



# Capital Electric COOPERATIVE

## FEBRUARY 2025

Capital Electric Cooperative was excited to host a First LEGO League event at our headquarters. Approximately 80 students comprising 10 teams competed in this LEGO robotic event. The Bytebots received the most points and will go to the state competition.



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Referees for the event were comprised mostly of former robotics team members who are now in college. Here, they work with the Rockin' Robos to help them with the mission.

## LEGO League focuses on teamwork and learning

BY WES ENGBRECHT

Innovation, learning and teamwork are at the heart of student growth and life success. As children grow, they require the introduction of a wide variety of skills to prepare them for careers, life and relationships with others.

An event hosted by Capital Electric Cooperative in January brought students together to show their talents in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) through the First LEGO League, which provides hands-on learning opportunities for kids ages 4 to 16.

Children who are 4 to 6 years old start this process in the "Discovery" class. This class focuses on building LEGO blocks, with activities in the classroom and at home. Its goal is to get the young ones to start thinking

about more advanced projects.

The next group, ages 6 to 10, move onto "Explore." This program focuses on fundamentals of engineering, as they explore real-world problems. As they design projects, they create unique solutions, which prepare them for the ultimate challenges to come.

The final stage of First LEGO League was the one held at Capital Electric's office on Jan. 10. The "Challenge" program engages students ages 9 to 16 in research, problem solving, coding and engineering. They build and program a LEGO robot with the purpose of navigating the missions of a robot game.

The 10 teams competing in the challenge confronted a mission called "Submerged," which encouraged them



According to this student from Horizon Middle School, being comfortable in front of people and communicating are important benefits of the program.

to focus on how to preserve ocean and sea life. The students took this opportunity to share their thoughts on maintaining a healthy Earth for their future.

Lee Gullingsrud, Bismarck Public School electronics and IT instructor, has been involved with robotic programs for the past 10 years.

"I want people to know that this program is about much more than the robots. The kids learn life skills, especially working together to accomplish something of value to the world," he says.

The Rockin' Robos drove from Fessenden to compete, with teacher and team coach Lindsay Widicker sharing her thoughts on the program benefits.

"Everyone can be involved in this program, as it includes all skill levels. Students learn teamwork, problem solving and the core value of inclusion. An additional important outcome is the development of a positive self-image," she says.

In consideration of hosting this event, Capital Electric looked at its own operations, which are built on STEM principles.

"A safe and efficient electric distribution system requires careful planning and analysis, resulting from application of concepts learned throughout our careers. This event was an amazing display of teamwork and dedication to achieve a goal, much like how Capital



A highlight of the day was sharing pizza with friends between events.

Electric employees work together to design and build our distribution system," says Capital Electric Manager of Engineering Greg Owen.

The cooperative is pleased to host events that focus on learning about these vitally important aspects of life. The First LEGO League brings ideas and methods to our offices which enhance the processes students are learning to prepare them for life and careers. The knowledge they attain will be applied to meet our needs in a world with quickly changing technologies.

In the First LEGO League program, participants gain real-world problem-solving experience through a guided, global robotics program, helping today's students and teachers build a better future together. The program was developed in 1989 and has grown to reach more than 3.2 million participants worldwide. Even with limited involvement, it has been shown students will have gains in STEM outcomes in comparison to students not participating in the program.

We thank the students for sharing their skills and for the excitement they brought to the office. We wish them the best life has to offer as they help make the future brighter!

For more information on the program, visit [www.firstlegoleague.org](http://www.firstlegoleague.org).



## Want to win \$100? Sign up for autopay for your chance to win!

Automatic payments can ensure you never miss a due date, minimizing the risk of late fees and penalties. Half of Capital Electric Cooperative's members currently take advantage of the autopay program. We are grateful for their participation and hope to encourage other members to give it a try.

Now is a great time to enroll! In an effort to promote Capital Electric's autopay program, the co-op will be giving away a \$100 Visa gift card. All members who are enrolled in the program by March 14 will be entered in the drawing.

