

- Factors that impact your rates
- Erbele returns from Youth Tour
- Student of the Month program begins



Many gathered at the Welk Homestead for the 10th anniversary celebration in June.



A statue of Lawrence Welk was dedicated to the homestead. The statue is originally from Branson, Mo.

WELK HOMESTEAD: Celebrating heritage and homesteading

Many of us remember the oom-pah-pah, oom-pah-pah sound coming across the television on a Saturday night while watching "The Lawrence Welk Show." Welk is well known across the nation for being a musician and television host. But around here, he is a hometown farm boy.

Now designated as the Welk Homestead State Historic Site located north of Strasburg, this is where Lawrence's parents, Ludwig and Christina, homesteaded from Russia in 1893.

In June 2015, the Welk homestead was purchased by the State Historic Society of North Dakota (SHSND)

and recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of becoming the Welk Homestead State Historic Site. This anniversary was celebrated with a reenactment of "The Lawrence Welk Show" and the dedication of a Lawrence Welk statue, which was formally housed in the Lawrence Welk Theater in Branson, Mo.

Since purchasing the homestead in 2015, SHSND has been doing upkeep and restoration on the buildings and house, says Brian Grove, supervisor at the Welk Homestead.

Grove, who is also the Strasburg Public School history teacher, has been involved with the Welk

continued on next page



continued from previous page

Homestead since 2015. He says the state is currently working to restore the buildings to look as they would have when Ludwig and Christina lived there in the 1880s to the early 1900s.

The original buildings include the home, a summer kitchen and a granary.

Rob Hanna, the historic sites manager at SHSND, has researched archives and visited with family and community members to decipher what the original look of the house and buildings should be. Other helpful information is gathered from other photos of German-Russian houses. In 2024, the inside of the Welk home was painted to closely resemble the original interior.

"When people come to visit, they are there to see where Lawrence grew up and see his humble beginnings," Grove says.

People are most familiar with Lawrence from "The Lawrence Welk Show" and his music career. But through his television show, he also passed on morals and traditions from a German-Russian background, which is what the Welk Homestead historical site impresses upon visitors.

This historic site is a wealth of information on German-Russian heritage and homesteading, and being Lawrence's birthplace helps draw people, Grove says. Notably, the Welk Homestead home is built from mud brick known as basta, which makes it the only sodhouse in SHSND's collection. Additional German-Russian emulation includes an outhouse, blacksmith shop and a barn, which was later moved onto the site.

"This site is about homesteading and German-Russian history, and Lawrence helps get people here," Grove says.

If you visit the historic site, you are welcome to take a guided or self-guided tour. In partnership with SHSND and the Tri-County Tourism Alliance, talking trail signs are available along the way. These signs allow visitors to scan a code with their phone to learn more about a specific location on the Welk Homestead.

The Welk Homestead hosts a variety of programs throughout the tourist season, which ends on Labor Day. These programs include blacksmith demonstrations, craft classes and other activities with a farm or music theme. ⚡

MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

Factors that impact your rates



Jason Bentz

Co-General Manager/CEO

One topic that frequents the boardroom is rates and the impact those rates have on our membership. KEM Electric Cooperative is dedicated to keeping rates affordable, while ensuring reliable service for all of our members. Through strategic investments in infrastructure and technology, we aim to enhance our efficiency and minimize costs, ultimately benefiting you, our valued members.

As a cooperative, we prioritize transparency in how your rates are set, ultimately ensuring you understand the factors which contribute to the cost of your services.

Several factors impact our rates, from the number of members per mile of line to our market conditions. This year, our cooperative saw an increase in our rates, primarily from the cost of wholesale energy.

The increase in costs can be attributed to new generation and transmission investments, inflation and power market volatility.

New generation and transmission

Basin Electric Power Cooperative, one of our wholesale power providers, notes investments in new generation and transmission facilities are needed to support member load growth, and it's critical to invest in existing facilities to maintain reliability.

To accommodate these large loads, Basin Electric

is investing over \$12 billion over the next 10 years in transmission and generation assets to ensure reliable electricity for our members.

Inflation costs

Cost increases for internal labor, contracted labor, materials and maintenance, in addition to higher costs of borrowing money due to higher interest rates, contribute to rising costs.

Volatility of power markets

Power markets have become more volatile, resulting in dramatic price movements. Increasing intermittent generation, swings in natural gas prices and increasing electricity demand are primary contributors to volatility. While Basin Electric manages volatility through generation and hedging, the cost of this is increasing.

We know we will have higher wholesale rates from both Basin Electric and Western Area Power Administration, but we continue to look for ways to maintain our reliability as a cooperative, while ensuring affordable rates for the services we provide to our members.

