



**Capital  
Electric**  
COOPERATIVE

**DECEMBER 2025**

During this holiday season and year-round, Bismarck and Mandan residents are fortunate to receive support and services from many nonprofit organizations. Inside, read about one of those organizations.

MERRY  
*Christmas*  
&  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The staff and board of directors of Capital Electric Cooperative wish you and your families a wonderful Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. We are thankful for your support this year and look forward to working with you as another year arrives!

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

- Bis-Man Mentor Squad changes lives
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# Bis-Man Mentor Squad changes lives

BY WES ENGBRECHT

**B**ismarck and Mandan residents are fortunate to receive support and services from many nonprofit organizations. One of those organizations, the Bis-Man Mentor Squad, focuses on providing mentoring for youth ages 6 to 16 years old.

The mentorship program started in 1979 in the Bismarck-Mandan area through the YMCA as Y-Pals. In the 1980s, the Police Youth Bureau began developing the program for prevention of youth problems. By 1987, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) joined the Village Family Service Center to grow the program and develop a funding base.

In 1992, the city of Bismarck, with supervision provided by the Police Youth Bureau, contracted the BBBS program to further develop local funding sources with the goal of program independence. In 1994, the program became a nonprofit agency and affiliated with the national BBBS of America.

At this time, the program contracted for services with the Dacotah Foundation, which serves individuals with mental health and addiction issues. In 2018, it became the Bis-Man Mentor Squad as a program of the Dacotah Foundation.

"We are a United Way agency and rely on local foundations and grant dollars, and financial support from businesses, service clubs, churches and private donors.

We are grateful for the support that our local community provides. We couldn't run a program without it," says 25-year Program Director Deanna Larson. "Also, people who decide to mentor are extremely valuable to give of their time and talents to kids in our community who need guidance."

The traditional community-based program requires volunteer mentors to be 18 years old, make a one-year commitment to mentoring and meet for a minimum of four hours per month. The school-based programs in collaboration with the Central Regional Education Association utilize high school mentors who must be 15 years old, make a school-year commitment to mentoring and serve for one hour one day a week at local elementary schools.

"I started as the case manager and in 2018 became the program director. It is very rewarding to see children become the best versions of themselves with the help of a mentoring relationship. I can also see the benefits that it provides the volunteer to witnessing the positive changes in a child. We focus on three main areas: improved confidence, improved behaviors and improved grades. It also is a prevention program and helps avoid the high costs of residential treatment centers and/or incarceration someday if problems are unaddressed," Larson says. ☰

## JOEL AND NOAH: Bis-Man Mentor Squad success stories



Noah's mom, Ginger, appreciates the mentorship from Joel for her son.

**N**oah and Joel have been matched for over three years in the Bis-Man Mentor Squad. During that time, they bought an old lawnmower and refurbished it. Joel also taught Noah how to mow lawns as a side business. He helped Noah develop a customer base, taught him how to manage his earnings and helped him develop a strong work ethic.

Next, they found a used car and fixed it for Noah to drive. Joel helped Noah with the paperwork to get his driver's permit and helps him maintain his car whenever it needs fixing. Joel has taught Noah invaluable handyman and mechanic skills. With this guidance, Noah has been able to secure his dream job at Valvoline.

Noah's mom, Ginger, has noticed he's generally happier, more respectful and is learning invaluable life skills, and Joel and Noah have a close friendship.

"Noah is a different kiddo since meeting Joel. God has brought us an absolute angel just when we needed it most," Ginger says. ☰

# Operation Round Up mission continues

BY WES ENGBRECHT

**A**s cooperative members, we have always focused on supporting our communities. One of the seven co-op principles states, "While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members."

Capital Electric Cooperative members who donate to the Operation Round Up program truly reflect how a community helps others. This has been happening through Operation Round Up since 1997, and participation has increased every year.

The program is about to reach the \$1 million mark in cumulative donations granted to meet community needs. A board of five cooperative members meets to review applications and award grants twice each year.

