A Menoken family is planting seeds of conservationism. Andy and KariAnn Buntrock have planted 35,000 trees on the prairie.
Nearly 35,000 trees, neatly arranged in rows, outline the landscape south of Menoken. If lined up in a single row, these trees would stretch nearly 28 miles. Thanks to the time and commitment of Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) members Andy and KariAnn Buntrock, trees are taking center stage on the prairie they call home.

The Buntrocks purchased their 360 acres in 2006 with the intention of moving to the country and enjoying the peaceful surroundings that rural North Dakota offers. Of all the things country living in North Dakota can boasts, an abundance of trees is not often one of them. Knowing they wanted trees, and lots of them, they embarked on a journey to populate the area with varieties they knew would thrive in a western North Dakota climate.

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The beauty of their plan was they didn’t have to go it alone. The Burleigh County Soil Conservation District (BCSCD) office in Bismarck had the expertise and willingness to help. Since trees are extremely beneficial to the reduction of soil erosion, the BCSCD is focused on assisting landowners with the planning, planting and consulting of shelterbelts in Burleigh County. Trees provide many benefits beyond soil...
health, such as keeping snow from blowing over the road, providing a habitat for wild birds and animals and providing shade from the hot summer sun.

According to Darrell Oswald, BCSCD manager, “The Buntrocks have been tireless in their efforts to replace any trees that do not survive, often planting hundreds of hand plants in the spring. As a result of their extra effort, the plantings are thriving and functioning at a high level.”

They began planting trees on their property and continued to live in Bismarck until 2016. They spent countless hours planning and planting, and continued even after they moved into their newly constructed home.

“Every year, we have to replant a batch of trees. We have friends and family help us to make the work go a little faster. We really count on them to get it all done,” explains Andy. Their commitment to keeping the shelterbelts filled with living trees is evident in the outstanding effort they put into the process.

KariAnn adds, “We have relied heavily on Darrell and the other employees at the soil conservation service to make sure we are doing it the right way. They were invaluable in making this dream a reality for us.”

CEC presented the Buntrocks with the BCSCD Tree Care Award at its November annual mixer. The award is sponsored and presented annually by the cooperative. Andy is the manager of strategic planning and member support at Basin Electric Power Cooperative. KariAnn works remotely from home for Eide Bailly, LLP as an information specialist for the communications department. Andy and KariAnn have two little girls, Tyne (4) and Quinn (2).
When Doug Jahner started his career with Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC), the world was a very different place. The movie "Jaws" had just been released, and the Vietnam War was finally coming to an end. You could buy a new Ford Mustang II for $4,100 and gas was 44 cents per gallon. Yes, 1975 seems like an incredibly long time ago when you think about it. But, what’s even more incredible is that Doug remained committed to the cooperative and its members for all those years – 42½ to be exact. It is the longest tenure of anyone who has ever worked at CEC!

“I’ve only had two jobs in my life,” Doug recalls. “My first job in high school was making pizzas at A&B Pizza. I really enjoyed that job, as you can imagine.” After graduating from high school Doug decided it was a good idea to attend college. He signed up for math and science classes at Bismarck Junior College (BJC), now Bismarck State College, planning for a career in a medical lab or doing medical research. After a short time, he realized this wasn’t his dream and started researching another career choice.

Doug picked up the BJC trade catalog which listed the various tech programs that were available. He made his way to the lineworker program page and noticed it was only an 11-month stint. “I knew I could handle that much school,” he laughs. “Plus, it sounded interesting, because I liked to work with my hands and be outside.”

While Doug was in the program, he coordinated the construction of a steel building for Basin Electric and a 70-foot tower as part of his lineman training. Noticing he had the ability to plan and organize such projects, his instructor put him in charge. It was Doug’s first opportunity to do some work for a cooperative and use his skills to plan and execute projects.

In 1975, CEC hired Doug as an apprentice lineworker on the overhead and underground crew. He enjoyed the underground work, trenching and laying wire the most. A year later, an opportunity to work in the meter...
department opened, and he jumped at
the chance.

