear a line. In addition, shifting soil may also affect whether or not machinery avoids power lines from year-to-year.
- Wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can cause you to lose control of equipment and make contact with power lines.
- Power lines also may sag over the years. If power lines on your property are sagging, contact your electric cooperative to repair the lines. Never try to move a power line on your own.

EDUCATE THE CREW

- Look over work areas carefully for overhead power

lines and utility poles. Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines, and use routes to avoid the lines when moving equipment. Do this every year, as equipment sizes and soil conditions may change.

LOOK AROUND

- Overhead power lines are not the only electric hazard on the farm. Pole guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are grounded. However, when one of the guy wires is broken, it can become charged with electricity. If you break a guy wire, call the cooperative to fix it. Don't do it yourself.

USE THE PROFESSIONALS

- Use qualified electricians for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems. ■



Easy weekend projects

As the autumn air turns crisp, it's time to make sure your home's air leaks are sealed properly to keep winter winds away. Sealing air leaks can be an easy weekend project.

TIPS FOR SEALING AIR LEAKS

- Test your home for air tightness.
- Caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows that leak air.
- Caulk and seal air leaks where plumbing, ducting or electrical wiring comes through walls, floors, ceilings and soffits over cabinets.
- Install foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls.
- Inspect dirty spots in your insulation for air leaks and mold. Seal leaks with low-expansion spray foam made for this purpose and install house flashing if needed.
- Look for dirty spots on your ceiling paint and carpet, which may indicate air leaks at interior wall/ceiling joints and wall/floor joists, and caulk them.
- Cover single-pane windows with storm windows or replace them with more efficient double-pane low-emissivity windows.
- Use foam sealant on larger gaps around windows, baseboards and other places where air may leak out.
- Cover your kitchen exhaust fan to stop air leaks when not in use.
- Check your dryer vent to be sure it is not blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire.
- Replace door bottoms and thresholds with ones that have pliable sealing gaskets.
- Keep the fireplace flue damper tightly closed when not in use.
- Seal air leaks around fireplace chimneys, furnaces and gas-fired water heater vents with fire-resistant materials.

ABCs OF CAULKING AIR LEAKS

Caulk is a flexible material used to seal air leaks through cracks, gaps or joints less than ¼-inch wide. For components that move – doors and operable windows, for example – weatherstripping is the appropriate material.

Before caulking air leaks in an existing home, you will need to detect the leaks and assess your ventilation needs to ensure adequate indoor air quality. In addition to sealing air leaks, caulking can also prevent water damage inside and outside of the home when applied around faucets, ceiling fixtures, water pipes, drains, bathtubs and other plumbing fixtures.

SELECTING CAULKING

Most caulking compounds come in disposable cartridges that fit in half-barrel caulking guns (if possible, purchase one with an automatic release). Some pressurized cartridges do not require caulking guns.

When deciding how much caulking to purchase, consider you'll probably need a half cartridge per window or door and four cartridges for the foundation sill of an average home. Caulking compounds can also be found in aerosol



cans, squeeze tubes and ropes for small jobs or special applications.

Caulking compounds vary in strength, properties and prices. Water-based caulk can be cleaned with water, while solvent-based compounds require a solvent for cleanup.

APPLYING CAULK

Although not a high-tech operation, caulking can be tricky. Read and follow the instructions on the compound cartridge, and remember these tips:

- For good adhesion, clean all areas to be caulked. Remove any old caulk and paint. Make sure the area is dry so you don't seal in moisture.
- Apply caulk to all joints in a window frame and the joint between the frame and the wall.
- Hold the gun at a consistent angle. Forty-five degrees is best for getting deep into the crack. You know you've got the right angle when the caulk is immediately forced into the crack as it comes out of the tube.
- Caulk in one straight continuous stream, if possible. Avoid stops and starts.
- Make sure the caulk sticks to both sides of a crack or seam.
- Release the trigger before pulling the gun away to avoid applying too much caulking compound. A caulking gun with an automatic release makes this much easier.
- If caulk oozes out of a crack, use a putty knife to push it back in.
- Don't skimp. If the caulk shrinks, reapply it to form a smooth bead that will seal the crack completely. ■



Parshall High School graduate **Alyssa Haakenson** was one of the Basin Electric Power Cooperative \$500 scholarship winners, presented at the June 18 McLean Electric Cooperative annual meeting. Alyssa is the daughter of Steve and Anita Haakenson, Parshall.



