Top reasons to work for and stay at an electric cooperative:

- **Competitive salaries**
- **Work-life balance**
- **Business model of serving the member-owner**
- **Excellent benefits**
- **Brother’s keeper**
- **Culture of safety**
- **Continuing education**
- **Co-workers refer to one another as family**

A beautiful sunset in northeast Bismarck, showing Capital Electric Cooperative’s distribution underbuild.

**In This Issue**

- Employees earn service awards
- Members receive Tree Care Award
- Annual Meeting SAVE THE DATE
- Serve your cooperative as a board member
- Meetings minutes and more
Congratulations!
And, some secrets behind closed doors

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY

There are many reasons employees choose to work for and stay at Capital Electric Cooperative. We listed some of the most common answers on C1. If you got to know some of our colleagues, they might also share that their jobs are fulfilling — because the time spent at work is fun. The linemen might tell you that they like doing a variety of jobs and spending time outdoors. The office staff at cooperative headquarters in Bismarck might share that nerf basketball games happen in a hallway and pinochle games get heated in the break room.

Our cooperative 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’d like to highlight seven employees who have put in a collective 95 years of dedicated service. These impressive numbers speak volumes about the dedicated people your co-op employs, and the environment in which they work.

Judy Ruzicka, work order clerk, and John Frey, crew foreman, are celebrating 20 years of cooperative service; Brad Johnson, lead lineman, and Beau Townsend, assistant staking engineer, are celebrating 15; Michelle Stark, ARC/GIS technician, and Josh Schaffner, energy services supervisor, are celebrating 10; and Journeyman Lineman Braden Martin is celebrating 5.

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

Judy Ruzicka, 20 years

Judy Ruzicka has been surrounded by men for decades. At home, she and her husband, Wayne, raised three sons who are grown and married. In the office, she works in the “man corner” where over the years she’s heard colorful language, been the target of practical jokes — and once walked in on a co-worker who was changing his clothes after a cold day in the field.

Judy, the work order clerk for Capital Electric Cooperative, laughs when she reflects on some of the experiences she’s had over the years in the male-dominated industry of building and maintaining an electric distribution system.

She could have taken offense to the profanity and pranks. Instead, she chose to laugh and become good friends with many of her co-workers.

Judy doesn’t mind being right in the center — serving an important role in coordinating with the line crews, staking engineers and contractors, and being a valuable employee because of her extensive knowledge and can-do attitude.

John Frey, 20 years

Crew Foreman John Frey wanted his photo taken in the basement of cooperative headquarters rather than out in the field. It seemed like a strange request that now makes perfect sense. John, a journeyman lineman for Capital Electric for the past 20 years, followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, Richard Maier, who was also a lineman and later line superintendent for the cooperative, many years ago. Back in 1976 during his grandfather’s employment, one of John’s uncles, an artist, painted a beautiful rural landscape on a wall in a meeting room. A reminder of our member-owners and consumers at the end of the line, the artwork remains today.

Recently promoted to crew foreman following the retirement of Les Vietz, John says he is ready for this next challenging chapter of his career.

Outside of work, John and his wife, Shannon, stay busy with their four kids, who participate in various sporting events. Also following in the footsteps of his former co-worker and mentor, Les, John likes to fish.
Be part of a team — and part of the change

Arlene Olson was elected to the board of directors at the annual meeting on June 4, 1992. Her number-one priority was to provide affordable, efficient and dependable electric service to the cooperative’s member-owners. It remains her priority today.

“Throughout the 24 years I have served on the board, change has quickly become the number one most-influential source in our everyday lives!” she says. “Some of the prominent changes I have witnessed are growth, automatic meter reading, ground-source heat pumps, reporting power outages and new substations.”

In the Touchstone Energy® Cooperative value of commitment to community, Arlene is actively involved. She serves as vice president of the Capital Electric board, business manager of the Wing Rural Ambulance, past president of the Burleigh County Housing Authority, executive secretary of the N.D. Association of County Social Service Board Members, vice president of the Wing Theatre, treasurer of the Golden Wing Club, board member of the Burleigh County Council on Aging, clerk of Trygg Township, vice president of Burleigh County Farmers Union, caretaker of Union Cemetery, and work group leader and frequent lector at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

Now’s the time to consider running for a position on Capital Electric’s board of directors. Arlene and the other eight directors encourage you to join them in the board room, and be part of the change that strengthens our cooperative and our member-owners.

Directors represent your interests

Capital Electric Cooperative is overseen by a board of directors elected by the member-owners of our co-op. Each director represents the members on the board and each director is a co-op member.

Directors represent the members’ interests. They learn and internalize concerns, expectations and ideas, and take the information into the board room. During board meetings, directors exchange information and strategize for the co-op’s progressive growth.

Directors have a fiduciary responsibility to the cooperative. They exercise care, time and responsibility in reviewing co-op matters. Because they are also owners of the cooperative, they treat the business like their own.

Directors devote a certain amount of time to the cooperative. At a minimum, directors attend a monthly board meeting. To learn about the industry and understand critical issues, directors also read and research, and attend state and national meetings.

To help directors with their responsibilities, training is offered through the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives. If directors choose to pursue certification, they must take and complete five courses that cover director duties and liabilities, understanding the electric business board roles and relationships, strategic planning and financial decision-making.

Serving Capital Electric Cooperative and your community can be a rewarding experience! For more information, contact a member of the Nominating Committee (see C5) or call the co-op at 701-223-1513.
Are you interested in serving as a director for Capital Electric?
Place **YOUR** name on the ballot today!

Capital Electric Cooperative’s 71st annual meeting will be held June 6 at the Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck. As a result of the change to the bylaws regarding the development of new director districts, which was approved at last year’s annual meeting, the Capital Electric board of directors has adopted staggered terms to ensure there is one director from each district up for re-election each year. Because of this staggering, we will have four director positions open and four current directors running for re-election this year. In future years we will have one director from each district up for re-election.

This year, four seats on the co-op’s board of directors will need to be filled. Directors whose three-year terms will expire this June include Bill Patrie and Kyle Hilken, both from District 3, and Rodney Eckroth from District 1. Richard Koski is also up for re-election, representing District 2.

The nine members who make up the Capital Electric board of directors set policies and make decisions that will guide the cooperative into the future. With the annual meeting just a few short months away, now is the time for members to start thinking about whether they have the time and desire to serve their electric cooperative.

In accordance with Article 4, Section 3 of the co-op bylaws, current members of Capital Electric can have their names placed on the ballot to be voted upon for the open board positions in one of three ways: accepting a nomination by the Capital Electric Nominating Committee; submitting a petition signed by at least 15 current members of the cooperative, not less than 30 days prior to the annual meeting; and having your name placed in nomination from the floor at the annual meeting prior to the board of director election.

If you are interested in becoming a candidate for the Capital Electric Cooperative board of directors or wish to have a member considered for nomination, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee listed above prior to April 18. Committee members will have information on the requirements a member must meet in order to serve on the co-op’s board of directors. Pursuant to the bylaws, the Nominating Committee must post a list of nominations at least 35 days prior to the annual meeting; and having your name placed in nomination from the floor at the annual meeting prior to the board of director election.

The following members have been appointed by the board of directors to serve on the Nominating Committee:

**Brian Bitter**
751 80th St. S.E.
Bismarck, ND 58501
701-226-3456

**Gary Hansen**
1423 Eagle Crest Lp.
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-471-3558

**Denise Brown**
21246 197th St. N.E.
Baldwin, ND 58521
701-226-5260

**Warren Larson**
4618 Feldspar Dr.
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-751-2329

**Ann Reich**
4401 Lookout Trail
Bismarck, ND 58504
701-255-4406

**Kristi Schlosser Carlson**
2810 Powder Ridge Dr.
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-251-8027

**Sanford Williams**
26900 331st Ave. N.E.
Wing, ND 58494
701-943-2474

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Official notice of Capital Electric’s 71st annual meeting will be mailed to members in May.

www.capitalelec.com
Key to tree success: ‘plant what grows’

Capital members Paul and Carmen Cain earn Tree Care Award

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY

Ready to plant a substantial number of trees around the property he and his wife, Carmen, purchased in 2010, Paul Cain researched, planned, and then called the local experts at Burleigh County Soil Conservation District. District Technician Darrell Oswald toured their 46 acres, assessed the soil, listened to their suggestions, nodded his head and said, “That’s great — but we aren’t planting any of it. We’re going to plant what grows out here.”

All three got a good laugh that day, before Darrell discussed the soil conditions and trees that would thrive — including lilac, juniper, scotch pine and spruce.

Prior to planting, a significant amount of preparation had to happen first. One of the couple’s sons, Nathan, would come home from school and head to the field. Using a disc, he leveled the buck brush, weeds and thistles with assistance from dad, and then they burned and buried the refuse.

When the land was ready for seeding, Darrell returned with a crew to do the work. Paul had one request before they began: “I can plant trees crooked. Don’t plant them crooked,” he said with a laugh.

Once the trees were planted, Paul placed fabric over the trees and seeded grass in between the rows several times in intervals. Then, Mother Nature took over, and the trees and grass grew.

Fortunate to have some well-timed rains, the couple watered, weeded and mowed for several summers until the rows were established.

Paul and Carmen Cain bought this horse property and built their dream home seven years ago. Paul grew up on a farm, and he says it’s in his nature to have tractors and work the land. The couple have two grown sons, Justin and Nathan, and Nathan was still home in 2012 to assist with land preparation prior to the tree planting.
Now, five years later, Paul’s not joking when he says the rows are so straight, you could land a plane in between.

Capital Electric Cooperative members from south of Bismarck, Paul works as a drug rep and Carmen is the principal of the Light of Christ middle school Academy. She also teaches at the University of Mary. Late last year, the Burleigh County Soil Conservation District awarded them with the Tree Care Award, which is sponsored annually by Capital Electric. Wes Engbrecht, director of communications and public relations, helped confer the award.

Chad Thorson, district technician for Burleigh County Soil Conservation District, said the Cains earned the award because of their organized and dedicated effort to conservation.

“They have some tough soil out there, and they took exceptional care of the trees, maintaining and replacing the ones they lost,” he says.

Carmen said not only did Darrell know his stuff, but he provided great customer service. She also expressed thanks for a program in which the Burleigh County Soil Conservation District had to remove a shelterbelt of mature trees elsewhere, so they had to plant a new one somewhere. That happened to be on the Cains’ property.

“That was really a benefit to us,” she says.

The moral of this story: It’s wise to research and plan a project of any size, and consult with experts in the industry before the work begins. If you’re planning a tree project this spring, we recommend first visiting with the folks at Burleigh County Soil Conservation District, who are knowledgeable, hard-working and friendly — and they have a great sense of humor.

Thank you, Paul and Carmen, for sharing your story, and congratulations on the award.

When Paul and Carmen Cain bought this property in 2010, there was only one tree — in the way of where they wanted to put the barn — so it had to be removed.

MAC focuses on issues

BY WES ENGBRECHT

The importance of an engaged membership was on display at this year’s annual Capital Electric Cooperative Member Advisory Committee (MAC) meeting. A group of co-op members convened at headquarters in Bismarck on Feb. 7 to listen to co-op updates and provide feedback on timely issues relating to load management, the possibility of an economic development rate and much more.

An in-depth discussion on how the cooperative can reduce its demand charges through load control, peak-time rebates and other methods resulted in productive feedback. The group was informed about the results of a recent member survey relating to these topics. More than 1,250 members completed the survey, providing the co-op with valuable information about how to proceed with demand reduction.

In other MAC business, Neil Ness was elected to fill the Operation Round Up board position vacated by LeAna Hug, and Roger Christianson was re-elected to serve a second three-year term.

Zac Smith (second from right), communications and government relations director for the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, met with members of the Capital Electric Cooperative Member Advisory Committee on Feb. 7. He shared some thoughts about bills being discussed in the N.D. Legislature, as well as power-supply opportunities and challenges.

PHOTO BY CARMEN DEVENY

PHOTO BY CARMEN DEVENY
Board minute excerpts
Friday, Jan. 20, 2017

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., was held Friday, Jan. 20, 2017, at co-op headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota, pursuant to due notice to all directors. All the directors were present at that time.

Financial review: Prior to the board meeting, Directors Vilhauer and Haugen-Hoffart reviewed the December 2016 check register and expenditures. They reported all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve December expenditures in the amount of $4,245,578.65.

Business Department report: The Business Manager presented the financial and statistical report to the Board. The total kilowatt-hour (KWH) sales for December 2016 was above budget by 3.4 percent. The actual monthly electric revenue is above budget by 3.7 percent. Year-to-date KWH sales are under budget by 2.8 percent and electric revenue is under budget by 1.4 percent. Capital Electric began billing nine new services in January, bringing our active services to 19,766 versus 19,207 at this time last year, or a net increase of 559 over the last 12 months.

The Business Manager reviewed the monthly power cost, cash flow statement, and comparison of actual-to-budgeted expenses for the month of December 2016. Accounts receivable balances as of Jan. 19, 2017, were also reviewed.

Work order inventory approval: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve work order inventory 487, which contains $1,076,288.50 of financial plant investment. This will be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service.

Quarterly write-offs: After discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to write off $2,668.50 for the Fourth Quarter. The total 12-month write-off for 2016 is $16,092.16.

Engineering and Operations report: The Manager reviewed the written report from the Engineering and Operations department. We completed 39 work orders this month, adding 29 new consumers to the system.

It was moved, seconded and carried to approve amending the budget to add a meter reader/apprentice apprentice position.

We completed our annual inventory adjustments and were within policy. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the inventory adjustment.

January outages were reviewed.

Member Services department: The Manager reviewed the member service written report.

Capital Electric Lot 1 appraisal: The appraisal of Lot #1, Capital Electric headquarters addition, was completed and discussed.

Energy Resource Conservation loans: There are no loans for Board approval this month.

Communications and Public Relations department: The Manager of Communications and Public Relations discussed topics of interest with the Board.

Safety report: There were no lost-time accidents this month.

The AT&SF Conference was held Jan. 11 to 13, 2017. Eight linemen attended the conference, and Jesse Goehring received his journeyman certificate and received the Outstanding Apprentice award for 2016.

The Business Manager reviewed the Minutes of the Safety Committee meeting.

Without objection, the Safety Report was approved.

Policies: Following discussion policies were reviewed:

• Policy No. 1-16 – Process for Determining Compensation. This policy was not modified.
• Policy No. E-6 – Substance Abuse Program. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the changes to Policy No. E-6.
• Policy No. E-11 – Safe Vehicle Operation Policy. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve this policy.
• Policy No. IV-1: Rate Schedule “ED–Economic Development.” It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the Rate Schedule “ED.”

Board redistricting: In 2017 we will hold our election to comply with the Bylaws as amended in 2016. Richard Koski volunteered to run early for the Director position in 2017 for District 2 to correctly stagger terms in that district. We will have two board positions vacant in District 3. To obtain the correct director rotation going forward, the board has staggered the terms for District 3. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes in District 3 will be elected for a three-year term. The candidate in District 3 receiving the second-highest number of votes will be elected for a two-year term.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative: Basin Electric matters were discussed.

Central Power: Hilken reported on Central Power matters.

Haugen-Hoffart was elected Director and Hilken was elected alternate to Central Power.

North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives report: Vilhauer reported on Statewide matters.

National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC): Eckroth will serve as delegate to the CFC annual meeting with Olson serving as alternate.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) conference: Fitterer reported on the CEO conference.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the meeting, without objection, the regular meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.