Working with and reading meters
meant he could still spend time
outside, plus he had the opportunity
to see cooperative members along his
normal meter reading route. He spent
time testing and cleaning meters, but
he really enjoyed being out installing
and reading meters.

He remembers, “There were a lot of
members who would want to strike up
a conversation or even invite me in for
coffee. I looked forward to seeing them
on my meter route. Work was fun, and
I enjoyed it every day.” Doug fondly
considers CEC members to be some of
the nicest people he’s known.

By 1980, Doug moved into more
specialized metering, testing and
programing three-phase meters.
Member Services Manager Pete Ziegler
trained him, and he became the expert
with that type of meter as well. Over
the years, Doug would become the
“go-to guy” on virtually everything
relating to metering at CEC.

In 1976, CEC hired Jim Siirtola
as a meter reader/repairman. Doug
and Jim handled that department
until Beau Townsend joined them
in late 2006. During this time, Doug
spent 24 years performing locates of
underground services, in addition to
his other meter-related duties.

Jim has fond memories of Doug,
“Doug is an extremely intelligent man
who could solve complex problems at
work, especially relating to electronics.
He is also very adventurous and a
whole lot of fun. We really had a great
time working together all those years.”

In 2002, CEC invested in a TWACS
meter reading system to automate the
meter reading process. This changed
the way Doug, Jim and Beau would
operate in the metering department.
They no longer needed to drive from
house to house checking meters. It was
all done automatically.

During this time, they changed out
10,000 meters, which was a long, but
rewarding process. Doug remembers
one winter day when it was well below
to zero. “It was cold, but so peaceful.
That’s what I enjoyed most about the
outdoor work.” He also remembers
being chased by too many dogs to
count over the years.

Doug plans to kick off his retirement
with a month-long vacation in Florida.
After that, he will “figure it out as it
goes.” This will most likely include
spending time with his wife of almost
40 years, Elizabeth. Together, they
raised four boys: Christopher, Jaden,
Cody and Jesse. Doug also has three
beautiful granddaughters, Tori, Tenley
and Taylor, to entertain in his spare
time.

Doug will be missed by all of us who
knew him and shared in his life while
working at CEC. We will miss his
quick wit and great sense of humor,
as well as his vast knowledge of not
only metering, but the cooperative as
a whole. You amass a lot of knowledge
over a lifetime of work, and CEC and
its employees appreciate everything
Doug has done for CEC and its
members. We wish you the very
best, Doug!”
There are many reasons employees choose to work at Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC). If you got to know some of our colleagues, they might share that their jobs are fulfilling, and the time spent at work is fun. The linemen might tell you they enjoy working outdoors. The office staff might share stories about the competitive ping pong games in the break room.

CEC has experienced significant growth over the past decade; yet, the same number of employees continue to serve our member-owners today. We can do this because of advancements in technology that have streamlined operations and gained efficiencies. We can also do this because we work together well and respect the role each person plays at the cooperative. Every year, we note employees who have achieved a significant work anniversary.

This year, we recognized eight employees who have put in a collective 115 years of dedicated service at CEC. These impressive numbers speak volumes about the dedicated people your co-op employs, and the environment in which they work. CEC’s most seasoned employees are Engineering and Operations Manager Ron Lipp, 30 years, and Billing Coordinator Dana Solem, 20 years. Erica Roth, accountant, Seth Lothspeich, lineman, and Jeff Holzer, system supervisor, are celebrating 15 years at CEC. Wes Engbrecht, communications and public relations director, Matt Hagen, lead lineman, and Mike Berg, staking engineer, are celebrating 10 years of cooperative service.

We thank these employees for their commitment to our cooperative and area communities, and the role each person at CEC plays in providing our members with safe, reliable and affordable electric service.
Get to know two of our most seasoned employees

Ron Lipp, 30 years
A lot has changed since Engineering and Operations Manager Ron Lipp began working at Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) in 1987. The cooperative has grown from 7,000 to 20,000 meters, and new technologies have led to advancements in the way it serves its members. When Ron started, the department only had one computer. He jokes, “Way back when I started, we had a slide rule. The new guys have no idea what a slide rule even is.”

