A popular Bismarck Christmas light display is receiving national attention.

Bismarck light fight

DECEMBER 2017
IN THIS ISSUE
- Holiday competition lights up
- Baldwin woman helps feed the hungry
- Peak Time Rebate news & updates
- Youth Tour & scholarship
- Board minutes
After 10 years of spreading holiday spirit through lights, music and candy canes, two homes on Bismarck’s Chestnut Drive are about to catch the attention of the entire nation.

On Dec. 11, the homes of Greg and Sharon Wilz and Gigi Wilz and Davina French will be featured on ABC’s Great Christmas Light Fight, a show that pits some of America’s most outlandishly decorated homes against each other in a contest for Christmas supremacy.

“We’re one of four teams that will compete in the neighborhood episode,” says Greg. “The competition is the best lights. You compete for this really beautiful, somewhat gaudy trophy and $50,000. We competed as a neighborhood, so we’ll split the money if we win.”

This isn’t the first time these neighbors have engaged a light fight, but it’s the first time they’ve competed as a team. Siblings Greg and Gigi have had their own competition going since 2006, when Gigi and Davina moved to Chestnut Drive.

“We couldn’t move into the house until after Christmas, but we were still using the ovens, because Greg was hosting Christmas. As we were driving up to pick up stuff out of the oven, I saw a small Charlie Brown Christmas tree with a sign that said, ‘You lost.’ So, I told him, ‘You just wait until next year!’ And it kind of started from there.”

In 2007, the competition really lit up.

“The competition was every day until Christmas,” says Greg. “We would sneak out at night and put new items up. The next day, when the lights went up, we would watch to see what they did.”

What started out as a sibling rivalry has become a labor of love – love for family, love for community and love...
for our nation's veterans.

“We are all veterans out here,” says Davina. “Five out of ten years that we’ve been doing this, there’s been someone deployed from one of our houses. The people of Bismarck and the surrounding area have been amazing in their support of us, fallen soldiers and the whole veteran package. It’s our way to say thank you.”

Every year, they spend countless hours preparing for the holiday season. Greg and Gigi design their own light displays and weld them from steel. It’s a skill Greg taught his younger sister.

In September, they begin setting up the displays, and it takes an army.

“It’s amazing,” says Davina. “People volunteer every year to help. This whole contest has been filled with friends and family learning, eating and laughing together. There’s a lot of laughter and spying on the neighbors to find out what the neighbors are doing.”

The displays include nearly 500,000 Christmas lights. It takes about 100 hours to program the lights for each song, and there are nine songs in the rotation. For a light sequence to work, the lights must be meticulously placed on each display. If one strand of lights is out of place, it can mess up

Since 2006, siblings Greg, left, and Gigi, right, have competed against each other in the ultimate light fight.
the show. It’s a lot of work, but they all agree it’s worth it.

“We take such great satisfaction in putting smiles on people’s faces,” says Greg. “It’s pretty awesome to know that you help people get in the Christmas spirit. It’s an awesome feeling.”

They do their best to greet everyone who comes to see lights, handing out candy canes as they share good tidings. Last year, they gave out 13,000 candy canes.

“We all find our way to contribute to make our community better – or we should,” says Gigi. “This is our way. It doesn’t fit for everybody, but it fits for us.”

For the third year in a row, Gigi will miss out on much the excitement. After returning from a two-year deployment to Bosnia this summer, she deployed to Puerto Rico to help manage the response to Hurricane Maria. But, in the few weeks she was home, she contributed her part to the holiday festivities, welding a 25-foot star tree and a believe sign in 95 degree heat.

“For years, we’ve wanted to do an outdoor ‘Believe’ display,” says Gigi. “Believe is a Davina word. It’s a word she has been using for years, because everything is bigger than we are.”

If bigger is better, the elaborately decorated homes on Chestnut Drive are ready to compete with the best. The battle for the best Christmas lights is officially on. Win or lose, the lights on Chestnut won’t disappoint. Built from one part sibling rivalry and three parts love, it’s a light show that mustn’t be missed.

Some light displays are inspired by the people who come to see the lights. Greg created this Frozen display by request.

It takes about 100 hours to program the lights for each song.
Baldwin woman delivers food to the hungry

BY KRISTA RAUSCH

A Baldwin woman is feeding the hungry, one trunk load at a time. LeAna Hug delivers food to nine different shelters, and she does it five days a week.

“I’m the taxi. I pop the trunk and say, ‘Take what you can use,’” says Hug.

For the last 14 years, Hug has worked with Cash Wise Foods, Bread Poets and Dan’s Supermarket to get food to those who need it most.

“It’s what they call their shrink. It could be day old breads or a bag of oranges where one orange is bad, but the rest are okay. It’s the type of food that would normally be thrown away,” says Hug.

Every year, Hug drives 8,000 miles to combat hunger, delivering deli sandwiches, yogurt, muffins and fruit to those in need. She volunteers 20 hours per week, and she doesn’t take time off on weekends or holidays.