### Why does Capital Electric want members to enroll in autopay?

A number of variables outside of the co-op's control are making timely billing and payments increasingly challenging. Last year, the postal service announced

changes to delivery timeframes, which took effect in October. This means it takes longer for the bill to get to you and longer for your payment to get to the co-op. Autopay removes those delays from the equation.

### What if I have a concern about my bill?

We always wait to process autopayments until the due date. The period between when the bill is generated and when the autopay is drawn gives the member time to review their bill and ask any questions they may have prior to the transaction occurring. If the timeliness of receiving the bill in the mail is a concern, the bill can also be accessed electronically via the SmartHub app.

### What safeguards are in place to protect my payment information?

Capital Electric takes member privacy and security very seriously. Autopay transactions are encrypted and provide the utmost level of security.

### How can I increase my chances of winning?

All members enrolled in the program by March 14 will be included in the drawing. Members who opt to use a bank account for autopay will have their name in the drawing twice, while those who opt to use a credit card will be included once. The use of a bank account is encouraged, because it prevents issues that arise when credit or debit cards expire and has a lower cost per transaction for the co-op.

### How do I sign up?

There are a number of ways to enroll.

You can complete the authorization form, which is included on the adjacent page, and send it to: Capital Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 730, Bismarck, ND, 58502, or email it to [css@capitalelec.com](mailto:css@capitalelec.com). The form is also available for download as an online web form at [capitalelec.com/forms](http://capitalelec.com/forms). For those who prefer signing up in person, authorization forms are available at the co-op's headquarters building, located at 7401 Yukon Dr., Bismarck.

You can also enroll through SmartHub. A link to SmartHub can be found on our website, [capitalelec.com](http://capitalelec.com). To sign up for autopay, login and click on "Billing & Payments." Then, select "Autopay Program."

### What if I try autopay and don't like it?

The program is completely voluntary. You may cancel your enrollment at any time.

For more information on the autopay program, call 701-223-1513. 

**Please note:** It may take up to four weeks for the first autopayment to process.



## Automatic Payment Authorization

### HOW TO SIGN UP:

- Complete and return this form by either mail or email.
  - Mail to: Capital Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 730, Bismarck ND 58502 or email to: [css@capitalelec.com](mailto:css@capitalelec.com)
- The automatic payment will be added onto the account as soon as the form is received, but may take up to four (4) weeks.
- The selected method of payment will be drafted for the amount due and will occur on the due date each month.
- Contact our office at 701-223-1513 with any questions.
- If you move addresses within the Capital Electric territory, this automatic payment will transfer on to your new service unless the cooperative is notified otherwise.
- If your selected method of payment is declined or returned two months in a row, the account will be removed from automatic payment.

Capital Electric Account Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Capital Electric Account Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Service Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### BANK AUTHORIZATION

Checking (enclose a voided check)

Savings (enclose a deposit slip)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Financial Institution

Voided check or deposit slip required

### - OR -

### CREDIT / DEBIT CARD AUTHORIZATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cardholder's Name (as shown on card)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cardholder's FULL Mailing Address (if different from service address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Card # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Exp. Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ (MM/YYYY) (CVV code not required)

We Accept

### AUTOMATIC PAYMENT AUTHORIZATION

I authorize Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., to automatically charge payment of my Capital Electric account balance on the due date each month, using the method of payment described above. This authorization is in effect until revoked by me; however, I understand that both the financial/credit card institution and/or Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., reserve the right to terminate this agreement at any time. This is a FREE service offered by Capital Electric Cooperative.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICE USE ONLY effective: \_\_\_\_\_


**Cole Leier**

**Kyle Volk**

## Lineworkers achieve journeyman status

Lineworkers Cole Leier and Kyle Volk have achieved journeyman lineworker status and are fully qualified to take on the vital responsibilities of ensuring safe and reliable service for Capital Electric Cooperative members.