The concept of Operation Round Up is simple. Members who participate agree to have their monthly bills rounded up to the nearest dollar. Those dollars are then pooled together and granted to nonprofit organizations and individuals in need.

The program has had an incredible impact on the community. Individuals who are experiencing times of need are given a helping hand. Organizations providing food, shelter, counseling or recovery assistance are just a few examples of grant recipients.

In recent years, the amount collected has increased dramatically and now totals approximately \$65,000 annually. Each application is limited to a grant of \$2,500. However, the board of directors can increase the grant level in special cases. At the September grant review meeting, the board granted \$28,500, all of which is benefiting someone in our community directly or through organizations that serve them.

It is easy to become a participating member of Operation Round Up. Call Capital Electric at 701-223-1513 to add your name to the list of



*Operation Round Up Director **A.J. Tuck**, right, presents a grant check to **Rev. Matt Thompson**, a Capital Electric Cooperative member who serves Holy Cross Lutheran Church. The funds will be used to help pay for a new storage shed.*



***Al Wald**, an Operation Round Up director, presents a check to **Jeanne DeKrey**. DeKrey and Nita Jeromchek put in many hours planning the Shoes of Hope event, which provides new shoes to students heading back to school in August.*

donors in just a few minutes.

Thank you to all who add their pennies to the fund each year. Be assured, your donation is making a huge impact on our communities.

Individuals and nonprofit organizations who desire funding can download a funding request application or complete an online form at [capitalelec.com/operation-round](http://capitalelec.com/operation-round). 

## Organizations receiving funds in September were:

- Ministry on the Margins
- Bismarck-Mandan Rifle and Pistol Association
- Bismarck Recreation Council
- Burleigh County Council on Aging
- Circle C Ranch
- Community Action Program
- Heaven's Helpers Closet
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church
- Hospice of the Red River Valley
- Bis-Man Mentor Squad
- Lincoln Days Events

- Women and Technology
- Mission Church of Student Ministry
- N.D. EMS Foundation
- Northern Plains Dance
- Pride Manchester House
- Renegade Rodeo
- Sheridan County Park Board
- Shoes of Hope
- The Larks Community Fund
- Welcome House
- Innovation School

# University of Mary grant empowers Native American graduate students

BY TOM ACKERMAN, UNIVERSITY OF MARY

**W**hen Dr. Carmelita Lamb first began mentoring Native American students nearly two decades ago, she saw their deep desire to make a difference. What many of them lacked, however, was access to affordable graduate education and the credentials needed to lead schools and programs in their own communities.

Today, when Native American educators earn their first master's degree, they don't just change their own future, they change the lives of the students who see themselves reflected in that success. That ripple effect is exactly what the University of Mary hopes to expand through a new \$1.74 million federal grant that opens doors for Native American graduate students.

Awarded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Indian Education, the five-year grant supports the University of Mary's Native American Education Leadership Program (NAELP) within the Liffrig Family School of Education and Behavioral Sciences. It covers full tuition and fees for eligible Native American scholars pursuing a master's in school administration, special education or a social work, as well as K-12 administration credentials.

"This grant is life-changing for Native American students who dream of advancing their education," said Lamb, grant coordinator at the University of Mary. "Now, they have the opportunity to earn a master's degree or credential at no cost and bring their talents back into classrooms and communities where they are needed most."

To qualify, applicants must be enrolled members of a tribe or tribal descendants, meet the university's admission standards and commit to serving in a K-12 school where at least 11% of students are Native American.

This is the fifth federal grant awarded to the University of Mary's NAELP program since 2016, bringing total funding to more than \$7.1 million. Over the years, more than 120 Native American scholars from North Dakota, South Dakota and Arizona have completed education and leadership degrees through the program. Many now serve as principals, superintendents, special education directors and teachers across Native communities.