For the last 30 years, Ron has overseen the engineering and operations department at CEC. His responsibilities include developing work plans and supervising lineman, staking engineers and engineering technicians.

Ron offers this advice for the next generation of workers, “Look for a co-op. You’ll love it.”

“The co-op family has always been good to me,” says Ron. “Everyone at Capital Electric is great. But, its not just Capital Electric. I like working with the people at co-ops across the state.”

When he’s not working, Ron enjoys hunting, fishing and spending time with his grandchildren.

Dana Solem, 20 years
Dana Solem recently celebrated 20 years at CEC. Hired in 1997, Dana worked at the front desk for 19 years before accepting the position of billing coordinator in 2016. As billing coordinator, she handles service orders and collections.

Dana says she loves the people and the atmosphere at co-op, “At Capital Electric, we’re family. Everyone looks out for one another.”

In her free time, Dana enjoys reading books and spending time with her husband, Dayne, and their two children Bentley (9) and Braelyn (5). In the warmer months, she enjoys camping at Lake Sakakawea State Park.

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.
The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, was held on Friday, Dec. 15, 2017, at the co-op’s Headquarters Building in Bismarck, N.D., pursuant to due notice to all directors. All directors were present at that time.

Financial Review:
Prior to the board meeting, Directors Arlene Olson and Dwight Wrangham reviewed the November 2017 check register and expenditures. They reported that all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve November expenditures in the amount of $2,966,483.17.

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 November exceeded the budget by 5.7 percent. The actual monthly electric revenue is above budget by 6.7 percent.

The total margin for November was $188,907 compared to the budgeted amount of $2,966,483.17.

Management Reports:

RUS Advance: CEC received its advance of $2 million.

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:

- Barbara Agnew: $1,037.74
- Betty Smith: $1,779.65
- Arlene Olson: $2,817.39

Engineering and Operations Report:
Engineering and Operations Manager Ron Lipp reviewed the written report from the engineering and operations department. CEC employees completed 51 work orders this month, adding 124 new consumers to the system.

The outage report was reviewed. Crews are connecting new services and trimming trees.

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CEC’s property on 43rd Avenue was discussed as well as scenarios regarding the property.

Energy Services Department:
Energy Services Supervisor Josh Schaffner reviewed the Energy Services Report. Twenty-four service orders were completed in November with most being heat meter installs and meter wiring maintenance. CEC’s contractor training luncheon is scheduled for Feb. 1, 2018. Westinghouse and Enertech Global are co-sponsors of the luncheon and will have representatives present to consult with our local contractors on changes and questions on new products CEC has available.

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

Communications, Public Relations and IT Department:
Communications and Public Relations Director Wes Engbrecht reviewed topics of interest, including a new sign for the parking lot, phone system and public relations items.

Scholarship and Youth Tour: The Youth Tour deadline is Jan. 31, 2018 and the Basin Scholarship deadline is Feb. 16, 2018.

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

NDAREC Safety Instructor Steve Homes visited CEC’s shop on Nov. 22, 2017 for field observation. He found that both crews he observed were doing their procedure safely and with the personal protective equipment.

Without objection, the safety report was approved.

Policies: Following discussion policies were reviewed.

Policy No. II-5 – Compensation of Directors. No action was taken.

Policy No. IV-1 – Parallel Generation Rate. Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve the revision to the policy.

Basin: The December board report had not yet been received

CPEC: Board member Sheri Haugen-Hoffart reported on CPEC matters.

Statewide Report: Board member Deon Vilhauer discussed items of interest with the board. The annual meeting is scheduled for Jan. 16-18, 2018.

Midwest Annual Meeting: Directors presented on the highlights of the annual meeting.

NRECA Annual Meeting: The annual meeting is scheduled for Feb. 26-28, 2018. Wrangham will serve as delegate and board member Dave Charles as alternate.

Strategic Planning: Management and the directors discussed the details of strategic planning. The planning session will be held at CEC’s headquarters.

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