We are dedicated to keeping rates affordable, while ensuring reliable service for all of our members. Thank you for your ongoing support of our cooperative. Together, we can navigate the complexities of energy costs and continue to provide you with the reliable service you deserve. ⚡



Vander Wal earns NRECA certificate



Carter Vander Wal (left) receives his NRECA certificate presented by Co-General Manager **Travis Kupper**.

Cooperatives adhere to seven principles known as cooperative principles, and our board of directors works to uphold those principles inside the boardroom as well as in their communities and everyday life.

Through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, our board engages in ongoing education and training, upholding one of the seven cooperative principles, "education, training and information."

Throughout directors' terms, they must attend and maintain certain education certificates to ensure they are staying current and informed on the industry.

We recognize KEM Electric Board Director Carter Vander Wal for earning his Director Gold Certificate. Vander Wal earned this certificate by completing approved educational courses and attending conferences. ■

YOUTH TOUR:

Erbele explores Washington, D.C.



Youth Tour participants over look the Lincoln Memorial.

Each June, hundreds of high school students gather in Washington, D.C., for an opportunity to learn more about electric cooperatives and cultivate lifelong friendships and memories.

To earn a spot on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, sophomores or juniors in high school submit an essay to KEM Electric Cooperative. The student whose winning essay is selected earns the trip of a lifetime.

Addyson Erbele from Streeter was chosen as KEM Electric's delegate and joined other youth sponsored by their electric cooperatives in Washington, D.C., for a week of learning and networking.

A trip of a lifetime

Fourteen North Dakota youth gathered before the trip at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives headquarters in Mandan for some team building before traveling to Washington, D.C. The group reviewed the itinerary and gathered coordinating T-shirts for the week. The group left on Sunday, June 15, and returned on Saturday, June 21. Each day included new learning experiences and sites to see.

These experiences and sites included eating at a famous restaurant, attending events and visiting various monuments and museums. One of Erbele's favorites places to tour was the U.S. Capitol and visiting with the North Dakota senators.

"It was eye opening and surreal to be there," Erbele says. "It was interesting to see how everyone works together at the Capitol."

Another memorable stop was the riverboat cruise, where they were able to connect with students from other states. While in Washington, D.C., the North Dakota group visited the White House and the Capitol.

"There's so many fun experiences," Erbele says.

The Youth Tour is a balance of learning about history, cooperatives and making connections, all packed into seven days. This includes workshops on various topics from leadership to cooperative principles.

"I learned more about cooperatives," Erbele says. "We talked about the seven principles of co-ops and learned how they're about community."

Additional networking opportunities for the students included pin trading. Each student is given 50 pins to trade with students from other states, which sparks conversation. Another opportunity was "Camp Co-op." "Camp Co-op" was hosted at the hotel each night, when students could come together to do crafts, play games and just visit after a long day of exploring.

"These friendships and connections will last a lifetime," Erbele says.

There were various other once-in-a-lifetime places the North Dakota group was able to visit, such as the FBI Experience museum, the White House and eating at Ben's Chili Bowl.

When reflecting on her time in Washington, D.C., Erbele urges others not to hesitate when applying.

"So worth it to go. It is the trip of a lifetime," Erbele says.

More information regarding the 2026 Youth Tour will be shared in the coming months. Keep an eye out in future issues of *North Dakota Living* and on our social media. ⚡



Erbele captures a picture in front of the U.S. Capitol.

MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS:

Student of the Month**Marcy Sanders***Manager of
Member Relations*

As we begin the 2025-26 school year, we are excited to once again announce our Touchstone Energy® Student of Month program. Thanks to you, this has been such a successful program highlighting the youth in our service area!

This year, in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, we look forward to recognizing deserving youth once again.

This program aims to recognize outstanding students in grades K-12 and provide a monetary

sponsorship to their school for a project or initiative chosen by the winning student.

KEM Electric Cooperative firmly believes in supporting education and fostering the development of young individuals in our community. The Touchstone Energy Student of the Month program

presents an excellent opportunity for us to celebrate and recognize students who excel in everything ranging from academics to leadership to community involvement or personal growth.

Application process

Students can be nominated by teachers, parents/guardians, school administrators or community members. Nomination forms can be accessed online through our website. The deadline is the 15th of each month. Students are eligible to be nominated and chosen September through April. Students who are members and are homeschooled or live outside of the service area are also eligible to apply and will be chosen in April.

The winning recipient will receive a monetary donation to his or her school. The student will have the opportunity to choose a project within his or her school for which the donation will be utilized. Winners from the 2024-25 school year will not be eligible for the donation in the 2025-26 school year. ⚡

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN!

