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Co-op employees assemble holiday gift bags for refugees
The holidays are a time of celebration for many, filled with food, laughter and family. But, for refugees, the holidays are often bittersweet. For many, coming to the United States meant leaving behind family, friends and cherished possessions. In December, Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) and its employees teamed up to deliver a little holiday cheer to those spending their first holiday season away from family.

“The holidays can be a difficult time for refugees, because the spirit is being around family and sharing food and laughter,” says Turdukan Tostokova, Lutheran Social Services. “This kind of gesture gives them a sense of welcome and belonging.”

Employees delivered 12 gift bags and visited with some of Bismarck’s newest community members. Each gift bag included a blanket, a loaf of fresh-baked bread, cookies, nuts, hot chocolate, a winter hat, kitchen supplies, honey and jelly. All items were donated by CEC and its employees.

“At Capital Electric, our commitment to community is something we take seriously,” says Wes Engbrecht, CEC director of communications and public relations. “Capital Electric and its employees were happy to share a little holiday joy with our new neighbors. It’s a special privilege to be able to share a gift and welcome someone who has move to our community from another country. Everyone we visited was friendly and welcomed us into their homes.”

Lisa Omlid, Lutheran Social Services, says refugees bring enthusiasm, culture and new perspectives to our communities. “They’re excited to start over. Many are able to start fulfilling the dreams they have for themselves and their families. They can get a good education. They can have a stable job. They can finally see that they have a future.”

The gift bag deliveries are part of a holiday tradition at CEC. Every year, the co-op and its employees work together on a project that benefits members in its service area. In 2016, they donated coats, gloves and hats to Ministry on the Margins.
Kyle Becker – a Bismarck High School graduate and trivia enthusiast – is a four-time "Jeopardy!" champion. Kyle appeared on five episodes of the buzz-worthy TV game show, which aired in December. “I was definitely surprised,” says Kyle. “I was not expecting to do that well. I retain a lot of random knowledge, but I was definitely not expecting to be a four-time ‘Jeopardy!’ champion.”

But, his success on the show came as no surprise to his parents. “We knew he was smart enough,” says Kyle’s mother, Donna Jean Becker. “Kyle was always taking advance placement classes. He’s a nerd. We tell him that.”

Appearing on "Jeopardy!" was a bucket-list item for Kyle, but getting on the show wasn’t easy. The selection process is highly competitive. Before appearing on the show, contestants must take an online test. Kyle says about 70,000 people take the test every year. Of that number, only 2,000 or 3,000 people are invited for an in-person audition. Kyle took the test 12 times before being invited to audition for the show in April. In August, he traveled to Los Angeles as a contestant.

“The day of taping was just a whirlwind. They tape five shows in a day. You show up, and everyone goes through make-up and the legal stuff. And then, everyone goes on stage to practice. And then, they bring in the live audience. At 11 a.m., they started filming the first episode.”

Kyle says it takes more than book smarts to win “Jeopardy!” Knowing the right answer is only half the battle. It’s a lesson he learned during his first appearance on the show.

“I had a little difficulty figuring out the buzzer in my first half. I was either a little too early or a little too late,” says Kyle. “They time opening the buzzers up to the end of Alex [Trebeck] reading the clue. If you buzz in too soon, you’re locked out for a quarter of a second. It’s not a long time, but it’s enough time for your competitors to ring in if they know the answer.”

Contestants know the buzzer is active when they see a set of lights that are out of view of the audience.

“I was trying to go off of the lights. After the first half, I realized that wasn’t working, so I started going more off of Alex’s voice than the lights.”

After the second half, Becker had a comfortable lead.
Sometimes a temporary position turns into something more. For Judy Ruzicka, it turned into a 22-year career with Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC). Judy came to work for the co-op as a temp in 1995. Now, she is retiring from a job she enjoyed, leaving behind a legacy of dedication and a commitment to member service.

“I was hired for a temporary position to help enter meter reads from the books into the system. It was a manual process back then and took a lot of time,” Judy recalls. “Today, technology has changed everything we do, making it more efficient. We can definitely get more done in a shorter amount of time.”

“I will miss the people, as I have made a lot of great friends here at the cooperative,” she explains. “But, I will also miss the work.” In 2003, Judy became the work order clerk and she’s held the position ever since. For years, Judy was responsible for making sure the costs to add electric service to new construction follow the staking sheets prepared by engineers. She also worked with builders and electricians to connect temporary and permanent services.