"The Office of Indian Education has repeatedly entrusted UMary with these grants because we've shown results," said Dr. Matt Lonn, chair of graduate education at the University of Mary. "Our graduates become leaders who make a real difference in Native schools."

A new addition to this grant cycle is the inclusion of the University of Mary's master's in social work (MSW) program, offering an advanced pathway for Native

American students called to serve through social work. The University of Mary's partnership with tribal colleges is unique. Through United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, students who earn an associate degree in social work can continue their education at the University of Mary to complete a bachelor's degree and go on to the MSW program. At Turtle Mountain College in Belcourt, graduates of the Master of Education Leadership program can advance their credentials even further through the University of Mary's K-12 principal and superintendent certification pathways.

"Our MSW program is deeply rooted in service and leadership," said Heidi Nieuwsma, chair of the social work program. "This grant ensures more Native American students can become the social work professionals their communities need."

Applications are open now for the January 2026 start of the University of Mary's master's programs in school administration and special education, and for the MSW program beginning in fall 2026.

"This grant is not just about degrees, it's about creating opportunity and building futures," added Dr. Brenda Tufte, associate dean of the School of Education and Behavioral Science. "When Native American scholars lead classrooms, schools and community programs, Native American children thrive."

These offerings build on a legacy of excellence at the University of Mary in preparing teachers, social workers and school leaders who serve across North Dakota and beyond.

Graduate programs provide full tuition for master's degrees in education, special education and social work to Native scholars, preparing them to serve their home communities.

For more information about NAELP, visit [umary.edu](http://umary.edu) or email [clamb@umary.edu](mailto:clamb@umary.edu) or [hjnieuwsma@umary.edu](mailto:hjnieuwsma@umary.edu).



**Samantha Bercier, Belcourt, receives her diploma from President Monsignor James Shea after earning her Master of Education in School Administration degree from the University of Mary's Liffrig Family School of Education and Behavioral Sciences in 2023.**



# Travel safely this winter

As winter blankets North Dakota in snow, Capital Electric Cooperative reminds members to stay safe, particularly when traveling. Remember these tips for safe winter travel:

## Before you leave

- Check road conditions BEFORE you travel. Consider postponing nonessential travel until the roads are cleared.
- Carry a cellphone that's fully charged.
- Let someone know when you depart, your route and expected arrival time.
- Dress according to weather conditions. Keep dry and wear clothing in layers.
- Always leave with a full fuel tank.
- Make sure everything is functioning properly on your vehicle. Tires should have all-season treads and be in good condition.
- Make sure your wiper blades are in good condition. Keep the windshield washer reservoir filled with antifreeze solvent.
- Check the radiator, heater core and all hoses that carry antifreeze solution to make sure they are in good condition and free of leaks.
- Emergencies can happen when you least expect them, so be sure to carry a winter survival kit in your vehicle.

## On the road

- Turn on your lights. This will increase your visibility to other motorists and snowplow operators. Brush snow from your car that could cover your lights or create visibility problems.
- Slow down and drive according to the conditions.
- Never drive through "whiteouts" or "snow fog" caused by wind or plowing snow. Wait until you can see.
- Stay back at least five car lengths behind the

snowplow; snowplow operators will pull over when it is safe to allow traffic to pass.

- Never use cruise control on wet or icy roadways.

## If you are stranded

- Stay with your vehicle.
- Run the engine sparingly. Start with 15 minutes every hour and adjust if needed.
- Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow.
- Keep your feet off the floor if the heater is not on.
- Never go to sleep with the engine running.
- Tie a colorful banner on the car antenna.
- Move all your emergency supplies from the trunk to the interior of the car as soon as you realize you will be staying for a while. Put on warm clothing now, before you get cold. It is easier to stay warm than it is to regain lost warmth. Loosen tight clothing so body heat can circulate.

