



**Capital  
Electric**  
COOPERATIVE

**APRIL 2026**

Capital Electric Cooperative member  
Jeff Olson shares his experience  
serving with the U.S. Marines in Iraq.



## IN THIS ISSUE

- Member shares story of courage
- Website enhancements
- Mercy Box makes a difference
- Peak forecast tool available
- Board minutes

*This World War II Jeep is a 1943 Ford GPW, which was restored by Jeff Olson, his sons and a friend. It's marked with his grandfather's unit number, as it would have appeared during the invasion of Normandy. They have displayed the jeep at several shows across the state as they enjoy sharing World War II history of World War II. They also show World War II-correct replica weapons and authentic uniforms, equipment and radios.*



# U.S. Marine shares story of courage

BY WES ENGBRECHT

*Editor's note: Capital Electric Cooperative members have stories about their lives, accomplishments, a new business or perhaps about meeting a community need. It's my privilege to tell their stories through words and photos to bring them to life for our readers. At times, we come across a special story built on courage, dedication and a desire to serve. This is one of those stories.*

**A**s Americans, our respect for military veterans is deeply rooted in our hearts. These selflessly courageous men and women have been part of our families throughout the years.

U.S. Marine Jeff Olson, Bismarck, epitomizes a life of commitment to service. His life reflects an indelible sacrifice to preserve freedom and provide protection to not only Americans, but to people around the world who desperately needed him during a time of turmoil.

A Devils Lake native, Olson was raised in a military family. His great-grandfather was in the U.S. Army, serving in World War I, operating Army trains in France. Olson's

grandfather, a World War II Army veteran, served first in Africa, but was later wounded in Normandy. His father served in Desert Storm and Desert Shield operations in Iraq.

There was no question what his life's mission would be. His blood ran deep with military service.

Realizing the need for fearless soldiers to fight in the intense counterinsurgency operations in and around Fallujah, Iraq, in 2005, Olson was compelled to join the U.S. Marines without hesitation.

"There was no doubt in my mind this was where I needed to be, and I knew the Marine Corps would get me there quickly," he explains.

Boot camp in San Diego was immediately followed by a



**Jeff Olson**



Jeff Olson's great-grandfather, **Arthur Albrecht**, served in the U.S. Army in France during World War I on troop trains as a fireman and conductor.

mission with the 2nd Battalion First Marines. He was 19 years old. Operation Steel Curtain/Iron Fist led the battalion to the front line, blocking the Syrian insurgency into the Al Anbar region at the Iraqi border.

The mission focused entirely on clearing enemy combatants from the area, working on the ground in deserted towns. The insurgents were Syrians, Iraqis and some from Chechnya. Olson and his peers were often accompanied by tanks or Humvees, but they were mostly on foot without much outside coverage.

"We never knew what we were walking into in the fortified

districts. We would identify and clear concealed explosive devices, such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs). We were also taking sniper fire as we moved through these active areas," he says.

The Marines were on the move for months at a time in the blazing desert heat during the day and the shuddering cold at night.

"At the end of the day, we were covered in sweat, so the freezing temperatures at night were not easy to endure. During those nights, we were hoping to rest in a clear building, but rest was scarce. Water and MREs were not always available, which resulted in demanding physical requirements," he says.

They were protected by flak jackets and Kevlar helmets. They carried 10mm ammo magazines, each with 30 rounds, four or five grenades and lightweight rockets, such as AT4's, SMAW and LAW. The weight of their equipment was significant, as they kept moving without time to stop even for a few minutes.

It's not possible for world news to accurately take us firsthand into the fray of battle. To hear it directly from Olson makes it real. The mental and physical strength it requires, mostly from young soldiers, is unfathomable to the rest of us.

"Marines are a warrior culture. In battle, there is no time to stop and evaluate your life. You just keep moving and then you move again and again," he says.

Marines are frontline protectors across the world, and nothing is more important to a Marine.

At home, Olson has worked for the Burleigh County Sheriff's Office for 17 years. He has worked his way into the position of lieutenant of the Burleigh County Detention Center. In 2020, Sheriff Kelly Leben nominated Olson to participate in the FBI National Academy. Less than 1% of U.S. law enforcement leaders and managers are invited to participate in this intensive law enforcement training program in Quantico, Va.