The people will miss Judy, too. Operations Supervisor Rick Dressler has great memories of working with Judy. He shares, “Judy has been a pleasure to work with for many years. She is going to be missed by all of us in Operations, that’s for sure. Not only is she a lot of fun to be around, she is extremely good at her job. From tracking down an old transformer number from the 1960’s to fixing problems at inventory time, she did it all. She has worked very well with the local electricians and home builders in getting new accounts hooked up.”

During her retirement, Judy plans to enjoy time with her family, which includes five precious grandchildren. “We will be busy with baseball in the summer. And now, we have another new grandson, so that will keep us busy as well.”

Judy and her husband, Wayne, will continue to live in their home along the Missouri River west of Wilton. As she explains, “There is never a shortage of projects at home to keep us busy. The kids visit a lot, especially in the summer, so it’s nice to be so close to the river.” Pinochle is a popular pastime when the kids are around.

CEC employees will miss Judy’s smile and outgoing personality. She has been an outstanding friend to many in the past years. We will also miss the annual breakfast that she and former Operations Manager Gordy Wiesz would treat the employees to downstairs. We wish you the best, Judy! Thank you for being a loyal co-op employee and a dear friend to us all!

Judy and Wayne have three sons; Scott and Rebecca (Hunter and Tyson), Brian and Helen (Liz and Joe), and Kurt and Amber (Asher).
Heat Your Home Safely

Fireplace safety
- Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out.
- Do not burn paper in your fireplace.
- Put the fire out before you go to sleep or leave your home.
- Put ashes in a metal container with a lid, outside, at least 3 feet from your home.

Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected each year by a professional.

Make Sure to Follow These Important Tips Before You Plug In

- Make sure the heater has an automatic shutoff, so it shuts off if it tips over.
- Plug a space heater directly into an outlet and avoid using an extension cord.
- Never leave space heaters unattended.
- Only use space heaters with the certification label of a nationally recognized testing lab.
- Don’t use a space heater if the plug is broken or the cord is frayed, worn or damaged.

Four Home Heating Tips to Live By

1. Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from a heating source.
2. Have your heating system inspected annually.
3. Keep vents clear of dust and debris.
4. Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.
Capital Electric adds an A/C load control option

BY WES ENGBRECHT

S aving money for its member-owners has always been a top priority at Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC). The co-op works hard to keep its costs down. The most significant monthly cost is the wholesale power bill. In fact, 60 percent of CEC’s wholesale power bill is determined by its peak demand for each month. The co-op has programs in place to help reduce peak demand charges and appreciates what members do to help make those programs successful.

In the past, CEC’s current load control programs only applied to electric heat, water heaters and irrigation systems. But now, the co-op is adding a load control program for residential air conditioning. Members who utilize an existing program already have a load controller in their home that can be used for air conditioning control, as well. In fact, one load controller is all you need to participate in any of CEC’s programs. A load controller can also be added to existing services that do not currently have one.

Energy Services Supervisor Josh Schaffner says, “Capital Electric has traditionally been a summer peaking cooperative, so it makes sense that air conditioning control will have a beneficial effect on our demand costs. Other summer peaking co-ops in the state have been offering the program with great success.”

Members who have central air, an air source heat pump or a geothermal heat pump qualify for this load control program. By allowing CEC to control your air conditioning, you can earn a credit of $2 per ton (based on the size of your A/C unit). You could also opt for the $.02 per kilowatt hour credit if you have a separate meter for your air conditioner. The program works by cycling the air conditioners on and off frequently enough to keep your home cool in such a way that the air conditioning of each participant is spread out, so that not all participants are cycled on at the same time. By timing the cycles, CEC will see reduced demand during its peak and in turn, pass the savings onto those in the program.

The air conditioning load control program is available to all members and works in conjunction with the PTR program for those choosing to participate in both. If you are interested in finding out more about the air conditioning load control program, call CEC at (701) 223-1513 and ask for Josh or Jared in the Energy Services department. They will be happy to discuss whether this program is right for you and answer any questions you may have. CEC
Understanding your new Capital Electric Cooperative Power Bill

This month, Capital Electric Cooperative introduced a new billing format in an effort to better serve the membership. This new detailed power bill provides you with more information on your energy consumption in an easier reading format. Follow the numbers for a guide to the new format. **Important: Your electric rates have not changed, we are merely providing you with more detail on your charges.**

**Account Number:**
This is your Capital Electric account number. Use it when you call the office, as it makes it easier for us to locate your information.

**Statement Date:**
This represents the day your statement was printed.

**Billing Summary:**
The billing summary shows your payments. For members participating in budget billing, your budget amount due appears here.

**Consumption:**
This area shows a monthly breakdown of the kilowatt-hours used for the last year. If you have a submeter, it will be broken out separately on the graph.

**Due Date:**
This is the date your payment is due. For members participating in the auto-pay program, the amount is deducted around the 20th of the month.

**Messages:**
Special messages appear here. These messages may include loan payment reminders, auto-pay updates for those who participate or other important information.

**Service & Meter Reading Details:**
This area presents information about the metered service by showing the meter number, present and previous reading information and the dates the meter was read. A second line may appear in reference to an additional heat service or meter exchange.

**Return Stub:**
The bottom third of your statement is the portion CEC asks that you mail back with your payment. By including this portion with your payment, you can be assured accurate credit to the proper account. Sign up for optional automatic payments on the back.

**Detail of Charges:**
This area shows all current charges and credits on your account.

**For more information, call 701-223-1513.**
We value our members and continually seek ways to better serve you - our owners!
The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., (CEC) was held on Friday, Nov. 17, 2017, at the Co-op Headquarters Building in Bismarck, N.D., pursuant to due notice to all directors. All of the directors were present at that time except Deon Vilhauer:

Financial Review:
Prior to the board meeting, Directors Sheri Haugen-Hoffart and William Patrie reviewed the October 2017 check register and expenditures. They reported that all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve October expenditures in the amount of $3,187,857.37.

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 October exceeded budget by 1.2 percent. The actual monthly electric revenue is above budget by 4 percent.

CEC’s load factor was above budget, resulting in power cost savings of $127,472. The total margin for October was $51,626 compared to the budgeted amount of $73,359, above budget by $124,985.

CEC began billing 50 new services in October, bringing active services to 20,148 versus 19,735 at this time last year, or a net increase of 413 over the last 12 months.

The business manager reviewed the comparison of actual-to-budgeted expenses, cash on hand and monthly power costs for the month of October 2017. Accounts receivable balances as of Nov. 16, 2017, were reviewed.

RUS Advance: CEC advanced $2 million instead of $4 million as refinancing activities it wanted to pursue turned out to be prohibitive because of the prepayment penalties which were significantly higher than originally quoted.

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:
   Lyle Ennen $4,177.98

Mansureh Iravani $937.84
   $5,115.82

Engineering and Operations Report: Engineering and Operations Manager Ron Lipp reviewed the written report from the Engineering and Operations department. CEC completed 57 work orders this month, adding 53 new consumers to the system. The prior month outage statistics were also reviewed.

CEC is working on its OCR (Oil Circuit Recloser) maintenance program.

Energy Services Department: Energy Services Supervisor Josh Schaffner reviewed the Energy Services Report. Twenty-five service orders were completed in October.

CEC is conducting research on the electric vehicle industry for a possible EV charging program.

Representatives from RESCO and Marathon presented new products and updated pricing to the Energy Services Department.

CEC is planning a contractor training luncheon to update contractors on its new A/C rate programs and the PTR program and to inform them about the DOE changes regarding the large volume water heaters.

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

PTR Update: Close to 5,000 members signed up for the program.

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

Without objection, the safety report was approved.

2018 Budget: Following review of the budget by department, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve the 2018 budget.

Policies: Following discussion policies were reviewed:
   Policy No. I-17 – Board of Director Virtual Meeting Attendance. No action was taken at this time.
   Policy No. II-5 – Compensation of Directors. No action was taken at this time.
   Policy No. E-12 – Funeral Leave. Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve policy E-12 with the changes requested by the board during the meeting.

Basin: The manager reported on Basin matters.

CPEC: There has been no meeting this month.


Midwest Annual Meeting: The Midwest Annual Meeting will be held Dec. 11-14, 2017.

Strategic Planning: The strategic planning topics were discussed.

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