## Pack a survival kit

- Several blankets and warm clothing, such as a parka, boots, heavy socks, mittens and ski mask.
- A source of heat, such as a multiple wick candle can heater. It is best to also have matches to light your candle, because some lighters won't work in extreme cold.
- A flashlight with extra batteries.
- Non-perishable food and water.
- Bright red or orange cloth to mark your vehicle.
- Repair tools such as pliers, wrenches, screwdrivers and a pocket knife.
- Tire chains, booster cables, tow rope, warning devices and a container of sand or cat litter.
- Snow shovel, broom and ice scraper.
- First-aid kit.
- Cellphone and charger. 

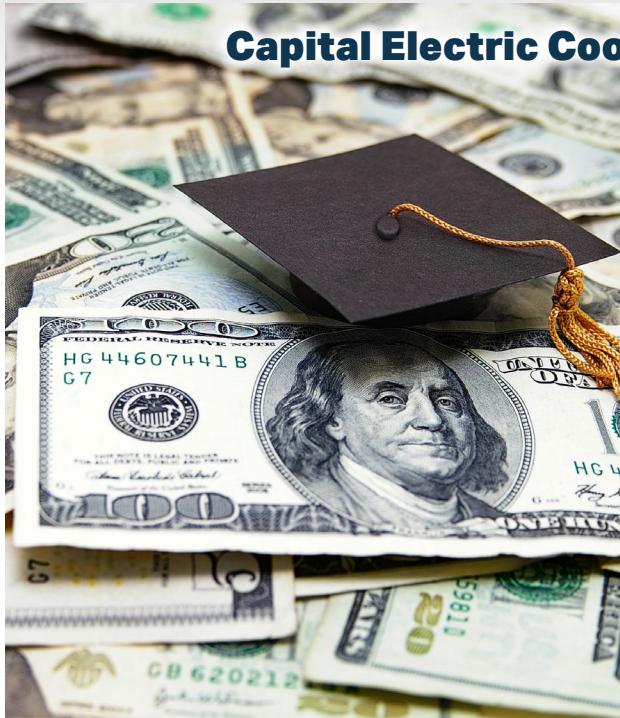
## Capital Electric Cooperative offers student scholarship

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

To qualify for the scholarship, students 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 parent(s) or guardian(s) 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 [capitalelec.com](http://capitalelec.com) or picked up at co-op headquarters at 7401 Yukon Drive in Bismarck. **Applications need to be completed and returned to Capital Electric on or before Monday, Feb. 16, 2026.** ☺



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Learn more at [ndyouthtour.com](http://ndyouthtour.com).



**JUNE 14-20. 2026**

### To enter the essay-writing contest:

- You must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Capital Electric Cooperative.

### Essay question:

As member-owned organizations, electric cooperatives are always seeking new ways to engage their members. What are some ways electric cooperatives can better communicate and connect, especially with students and young adults?

The application deadline is **Jan. 16, 2026**.

Questions? Please contact Wes Engbrecht, Capital Electric Cooperative, at 701-223-1513 during regular business hours.

Email entries to Wes Engbrecht at [wese@capitalelec.com](mailto:wese@capitalelec.com) or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, 7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck, ND, 58503.

## Board minute excerpts OCT. 24

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Capital Electric Cooperative was held on Friday, Oct. 24. The meeting was held in person at Capital Electric, 7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck. All directors were present.

**Also present were:** Manager Paul Fitterer, Business Manager Luke Steen, Operations Manager Jeff Holzer, Engineering Services Manager Greg Owen, Energy Services Manager Josh Schaffner, Manager of Communications and PR Wes Engbrecht, Manager of IT Kent Kensmoe and Attorney Zachary Pelham of Pearce Durick PLLC, who acted as recording secretary.

**Financial Review:** Prior to the board meeting, Directors Dave Charles and Luke Ellenbaum reviewed the September check register and expenditures. They advised all checks and expenditures were in order.