Olson and his wife, Katie, a third-grade teacher at Dorothy Moses Elementary School in Bismarck, are Capital



Jeff Olson, right, and his friend, Christopher McCrackin take a short break in November 2005 after clearing several blocks of a city. "Chris and I served in the same fire team and were linked at the hip. A couple of weeks after this photo, Chris and I entered a home to clear it and came across an IED which exploded. I was wounded with a traumatic brain injury and Chris was unfortunately killed. My son Henry's middle name is Christopher in memory of him," Olson says.

Electric members. They have four children: Ayden, Ben, Henry (Hank) and Harper.

Mere words are not enough to say thank you to Jeff and his fellow Marines for their role in keeping the world safe, but it's all we have, so it's important to say. We appreciate Jeff and all soldiers for representing our country with fierce toughness and resilience!

Resiliency is an important aspect of a Marine's personal and professional life. It ensures when faced with the challenges Marines endure in and out of combat, they will be able to meet those challenges, drawing from internal and external sources of strength and support. ☺



#### Co-op News & Events

North Dakota Living Magazine

#### Community Initiatives

Operation Round Up  
Federal Grant Projects  
Scholarships  
Youth Tour  
Member Advisory Committee

#### Resources

Safety Information  
Wildfire Mitigation Plan  
Energy Savings Center

The "Community and News" section is easy to navigate with a well-organized drop-down menu.

## Exploring new website features

In February, Capital Electric Cooperative completed the design and launch of a new website at [capitalelec.com](http://capitalelec.com). Our goal with the redesign is to create a user-friendly, online experience providing up-to-date information and interactive features. We encourage you to visit the site often to stay in touch with what's happening at the cooperative.

Over the next few months, we will provide a walk-through of each website section. In this issue, we will present our "Community and News" area. Capital Electric has focused on community and member involvement since its inception in 1946. As you can imagine, things have changed considerably in the past 80 years, but the message remains the same. We care!

### North Dakota Living magazine

Let's start with our *North Dakota Living*. In this section, you will find it simple to navigate through the entire magazine or focus on the Capital Electric pages, better known as our local pages. Issues are available for the prior 24 months for easy reference to stories and features. You are encouraged to provide us with story ideas at any time.

### Community initiatives

Next, we have a subsection, "Community Initiatives," which includes explanations of specific programs benefiting co-op members. Since 1997, Operation Round Up has granted funds to assist nonprofit organizations meeting community needs and specific needs of individuals and families in our service area. On this page, you will find necessary information regarding this program, including a list of recent grantees. You will also be able to apply for funds using an online web form.

Other initiatives include information on federal grant projects, the most recent data on the Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship program, the Youth

Tour essay contest and how to be involved with the Capital Electric Member Advisory Committee. The Member Advisory Committee provides an open forum to discuss current topics and member concerns. In each area, we strive to provide answers to these on-going opportunities.

### Other resources

Under the title, "Other Resources," you will find valuable safety information. Providing a safe work environment for employees and educating our members on keeping themselves and their families safe while they live and work around our electric system is our top priority. Ensuring a high level of system reliability is only achieved with a safety focus.

A wildfire mitigation plan is available in this section as well. Wildfires can and do occur in our service area for a variety of reasons. They endanger our volunteer rural firefighters, as well as our members' families, homes and property. This detailed plan is written to ensure we are doing everything possible to avoid fire danger.

Finally, we arrive at our "Energy Savings Center." This section provides opportunities to minimize your power usage through a wide variety of methods. A considerable amount of information is available on this page, so take the time to scroll through and click the links. Our staff is available to interpret and assist in keeping your electricity bills as low as possible.

This covers what we can do for you as this is vital to a member-owned cooperative. If you have any questions regarding these areas or anything else, please call us at 855-937-1736. There is always someone here to answer your call and get you to the right person. Thank you for taking the time to visit our website! ☺



*Operation Round Up grants are awarded twice each year.*



*The Youth Tour essay contest brings high school students from around the country on a tour of Washington, D.C.*



*Many Member Advisory Committee members attend regularly and are focused on learning, asking questions and providing feedback.*



*Volunteers deliver piles of donated items directly to the agency, which is chosen monthly.. All donated items are given to those in need.*

## Mercy Box program supports local charities

If you have been in our lobby sometime in the past few years, you probably noticed a red container on the floor inside the front door. Capital Electric Cooperative's employees, directors and cooperative members are doing our part to alleviate community needs via this Mercy Box.