Justis Klabunde, son of Robin and Sheila Klabunde, rural Garrison, will attend Bismarck State College in the fall of 2024 to pursue a plumbing career and help on the family farm. Justis was the 2024 recipient of McLean Electric Cooperative's \$500 college scholarship.



Garrison High School graduate **Mara Krzmarzick** was one of the Basin Electric Power Cooperative \$500 scholarship winners, presented at the June 18 McLean Electric Cooperative annual meeting. Alyssa is the daughter of Tom and Karen Krzmarzick, Garrison.

Commitment to community provides student opportunities

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

It's not a cheap endeavor to attain a higher education degree, whether it's an accredited vocational and technical school, a two- or four-year college degree or beyond

That's why North Dakota electric cooperatives, including McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC), continue supporting the cooperative principle, "commitment to community" through higher education scholarships and educational opportunities.

MEC offers three \$500 scholarships:

- Teaming with Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC), MEC offers two scholarships to help defray educational costs. Checks are paid to the higher educational institution for the student going to that school the fall they receive the scholarship. The three-page application includes sending a recent transcript, ACT or SAT score for applicants entering their first year of higher education, a short essay on a chosen topic and information about the student, such as community involvement, activities, honors, work experience and goals, along with an applicant appraisal. Applicants must be a child or guardian of an MEC member-owner.
- MEC's financial assistance scholarship helps recipients defray some of their educational expenses. It's also available to students entering an accredited vocational and technical school or two- or four-year college.

This one-page application requires students to be either a child or guardian of an MEC member-owner or a member-owner themselves, identify where they received their high school diploma and their chosen accredited school, as well as a short essay.

In addition to helping defray advanced education expenses, MEC has participated in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, sending students entering their high school juniors or senior year in the fall to Washington, D.C., since the early 1960s.

Each June, almost 2,000 students from throughout the United States not only tour some of the nation's most historic and iconic sites, they get to see firsthand the workings of the federal government, meet other students, learn about cooperatives – their role and how they function – and gain an understanding of the importance of leadership and community involvement.

Applicants must be the child or guardian of any MEC member-owner and submit an essay on a chosen topic.

Scholarship and Youth Tour details for 2025 will be available later this fall on McLean Electric's website at www.mcleanelectric.com under "Grants and Scholarships" on the homepage. Or contact MEC Communications Director Sonja Moe at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922. Application deadlines are included on the applications. ■



**YOUR
OPINION
MATTERS**

MAGAZINE READERSHIP SURVEY

North Dakota Living will conduct a readership survey in August. If you are randomly selected to participate, McLean Electric Cooperative asks you to take the survey.

Participants will be asked about their media consumption and communications preferences, to describe their magazine readership habits and to provide feedback on all sections of the publication. Demographic questions will provide additional information about our members and trends.

SURVEY METHODS

- **Phone** – If you participate on the phone, the caller will walk you through a list of questions and responses.
- **Text-to-web** – You will receive a text with a link to participate and complete the survey online.



You will only be asked to confirm your name. *North Dakota Living* and its representatives will never ask for your contact information, including phone number, email or mailing address, credit card or banking information, Social Security number or other protected personal information. If you are ever concerned about the validity of a survey or call claiming to be coming from McLean Electric Cooperative, hang up the phone immediately and call us.



Thank you for being a valued member and *North Dakota Living* reader. We know your time is one of the most precious resources you can give us, and we thank you in advance for your participation and cooperation.

VOTE, NORTH DAKOTA!

As democratically governed, democratically controlled organizations, electric cooperatives understand the importance of democratic participation. Whether it be voting for members to represent you on your co-op's board of directors or voting for your representation in local, state or federal government, voting is essential to a functioning democratic process.

You can vote in North Dakota if you are at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen and have lived in the state for at least 30 days prior to Election Day. North Dakota does not require voter registration.



VOTER IDENTIFICATION

Make sure you have one of the following valid forms of identification:

- ✓ North Dakota driver's license
- ✓ North Dakota non-driver ID
- ✓ Tribal ID or tribal letter
- ✓ Long-term care certificate

VOTING METHODS

Choose the voting method most convenient for you:

- ✓ **Absentee.** To vote by mail, voters must first request an absentee ballot by completing an application. An absentee ballot application can be found online or by requesting one from your county auditor. In vote by mail counties, all voting age residents are mailed an absentee ballot application. Return completed applications to your county auditor or appropriate election official.