**Management Reports (Business Department, Operations Department, Engineering Services, Energy Services and Communications/IT):**

**Business Department Report:** Steen presented the September financial and statistical report to the board.

Revenue was ahead of budget for September, as \$3,960,403 was generated in comparison with the budgeted figure of \$3,893,761 (favorable variance of \$66,282 or 1.7%).

Capital Electric's September power costs were just under budget for September by 0.1%.

The operating margin for September was -\$220,892, ahead of the budgeted amount of -\$337,400. The total margin for September was -\$197,728, which was ahead of the budgeted -\$319,673.

Capital Electric began billing 24 new services in September, bringing our active services to 22,651 versus 22,464 at this time last year, or a net increase of 187 accounts over the last 12 months.

The cash flow statement was reviewed.

**Estate Retirements:** Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by management,

payment of capital credits to nine member estates was authorized for a total amount of \$9,802.81.

**Write-offs:** Write-offs for the third quarter totaling \$8,649.94 were approved. The total 12-month write-offs are \$36,085.

**Modify Homestead 457b Deferral**

**Plan:** Steen reviewed amendments to the cooperative's 457b Deferral Plan required by new regulations. The documents were adopted with amendments as presented.

**Operations Report:** Holzer reviewed the written report from the operations department. Holzer reported on the completion of the underground conversion at the University of Mary hill, completion of monthly substation inspections and the energization of the Love's Travel Center in Sterling.

**Safety Report:** There were no lost-time accidents since the last board meeting. North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperative's (NDAREC) safety instructors met with line crews for field visits in October. The safety report was reviewed.

**Engineering Services Report:** Owen reviewed the written report from engineering services. Thirty-two work orders were completed in September. Owen reported on ongoing and upcoming projects, including work at the Imperial Valley subdivision, the Midco service center and updates on grant opportunities.

**Township Franchise Agreements:** Owen reported on service territory agreements, which were approved.

**Property Closing Documents:** Owen reviewed closing documents for the 43rd Avenue property, which were approved as presented.

**Energy Services:** Schaffner reviewed the energy services report. Schaffner reported on an increase in geothermal equipment orders, attendance at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) regional meeting and review of multiple distributed generation projects for safety testing.

**Communications and PR:** Engbrecht reviewed the communications and PR

report. Engbrecht reported on the status of the new website.

**IT:** Kensmoe reviewed the IT report. Kensmoe reported on the Bismarck State College CyberCon conference, meeting with BEK Communications regarding a cloud-based telephone system and gathering images for Federal Emergency Management Agency reporting.

**Policies:** Fitterer reviewed Policy No. E-23, Paid Time Off (PTO), Supplemental Sick Leave (SSL) and Holiday Leave. Following discussion, the policy was approved as presented.

**2026 Budget:** Steen reviewed the 2026 preliminary budget and no action was taken.

**Basin Electric Power Cooperative:**

Fitterer reported on Basin Electric matters.

**Central Power Electric Cooperative:**

Charles reviewed the October board meeting.

**NDAREC:** Deon Vilhauer reviewed NDAREC matters. Fitterer reviewed the proposed annual budget.

**NRECA:** Fitterer reviewed the regional meeting.

**National Information Solutions**

**Cooperative:** Fitterer reviewed the member conference and board meeting.

**Mid-West Electric Consumers**

**Association:** Fitterer reported on the new CEO being named.

**Cooperative Finance Corporation**

**(CFC):** Fitterer reviewed the upcoming election for the CFC board and noted Nodak Electric Cooperative's Mylo Einarson would be seeking the Region 6 manager/director position.

**CoBank:** Fitterer reported Minnkota Power Cooperative CEO Mac McLennan was elected to the CoBank board. Proposed bylaw amendments were reviewed and the motion carried to return the proxy ballot indicating the cooperative was in favor of the amendments.

**Industry Update:** Fitterer reviewed materials related to power markets and general cooperative news. ☺

### CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck, ND 58503

Website: [www.capitalelec.com](http://www.capitalelec.com)

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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#### OFFICE HOURS:

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