Nominate a deserving student for the KEM Electric Touchstone Energy Student of the Month.

Scan the QR code or visit our website at www.kemelectric.com for more information.

The nomination deadline for Ashely Public School and Zeeland Public School students is September 15.

**SCAN
ME**

MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS:

A look back at the June storm



Dale Nagel

Chief of Staff/
Line Superintendent

As potential storms approach, our committed team at KEM Electric Cooperative is prepared to respond quickly and safely, working to restore power as soon as conditions allow.

In late June, KEM Electric's service area faced dangerous weather, with damaging winds accompanied by hail and thunderstorms. During these conditions, vegetation and buildings do not fare well, which will occasionally impact our system as well. While a cooperative can be prepared for storms and utilize technology to identify outages and damage, we would not be able to assess the full impact without our employees and members.

The National Weather Service reported wind gusts from the storm ranged from 66 to 101 miles per hour within KEM Electric's service area. High winds across a vast prairie can do a fair share of damage. While the storm began before 10 p.m., lineworkers were not dispatched until the storm was over for the safety of our crews. Dedicated crew members worked through the night and into the early morning to restore power to members. Several KEM Electric substations were impacted by the weather conditions, resulting in three substations enduring extended outages.

Due to the vast area impacted by the storm stretching across the whole service territory, KEM Electric brought in some assistance. KEM Electric crews, along with a crew from Roughrider Electric Cooperative, were able to make restorations to members in a timely manner the following days. The impact to KEM Electric's system included utility poles damage and a number of broken power wires due to falling trees and flying debris. KEM Electric crews continued to clean up broken utility poles and fix downed wires in the following days after the storm.

Community members helped play a role in restoration efforts as well. They were paramount in reporting downed power lines, trees in the power lines and damaged poles, which helped KEM Electric's operations department determine the source of the issues. This additional assistance helped crews identify what equipment they would need to bring for repairs and streamline the restoration process.

We understand when a storm hits our service area, it impacts everyone, including homes, businesses and operations. It is our top priority to restore power to members in a safe and efficient manner. We are grateful to have understanding members who make these tasks a bit easier, from reporting power outages to lending a helping hand to crews in the field. Thank you all once again for your patience and assistance as we worked to navigate the impacts of this storm. ⚡



A transmission tower fell into one of KEM Electric's power lines causing the power line to snap.



The high winds caused significant damage across KEM Electric's service territory.

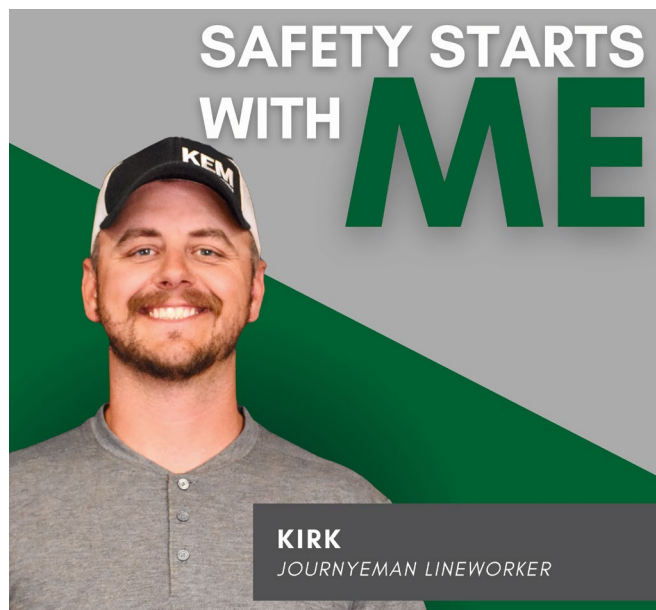
SAFETY STARTS WITH ME: Storm safety

In North Dakota, we endure our fair share of storms over the summer. A mix of high winds and heavy rain can cause a fair share of damage. As we continue through summer, we want to ensure you are equipped and prepared if a storm occurs.

"We are ready to take the necessary steps during storms to ensure we can return power safely to homes and businesses," says Kirk Praus, journeyman lineworker. "We also want to encourage members to practice safety and keep these tips in mind when a summer storm rolls through."

Here is how you can ensure your safety:

- **Stay away from downed power lines and avoid walking through flooded areas.** Power lines could be submerged and still be energized. Report any downed lines you see to KEM Electric Cooperative by calling 701-254-4666 immediately.
- **Never use electrical equipment that is wet.** Electrical equipment, especially outdoor electrical equipment, could be a potential danger after a summer storm. Water can damage electrical equipment and parts, posing a shock or fire hazard. In addition, if lightning strikes a home, the electrical charge can surge through pipes and utility wires. That means you can get shocked if you're touching water or any device that's plugged in.
- **Take special care with portable electric generators.** While they can provide a good source of power, they can become deadly if improperly installed or operated. Do not connect generators directly to household wiring. Power from generators can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact, including lineworkers making repairs. A qualified, licensed electrician should install your generator to ensure it meets local electrical codes.