“The first Sunday that I picked up, there were 19 deli sandwiches,” says Hug. “We stopped at the Soup Café, and Mark was holding a bible study. He had 19 people at his bible study. Talk about God working. I said, ‘Okay, God. I get the message. We’ll pick up on Sundays.”

Mark Meier, founder of the Soup Café, says Hug’s deliveries are a blessing.

“Without donations, we couldn’t operate,” says Meier. “We serve 100 to 200 meals a day. Things we aren’t able to use, we give away. We give away bread. We give away desserts. We give away vegetables.”

For Hug, hunger is a familiar struggle. “I was a single mom of two little girls when I was in college. And I really struggled to feed them. I know what it’s like to put children to bed hungry. It hurts.”

She hopes her deliveries help keep kids in school and help people get back on their feet.

Hug says she is beyond thankful for the generous businesses who donate food to the hungry.

“I’ve hugged every one of them. They know how much it means.”

Cash Wise Foods donates food from six departments – dairy, produce, bakery, frozen, organic and deli.
Peak Time Rebate news and updates

Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) launched the Peak Time Rebate program on Oct. 1. More than 4,000 members signed up to participate in peak time events.

CEC received great feedback from members about how they feel the program is going. The co-op’s goal continues to be a reduction in monthly wholesale power costs by lowering its monthly peak usage. This will result in savings for everyone in the cooperative!

Here are a few frequently asked questions about the program.

Q. What did I earn in rebates from the first month?
A. Rebates for each account will only be calculated twice per year. The year is split up into two seasons – heating and cooling. The heating season is seven months long and runs from Oct. 1 to April 30. The cooling season runs from May 1 to Sept. 30. At the end of each season, rebates will be calculated and applied to your bill as a bill credit. The heating season rebate will be calculated in May and paid back to you in early June on your May bill. The cooling season rebate will be calculated in October and paid in early November on your October bill. Calculating rebates on a more frequent basis would drive up the costs for the program.

Q. I am on the dual fuel or electric heat rate, why can’t I receive peak time event notifications by text or email during the heating season?
A. Our dual fuel and electric heat rate programs are made available through our wholesale power provider. They offer a discounted rate for these programs to help our members with the cost of heating during the cold weather months. Because the program already provides a benefit to those members, we are not allowed to provide direct peak time alerts to them during the heat rate months (October – April). You can participate in the program by following us on Facebook or Twitter and watching for scheduled peak events. You will begin receiving email and text notifications during the cooling months (May – September).

Q. Why did you call five peak events in October?
A. In an attempt to call an event during our monthly peak, we need to make educated guesses based on factors such as weather reports. The cold spell we had at the end of October caused us to try to “hit the peak” on more than one occasion. This may or may not be typical of other months. Those members that reduce usage during called events will earn rebates even if we don’t hit the peak.

Q. What is the best way for me to reduce usage during a called event?
A. Determining which electrical appliances in your home utilize the most electricity is important. The top users of electricity are typically 1) electric water heaters, 2) air conditioners, 3) ranges/ovens, 4) electric clothes dryer, and 5) refrigerators/freezers. It is also possible to save electricity by turning off your televisions, computers, dehumidifiers, lights and other small appliances.

Q. Is it too late to sign up for the Peak Time Rebate program?
A. If you haven’t already signed up for the program, you can sign up by visiting our web site at www.capitalelec.com and clicking on the Peak Time Rebate page link. There are two methods to sign up, either through SmartHub or by filling out a survey through a link on that page. If you have questions about the sign-up process, please call us at (701) 223-1513.

Q. How can I stay informed on the latest updates to the Peak Time Rebate program?
A. We will be using Facebook, Twitter and our web site at www.capitalelec.com to provide current program information on a regular basis.
Capital Electric offers student scholarship

Capital Electric Cooperative is offering a $1,000 student scholarship, in partnership with Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

To qualify for the scholarship, seniors must be enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate or graduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school. Their parents or guardians must be members of Capital Electric.

Our cooperative will assemble a panel of impartial judges to review all applications. The judges will select the winning application based on academic performance, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, a statement of education and career goals, work experience and an outside referral. The scholarship will be awarded without regard to other awards, loans or financial assistance the applicant may have obtained.

Application forms may be downloaded at www.capitalelec.com or picked up at co-op headquarters at 4111 State St. N. in Bismarck. Applications need to be completed and returned to Capital Electric on or before Friday, Feb. 16.
Board minute excerpts
Oct. 26, 2017

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., was held on Thursday, October 26, 2017, at Co-op Headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota, pursuant to due notice to all directors. All of the directors were present at that time except Dwight Wrangham.

A prospective member attended the meeting concerning a line extension. Following discussion, it was moved, seconded, and carried to follow our written policy.

Financial Review:
Prior to the board meeting, Directors Kyle Hilken and Dave Charles reviewed the September 2017 check register and expenditures. They reported that all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve September expenditures in the amount of $3,212,066.86.

Management Reports (Business Department, Operations and Engineering, Member Services, and Public Relations/Communications):

Business Department Report: The business manager presented the financial and statistical report to the Board. The total kWh sales for September 2017 was under budget by 2.7 percent. The actual monthly electric revenue is below budget by .24%.

The operating margin for September was -$339,835 compared to the budgeted amount of -$194,345. The total margin for September was -$324,368 compared to the budgeted amount of -$194,345, under budget by $130,023.

CEC began billing 43 new services in September, bringing our active services to 20,101 versus 19,687 at this time last year, or a net increase of 414 over the last 12 months.

The business manager reviewed the comparison of actual to budgeted expenses, cash flow statement, and monthly power costs for the month of September 2017. Accounts receivable balances as of October 25, 2017, were also reviewed.

RUS Advance: We are in the process of preparing an advance request to RUS/FFB. We intend to draw $4 million; $2 million is part of our normal budgeted borrowing for the year and the other $2 million would be used to pay off an existing note with a higher interest rate from 2001.

Revenue Deferral: At this point, we do not anticipate using revenue deferral funds this year.

Estate Retirements: Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by management, it was moved, seconded, and carried to authorize payment of capital credits to the following deceased members’ estates:
Evelyn Flemmer.........................$247.90

Quarterly Write Offs: After discussion, it was moved, seconded, and carried to write off $3,390.74 for the Third Quarter. The total twelve month write offs is $18,258.48.

Engineering and Operations Report: Engineering and Operations Manager Ron Lipp reviewed the written report from the Engineering and Operations department. We completed 27 work orders this month, adding 29 new consumers to the system.

In October we had 19 total outages affecting 281 consumers.

HDR has completed our four year work plan. This work plan will take us to the end of 2021. The recommended system improvements included in this work plan are primarily to improve power quality, increase service reliability, replace aged facilities and serve new consumers throughout the system. The total construction cost is $29,353,893.

Engineering and Operations put on a demonstration for “Know your Co-op” on October 5, 2017.

All CEC employees attended a seminar on October 13, 2017 on “Enhancing the Member Service Experience”.


Seventeen service orders were completed in September and we are seeing great response to the PTR program from our direct mail campaign.

We are planning to expand our solar work and expertise into warm air and hydronic solar systems.

ERC Loans: There were no loans for Board approval this month.

Communications, Public Relations and IT Department:
Wes Engbrecht, director of communications and public relations, reviewed topics of interest.

PTR Update: We have had a great response on PTR enrollments and expect more than 3,000 participating households.

Safety Report: There were no lost time accidents in September.

Jeff Tweten, Safety Instructor from North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperative was at our shop on October 23 and 24, 2017, to conduct an onsite field visit and went with crews to observe.

Without objection, the safety report was approved.

2018 Update of 2017 Load Forecast: This update reflects a reduced rate of load growth and load requirements which more accurately reflects our needs.

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the update and adopt the Resolution.

2018-2021 Construction Budget: Lipp highlighted the 4 year construction budget.

It was moved, seconded, and carried to adopt the 2018-2021 Construction Work Plan Resolution.

Policies: Following discussion policies were reviewed.

Policy No. IV-4 – Application, Connection, and Deposits for Acquisition of Electric Service. Following discussion, it was moved, seconded, and carried to rescind Policy I-II and adopt combined Policy IV-4.

NDAREC Report: Director Deon Vilhauer reported on Statewide matters.

The NDAREC Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 16-18, 2018. All directors, CEC General Manager Paul Fitterer and Engbrecht will attend.

It was moved, seconded, and carried to cast a unanimous ballot for Vilhauer as delegate.

2018 Preliminary Budget: The 2018 preliminary budget was reviewed by department.

Basin: Fitterer reported on Basin matters.

Strategic Planning: The manager will attempt to coordinate strategic planning on Feb. 23 and 24.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the meeting, without objection, the regular meeting was adjourned.

CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
4111 State St. N.
Bismarck, ND 58503
Website: www.capitalelec.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
Dwight Wrangham, Pres. ................. Bismarck
Arlene Olson, V. Pres. ..................... Wing
Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, Sec.-Treas. ....... Bismarck
Richard Koski, Asst. Sec.-Treas. .......... Wing
Kyle Hilken ................................ Wilton
Rex Hollenbeck ......................... McClusky
William Patrie ......................... Bismarck
Deon Vilhauer ......................... Bismarck
Dave Charles ......................... Bismarck
Paul Fitterer, Mgr. .................. Bismarck

OFFICE HOURS:
Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Office phone: 701-223-1513
Toll-free: 888-223-1513
Pay-By-Phone: 1-877-853-5928
DAY–NIGHT–WEEKEND TROUBLE CALL: 223-1513

Capital Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

A ‘Touchstone Energy’ Cooperative