For your absentee ballot to be counted, it must be postmarked or hand delivered to the county auditor or appropriate election official by 5 p.m. local time the day before Election Day.

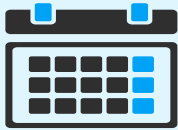
- ✓ **Early voting,** if available in your county. Check with your local election officials.
- ✓ **On Election Day.**

YOUR VOTING INFORMATION

Go to vote.nd.gov/myvotinginfo to:

- ✓ Request an absentee ballot.
- ✓ Find your polling location information. You can search by address or by individual using a state-issued ID number.
- ✓ View your sample ballot, with candidates and measures that will appear on your ballot.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **VOTE.ND.GOV** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



McLean County community calendar: Events and activities to see and do

McLean County area food pantry August distribution dates, times and locations:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood food distribution:** 4-6 p.m. Aug. 15, 208 Lincoln Ave. Like us on Facebook, Community Cupboard of Underwood, for food pantry distributions, thrift store and other information.
- **Community Food Pantry serving Ryder, Makoti, Roseglen, Plaza, White Shield, Parshall and those in need:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Aug. 24, 181 Ellsworth, Makoti.
- **Community Thrift Store serving Ryder, Makoti, Roseglen, Plaza, White Shield, Parshall and the region, 181 Ellsworth, Makoti.** Store hours: 3-6 p.m. Tuesday, 4-7 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, except holidays.
- **Free Community Clothing Share & Exchange Store:** Noon-6 p.m. every Thursday, 221 Main St., Turtle Lake.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry:** Noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. Aug. 22.
- **McLean Family Resource Center:** McLean County residents can contact the center, 701-462-8643, for an appointment to pick up baskets along with more information or assistance through the center, 205 Seventh St., Washburn.
- **McLean Family Resource Center Clothing Outlet:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. first Saturday of every month, 205 Seventh St., Washburn.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** Noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. Aug. 19, Max City Hall, 215 Main St., Max.
- **The Lord's Pantry:** 2-4 p.m. Aug. 8, 10 a.m.-noon Aug. 24, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St., Turtle Lake.
- **Wilton Food Pantry:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone. Full food distribution, 4-6 p.m. Aug. 15, Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave., Wilton.

Area food pantries often experience high needs for the following items: baked beans, pork and beans, canned fruit, tuna, chicken, vegetables, cereal, oatmeal, granola and breakfast bars, juice, macaroni and cheese, hamburger and tuna helper, pancake mix, syrup, pasta, spaghetti,

Alfredo and pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice side dishes, soups, chili, 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 locations, information or a list of additional needs in your community.

The McLean Family Resource Center is sponsoring Greater Access for Groceries, providing free gas cards to help pay travel expenses to pick up food baskets during the month. Contact the center at 701-462-8643 for more information on Greater Access for Groceries and to schedule an appointment to get a food basket.

August and early September events:

- Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery free tours through Labor Day, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and holidays.
- **Aug. 1-2:** Max Rodeo.
- **Aug. 2-4:** McClusky Fest & Car Show featuring an array of family activities beginning Friday morning with Farm Safety Day at the Hoffer Lake 4-H grounds, 10 a.m. Activities include 5K run, parade, cornhole tournament, open swimming, music and more.
- **Aug. 3:** Fort Stevenson State Park 50th anniversary celebration featuring regatta, Club de Skinautique Water Ski Show and evening entertainment, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **Aug. 3-10:** CaNDak (Cycle around North Dakota) Back to Our Roots Bike Tour, beginning and ending at Garrison City Park, Main Street.
- **Aug. 6, 13, 20 and 27:** Harvest Market on Main, every Tuesday afternoon with "Make It, Bake It or Grow It" vendors, Main Street, Garrison.
- **Aug. 17:** Aw Shucks Corn Fest and Party in the Park. Corn feed, car and tractor show, games, contests, live entertainment, labor auction, food, City Park, Main St., Garrison.
- **Aug. 17:** Evening Hike Series, The Sensory Hike, 9:30 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **Aug. 31:** Evening Hike Series, The Lantern Hike, Fort Stevenson State Park Visitor Center, Garrison.
- **Sept. 30:** Operation Round Up grant application deadline. Go to McLean Electric's website at www.mcleanelectric.com for details.

Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County can contact Patricia Stockdill at stockdill.patricia@gmail.com or 701-337-5462 to submit community events. ■

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