When a strong storm comes through, rest assured employees at KEM Electric are diligently and safely working to restore power in the event of an outage. This may take additional time for employees to navigate and analyze the situation due to the spread and severity of a storm.

If you experience a power outage, you can assist us by reporting the outage by calling our office at 701-254-4666. This information helps our operations department gather information to assist in the restoration process. ⚡

WORK SAFELY ON THE FARM.

DON'T STACK HAY BALES UNDER POWER LINES.
PLEASE KEEP IN MIND TO STAY 10 FEET CLEAR
OF POWER LINES.

KEM ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: **MAY 27**

The meeting of the board of directors of KEM Electric Cooperative was held on May 27 in Linton. The meeting was called to order at 9:48 a.m. by Chairman Victor Wald. A quorum was present. Also present were co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Legal Counsel Tom Bair, Chief of Staff/Line Superintendent Dale Nagel, Manager of Member Relations Marcy Sanders, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile and Executive Assistant Connie Hill.

Consent agenda: The consent agenda was approved as presented.

Strategic items: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers report, which included updates on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Legislative Conference, National Information Solutions Cooperative and more. Several additional Basin Electric Power Cooperative board documents were available for review.

Department reports: Craigmile provided the

financial report. Nagel provided a department report, which included safety training and projects. Sanders provided a written department report, which included annual meeting information and a communication channels update. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar updated the board on his projects. Bair provided an update on his items.

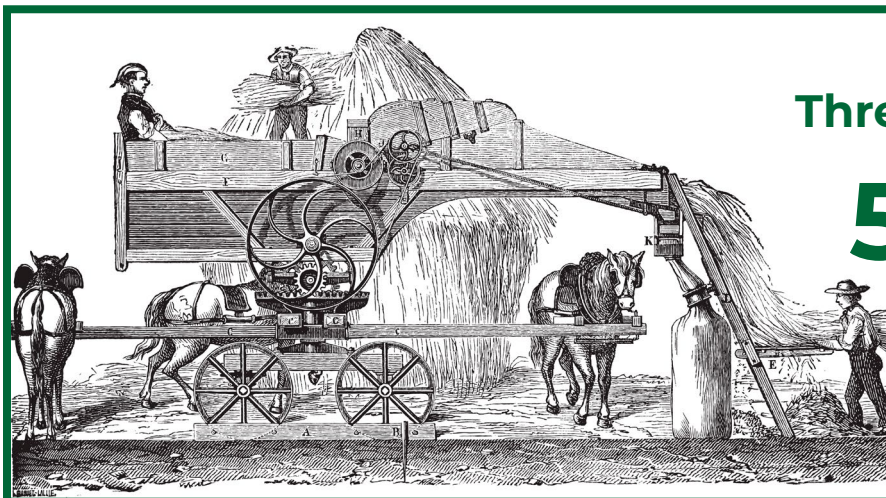
Action items: Action items were discussed and resolved.

Discussion/general information: The board discussed upcoming meetings and other information.

Executive session: The board entered an executive session during the meeting.

The meeting concluded with adjournment. Secretary-Treasurer Carter Vander Wal certified the accuracy of the minutes.

Next meeting date: The next meeting is at 9:30 a.m. Aug. 26 in Linton. If you wish to be placed on the agenda, please call the office. ⚡



**The South Central
Threshing Association**
is celebrating
50 years

Join the South Central Threshing Association for a threshing bee and antique show Sept. 6 and 7 to celebrate the 50th anniversary. Find more information on the South Central Threshing Association's Facebook page.

KEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

DIRECTORS:

Victor Wald, Chairman, District 4.....Napoleon
Carmen Essig, Vice Chairman, District-at-Large.....Lehr
Carter Vander Wal, Sec.-Treas. District 2.....Pollock
Dean Dewald, Director District 5.....Dawson
John R. Beck, Director District 1.....Linton
Neil Meidinger, Director District 3.....Zeeland
Todd Schnabel, Director-at-Large.....Lehr

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

MANAGEMENT:

Travis Kupper.....Co-General Manager/CEO
Jason Bentz.....Co-General Manager/CEO

**Report outages to the following toll-free number:
800-472-2673**

Hazleton, Linton and Strasburg exchanges' phone number: 701-254-4666

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday through Friday,
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Website: kemelectric.com
Email address: info@kemelectric.com

FIND US ON:

