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Dancers perform a traditional Filipino dance at the Bismarck Human Relations Committee’s annual cultural dinner. This year’s theme was “An Evening in the Philippines.” Students in the Legacy High School culinary arts program prepared and served authentic Filipino cuisine under the advisement of Filipino community members.

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PHOTO BY NDAREC/LIZA KESSEL

‘An Evening in the Philippines’
Filipino culture was the star of the city of Bismarck Human Relations Committee’s 2018 cultural dinner, “An Evening in the Philippines.” Held at Legacy High School on Nov. 1, the event was a celebration of one of the many cultures represented in North Dakota. More than 70 attendees savored a flavorful three-course dinner that provided a taste of the Philippines.

The scene was jubilant. Women donned in vibrant dresses performed the salakot dance, and plates offered traditional Filipino fare from crispy pork lumpia and pancit, a dish made with chicken breast, vegetables and rice noodles, to soy sauce and vinegar-glazed chicken adobo. Attendees also enjoyed two desserts — leche flan and bilo bilo, a warm coconut milk-based soup with fruit, tapioca pearls and rice balls.

“The birthday noodles (pancit) and the bilo bilo were definitely the most unique,” says Damianna Byerly, junior, Legacy High School. “The bilo bilo was unlike anything I’ve ever had before, and I never knew people from the Philippines ate birthday noodles to elongate their life. That was really cool to learn.”

Now in its third year, the cultural dinner is a partnership between the Human Relations Committee and the Legacy High School culinary arts program. Each year, the event highlights a different culture represented in the community. The first event, held in 2016, celebrated...
Indian culture. In 2017, the event offered a taste of Liberia. The goal is to recognize the value of a diverse community.

“This is the third year we’ve partnered with the Bismarck Human Relations Committee on this event,” says Family and Consumer Science Department Chair Kim Hertz, Legacy High School. “I appreciate the continued partnership, because its such a great value to our students in so many ways. It’s good for us to become aware of the different cultures represented in our community, and, as far as lifelong skills, they learn about teamwork and the effort it takes to create something that’s very special.”

Each year, community members volunteer to share their culture and teach the culinary arts students how to prepare an authentic dinner. This year, four members of the Bismarck-Mandan Filipino community volunteered their time. Agnes Moore was one of those volunteers. Born and raised in the Philippines, she moved to North Dakota in 2002.

“My favorite part of the experience was meeting the students and seeing in them a genuine interest to learn about another culture and a sense of adventure in trying the food,” says Moore.

Following an in-class demonstration, nine students mastered the recipes before unveiling their hard work at the main event.

“Different cultures prepare foods differently, so it was really helpful to see how they prepared the food,” says Byerly. “I enjoyed cooking for others and allowing them to experience a culture they’ve probably never experienced before.”

Moore says the students did an excellent job and everything tasted just right. That comes as no surprise to Hertz, who says her students continue to impress her, year after year.

“I’m just really proud of this group. It makes me really proud at the end of the night, when you see the smiles on the kid’s faces, and you see how proud they are of what they accomplished. There’s nothing greater. It’s absolutely amazing.”

The Human Relations Committee is already planning next year’s cultural dinner, which will celebrate Guatemalan cuisine and culture.

Attendees of the cultural dinner enjoyed two desserts – bilo bilo, a Filipino dessert soup, and leche flan.
Capital Electric offers interpretive services to members

At Capital Electric Cooperative, we take pride in the human connections we have with our member-owners. As the co-op’s membership grows and becomes more diverse, we’re becoming more aware than ever before of the importance of these connections.

Earlier this year, Capital Electric began offering over-the-phone interpretation services through Language Link, a company that provides access to native-linguists who speak more than 240 different languages and dialects. The service allows us to seamlessly connect with our members, regardless of their language. Don’t speak English? Just come in, tell us what language you speak, and we’ll have an interpreter on the phone in minutes to help us better serve you.

Capital Electric values its members, and we strive to make every connection a positive one. This is just another example of how we’re working to achieve that goal.
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. 15.
A favorite quote of mine is from a farmer giving witness in a rural church in the early 1940’s. His heartfelt passion could be heard in his words as he loudly proclaimed, “Brothers and sisters, I want to tell you this. The greatest thing on earth is to have the love of God in your heart, and the next greatest thing is to have electricity in your house!” This statement certainly expressed the feelings of millions of Americans as they finally received electric service to their homes, farms and businesses, bringing a tremendous new quality of life to previously unelectrified areas. The establishment of rural electric cooperatives across the country is, in my opinion, one of the most successful quality-of-life enhancing initiatives that America has ever seen.

In the beginning, Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) was created to be the trusted energy partner of its members. In those days, members simply wanted safe, affordable and reasonably reliable power. Awhile back, while going through the CEC archives, we came upon a postcard from yesteryear. The postcard read “Dear Capital Electric, We are out of power and would appreciate if you could look into this when you get out our way.” I think it is fair to say that times have changed over the last 70 years, and the needs of our membership have evolved as well. Today, safe, affordable and extremely reliable energy is an expectation, and for good reason—through significant investments in infrastructure such as high-quality underground wire, rebuilt and reinforced overhead line and significant automation, CEC achieved an average service availability rate of more than 99.99 percent over the last five years.

Perhaps the biggest surprise I had when starting at CEC 14 years ago was the number of members that came into the office to interact with our employees on a daily basis—a trend that continues today. It didn’t take me long to reach the conclusion that if you want to get the pulse of how a community is changing, a great place to start would be in the lobby of your electric cooperative. Just like 70 years ago, CEC’s employees are here to serve you in person, whether you’re seeking answers to billing questions, energy savings strategies or new service lines.

In the last decade, we have seen a significant shift in the diversity of our members including in primary languages spoken, significant requests for electronic communication methods and member interest in new energy technologies. A cooperative mantra that embodies our business model is, “We meet our members where they are.” Let’s look at some of the latest steps we’ve taken to address some of these changing expectations.

**Additional Communication Preferences**

The cover story of these center pages shows a slice of the cultural changes in our service area. The Bismarck Human Relations Committee’s cultural dinner reflects the growing diversity of our local community and CEC membership. Increasingly, CEC is seeing new members that come from areas all over the world and in many cases, there can be a language barrier. To improve communication the co-op recently began participating in a program called Language Link. Language Link is a call-in interpreting service that translates conversations between CEC employees and co-op members that have limited English proficiency. This helps co-op employees to explain what to expect and answer any questions the member may have.

Did you know that CEC currently captures over 200 million interval meter readings annually, and we expect this to grow to one billion records per year within the next 10 years? With the advent of high-speed communications and increasingly capable meter systems, usage information can be received by the cooperative in near real-time fashion and at increasingly granular levels.

**Near Real-Time Information**
Similarly, the member expectation is to have online access to their account information and to receive pertinent information delivered in near real-time fashion. More and more, we are finding that text and email notifications are often preferred over letters and phone calls. Through CEC’s Smarthub app or web portal, members can access their usage data to analyze their energy patterns, modify notification preferences or view and pay their bill. You can also manage autopay options and elect to receive notifications such as when a new billing statement is available, a payment is posted or a peak time rebate is predicted.

**A trusted energy partner**

With the plethora of new emerging electric technologies, our energy services department does the research and analysis for our members and delivers the unbiased facts to you so you can make educated decisions that are right for your situation.

**Electric Vehicles:** CEC recently leased an all-electric Chevy Bolt, which we have been busy benchmarking as we drive it in the community and to events around the state. Electric vehicles (EV) are gaining steam and will probably come faster than you think. Off-peak, over-night charging shows tremendous promise to have a major and positive effect on CEC’s load curve and potentially on your overall vehicle operating costs as well. We expect to soon offer an overnight EV charging rate that, when combined with other EV benefits, may be proof enough that an EV could be your next vehicle.

**Off peak Air-Conditioning:** Did you know CEC has a new off-peak air conditioning rate? Similar to off-peak water heating, a load controller allows the cooperative to cycle your air conditioner during peak times in order to reduce our system load during expensive power peaks such as on an extremely hot day. In turn, the member receives a monthly credit based on their a/c size.

**Solar:** Solar is coming and faster than you may think. In fact, in the last year, CEC began installing solar pasture wells which provide significant upfront savings to the member and similar long term maintenance savings to the cooperative. Partnered with storage tanks that can store multiple days of water, efficiency and falling solar prices, solar pasture wells are proving that in specific situations, they are very cost effective and reliable.

**Democratic Member Control**

One of the seven principles of a cooperative is democratic member control. Every cooperative member receives an equal vote on all matters brought before the membership, including the election of directors. At the 2018 CEC annual meeting, the membership approved a bylaw modification that allows, at the board’s direction, additional methods of voting, such as online and by mail, in addition to the existing method of voting in person at the meeting.

I’m very proud to work for a cooperative that was formed by a group of individuals that stuck up for themselves to improve the quality of life for their families and communities. Even though we have a great story to tell, we don’t hang our hat on that. Just like our membership, we are constantly evolving to provide the tools and knowledge that you need to be engaged with your co-op and make informed energy decisions. Simply put, we strive to be your trusted energy partner, and that’s something you can always count on.
Board minute excerpts OCT. 19, 2018

The Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CEC), held a regular meeting on Friday, Oct. 19, 2018, at co-op headquarters in Bismarck, N.D., pursuant to due notice to all directors.

All directors were present, except Richard Koski, who appeared by telephone, and Kyle Hilken.

Also present were General Manager Paul Fitterer, Business Manager Luke Steen, Director of Communications Wes Engbrecht, Manager of Engineering Ron Lipp, Energy Services Supervisor Josh Schaffner and Attorney Steven A. Laut of Pringle & Herigstad, P.C., who acted as recording secretary.

Financial Review:

Prior to the board meeting, Directors Deon Vilhauer and Arlene Olson reviewed the September 2018 check register and expenditures. Vilhauer reported that all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve September expenditures in the amount of $4,812,603.64.

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 was under budget by .41 percent. The actual monthly electric revenue is ahead of budget by .73 percent.

CEC’s load factor was above budget, leading to a cost savings of $150,700. The total operating margin for September was $161,958, versus the budgeted amount of $147,913, above budget by $255,955. The total margin for September was $132,186 compared to the budgeted amount of $409,372, ahead of budget by $277,188.

Year-to-date sales are over budget by 6.4 percent; revenue is above budget by 4.4 percent; and total margin is 482 percent over budget year-to-date which is a $687,245 positive variance.

CEC began billing 35 new services in September, bringing active services to 20,517 versus 20,101 at this time last year, or a net increase of 416 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 2018. Total cash on hand on Sept. 30, 2018 was also reviewed.

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:

- John M Hagen: $1,810.28
- Douglas Krueger: $751.73
- Doris Triebwasser: $1,066.00
- Phyllis Nelson: $46.11
- Arlene Olson: $672.12

Quarterly Write-offs: After discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to write-off $17,059.90 for the third quarter. The total 12-month write-off is $33,092.25.

Vision Plan: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve the Superior Vision Plan option.

Engineering and Operations Report: Lipp reviewed the written report from the engineering and operations department. CEC completed 23 work orders this month, adding 28 new consumers to the system.

CEC crews are trimming trees, doing line maintenance and repairing outages.

VIP continues to rebuild old single-phase overhead line.

Fisher Contracting and Geiser Utility Contracting are trenching and boring in new services and replacing old underground cable.

In October, to date, the co-op had a total of 21 outages.

Line crews are working with CPEC and Embloom Brothers on the installation of overhead ground wire with fiber optic cable from CPEC’s East Bismarck Substation to their Ward Delivery Substation.

Property on the corner of State Street and 43rd Avenue NE: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to authorize the general manager to continue negotiations.

Energy Services Department: Schaffner reviewed the Energy Services Report.

CEC completed 22 service orders in September.

The NDDOT had a planning meeting on the EV charging network. CEC staff will follow up with groups involved to discuss options.

CEC is designing and implementing new control board designs for members who own heat pumps, saving members around $300 in replacement parts.

The curb is poured for the front parking lot solar water feature and the landscaping work should be finished in a few weeks.

ERC Loans: There are no ERC loan applications for approval this month.

Communications, Public Relations and IT Department:

Engbrecht reviewed topics of interest.

Annual Meeting Options - 2019: Two options for the venue of the annual meeting were discussed.

Youth Tour Essay Contest: The deadline for essays is Jan. 31, 2019. The deadline for the Basin scholarship program is Feb. 15, 2019.

RDFC Grant: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve $1,000 for each applicant.

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

Jeff Tveten, safety instructor from NDAREC, visited CEC’s shop on Oct. 4, 2018 for a field visit.

Without objection, the board approved the safety report.

Preliminary Budget: The Board reviewed the preliminary 2019 budget.

BisMan Food Coop Update: Carmen Hoffner appeared at the meeting to give an update on the BisMan Food Coop.

Basis: Fitterer reported on Basin matters.

CPEC: Director Sheri Haugen-Hoffart reported on CPEC matters.

Statewide Report: Vilhauer and Fitterer reported on statewide matters.

Midwest Annual Meeting: Director Dave Charles was selected as delegate to the Midwest Annual Meeting and Olson was selected as alternate.

Bylaws: The Board will meet to review the Bylaws on Nov. 3 at 9:00 a.m.

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