Leier and Volk were among 14 apprentices to complete the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) apprenticeship program in 2024. Graduates received their journeyman lineworker certificates during a Jan. 9 awards ceremony held in conjunction with the Apprenticeship, Training and Safety Conference.

"Lineworkers are the backbone of our system. Without their expertise, the power that runs our homes, businesses and communities wouldn't be possible. Their work is vital to the system and requires a focus on safety and knowledge of the necessary technology," says Operations Manager Jeff Holzer. "Throughout the apprenticeship program, Cole and Kyle demonstrated the expertise and commitment necessary to excel in this critical role. We are proud to have them on our team."

Completing the lineworker apprenticeship program is no small feat. The training program is designed to teach the skills and knowledge needed to be a successful lineworker. Through on-the-job training and independent

study, apprentices learn how to safely construct, maintain and operate the power grid. To graduate, they must complete 8,000 hours of on-the-job training and 576 hours of study.

"Investing in comprehensive training is about more than meeting industry standards. It's about protecting lives, maintaining reliability and keeping our communities connected to the power they rely on every day," says NDAREC Executive Vice President and General Manager Josh Kramer. "Through their support of NDAREC's apprenticeship programs, North Dakota's electric cooperatives are helping to produce the next generation of line professionals and building generational greatness in our industry."

Capital Electric is committed to providing employees with ongoing education and training, ensuring the highest levels of service, safety and reliability for our members. In addition to participating in the lineworker apprenticeship program, lineworkers attend annual training sessions to learn and refine the techniques necessary to safely work on energized and nonenergized power lines.

We congratulate Cole and Kyle on their achievement and look forward to their continued commitment to our members. ☈

## Cooperative receives Safety Performance Award

**A**t Capital Electric Cooperative, safety is a top priority. Working with high-voltage electric infrastructure and power lines makes linework one of the most dangerous professions. Through safety initiatives, we reduce the likelihood of accidents, outages and injuries, and foster a culture of accountability and care.

On Jan. 9, the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) presented Capital Electric with the Safety Performance Award, recognizing the co-op for achieving zero recordable injuries

between Dec. 1, 2023, and Nov. 30, 2024. It is the third consecutive year the cooperative has earned this recognition.

Through its safety awards and recognition program, NDAREC has recognized outstanding safety performance for more than 60 years.

NDAREC is the statewide trade association for 17 electric distribution cooperatives and five generation and transmission cooperatives operating in North Dakota. These distribution cooperatives provide electricity to more than 250,000 North Dakotans. ☈



## Save the date for your annual meeting

**June 10**  
**Bismarck Event Center**

- Learn about co-op issues.
- Elect board directors to represent you.
- Enjoy a free meal.

## Online voting for directors

**Sign up for SmartHub to vote online!**



In addition to traditional in-person voting at our annual meeting June 10, Capital Electric Cooperative will again offer online voting through SmartHub, a web and mobile app that allows members to access their bill, manage their account and monitor electric usage. To register for the free resource, visit [www.capitalelec.com](http://www.capitalelec.com) and click on "New User? Register to use SmartHub!" at the top of the home page. You will need to enter your billing account number, last name and email address to sign up. ☺

## 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 [www.capitalelec.com](http://www.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 Friday, Feb. 16.**



# Board minute excerpts DEC. 13, 2024

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Capital Electric Cooperative was held Dec. 13, 2024. All directors were present at that time.

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

**Financial Review:** Prior to the board meeting, Directors Bret Weiland and Lyndon Anderson reviewed the November 2024 check register and expenditures. They advised all checks and expenditures were in order. The financial review was approved as presented.

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

**Operations Report:** Holzer reviewed the written report from the operations department. Holzer reported the McClusky substation was outfitted with new electronic breakers, crews changed out a voltage regulator southwest of Wing and service was energized at the new Daybreak/Fleet Farm area.

**Safety Report:** There were no lost-time accidents since the last board meeting. Without objection, the safety report was approved.

**Engineering Services Report:**

Owen reviewed the written report from engineering services. Twenty-seven work orders were completed in November 2024. Owen reported on ongoing and upcoming projects, including completion of numerous service lines, extensions in advance of winter, beginning installation of lines at the Brownsville subdivision and the status of an electric service agreement for a new potential load.

**Relocation Agreement:** Owen reviewed a utility relocation agreement for services in the Centennial Road area subject to road construction in Bismarck. Following

discussion, the agreement was executed as presented.

**Real Estate:** Owen reviewed proposals submitted by local commercial real estate brokerage companies to market and sell the tower property near the North Cash Wise grocery store. Following discussion, approval was given to enter into an agreement with Stillwater Commercial to market the property at the amount recommended.

**Energy Services:** Schaffner reviewed the energy services report. Twenty-two service orders were completed in November. Schaffner reported continued efforts to explain to members the new rates, work to complete the load control transponder changeouts and discussions with N.D. Department of Transportation on plans to install EV charging infrastructure along Highway 83, Highway 2 and Highway 52.

**Communications and IT:** Engbrecht reviewed the communications and IT report. Engbrecht reported on an upcoming *North Dakota Living* local pages article, an update on the employee events committee and the upgrade of the phone server.

**2024 Audit:** Steen reviewed the audit engagement letter and Operation Round Up agreed upon procedures letter. Following discussion, the letters were approved.

**Business Department Report:** Steen presented the November 2024 financial and statistical report to the board.

Revenue was behind the budget for November 2024, as \$3,566,292 was generated in comparison with the budgeted figure of \$3,787,356 (unfavorable variance of \$221,064 or 5.8%).

Capital Electric's November 2024 net load factor was behind budget by 0.90%.

The operating margin for November 2024 was \$193,387, behind the budgeted amount of \$203,443. The total margin for November 2024 was \$199,407, which was behind the budgeted amount of \$210,943.

Capital Electric began billing 30 new services in November 2024, bringing our active services to 22,510 versus 22,219 at this time last year, or a net increase of 291

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, it was authorized to pay out 12 member estates totaling \$12,289.76.

**City of Lincoln:** Fitterer discussed a draft street light maintenance contract and other matters.

**Policies:** Fitterer reviewed proposed Policy II-8, Equity Management, which was adopted as presented. Steen reviewed Policy IV-01-13, Electric Heat – Residential, which was modified as presented.

**Basin Electric Power Cooperative:** Fitterer reported on Basin Electric matters and the CEO report was reviewed.

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

**North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC):** Deon Vilhauer reported on updates on NDAREC and the Rural Development Finance Corporation. Fitterer reported on the annual meeting scheduled for Feb. 11-12. Vilhauer was elected to serve as Capital Electric's representative on the NDAREC board of directors and Kayla Pulvermacher was elected to serve as the alternate representative on the NDAREC board of directors.

**National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) Board Meeting:** Fitterer reviewed materials and announced his reelection to the NISC board of directors.

**National Rural Electric Cooperative Association PowerXchange:** Anderson as delegate and Kyle Tschosik as alternate.

**Mid-West Electric Consumers Association:** Greg Dehne reported on the annual meeting.

**Federated Board Report:** Fitterer reviewed reports.

**Cooperative Finance Corporation Report:** Fitterer reviewed reports.

**CoBank Report:** Fitterer reviewed reports.©

## CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck, ND 58503

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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Deon Vilhauer, Pres.	Bismarck
Dave Charles, V. Pres.	Bismarck
Kyle Tschosik, Sec.-Treas.	Bismarck
Lyndon Anderson, Asst. Sec.-Treas.	Baldwin
Greg Dehne	Bismarck
Dwight Wrangham	Lincoln
Kayla Pulvermacher	Lincoln
Sara Vollmer	Wing
Bret Weiland	Bismarck

### OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Office phone: 701-223-1513

Toll-free: 888-223-1513

Pay-By-Phone: 1-877-853-5928

DAY—NIGHT—WEEKEND

TROUBLE CALL: 701-223-1513

Capital Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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