The Mercy Box movement started in 2016 to spread kindness and generosity across our community by providing red boxes in various locations where donations are collected each month for a unique agency or cause. Each month, that agency chooses what they need the most.

Drop-off sites are at Bismarck, Mandan and Lincoln businesses. The effort to recruit more business drop-off locations is always underway. Being a drop-off location entails having a red tote where people can leave their donations. The Mercy Box team will pick up the donations each month and switch out the flyers for the next month.

For the past few years, Capital Electric has been part of this effort to assist individuals served by charitable organizations in our communities. Each month, we receive a list of items needed by the designated organization.

Virtually all requested items are inexpensive, so it doesn't require much money or time to make a difference.

For April, the designated organization is Cross Training

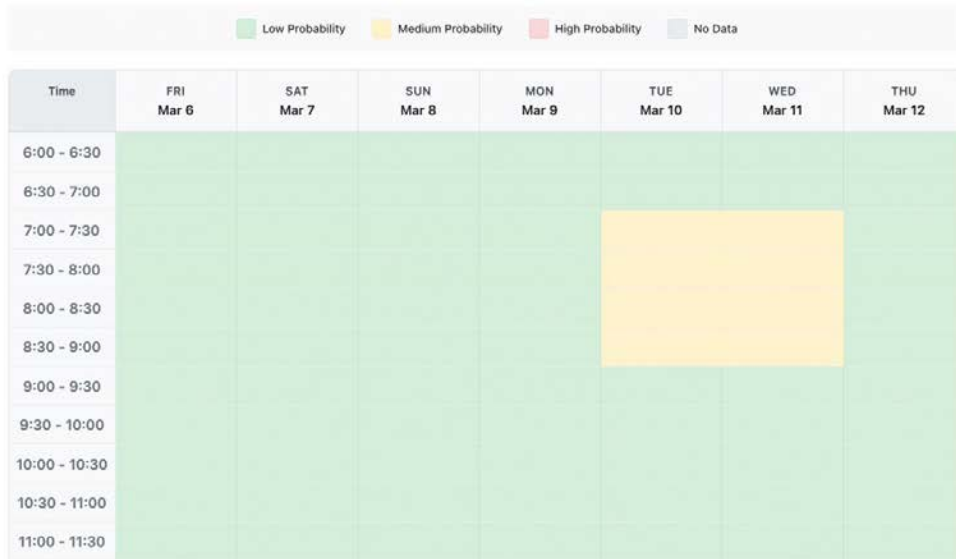


Ministries, a Christ-centered sports ministry based in Bismarck. For over two decades, Cross Training has ministered to tens of thousands of kids through sports camps, mission trips and Bible studies.

Bags without Borders is a program created by Cross Training. Bags are filled with items and distributed on mission trips to impoverished children living in migrant villages. Requested items for Cross Training participants include shampoo, toothpaste, hairbrushes, washcloths, school supplies, small toys and small sports equipment.

Join us in sharing the cooperative spirit and stop by the office today. If you have questions about the program, please call our office at 855-937-1736 and ask for Wes. Thank you for making a real difference in our communities! ☺

# Peak Forecast



## Website forecast tool provides peak information

To provide more timely peak information to our members, Capital Electric Cooperative now has a forecast tool on our website. This newly developed feature will enhance member convenience and increase the accuracy of peak event determination.

The forecast tool updates hourly, so members can stay in tune to the changing level of peak probability on their schedule. Just like a weather forecast, the closer you are to the actual time, the more accurate the forecast. This tool will allow members to look ahead seven days to view the probability of an upcoming peak event.

While we are happy to send out peak notifications, we have received comments that they create fatigue over time. Additionally, we feel the need to determine peak notifications beyond 18 to 36 hours in advance. When we do that, we sometimes call for periods that don't end up being high probability timeframes. Our goal is to narrow peak time estimates to reduce your need for continuous tracking.

To access the peak forecast tool, go to our website homepage and click on "Peak Forecast." You will then be directed to a graph reflecting the upcoming seven days, shown in half-hour intervals. The probability of reaching a peak during any of those intervals is noted by color

shades, as defined at the top of the page.

We will continue to run peak notifications in conjunction with the forecast tool simultaneously for a while. We will eventually use the current notifications as more reminders to keep an eye on the forecast rather than identifying specific peak windows via text, email or SmartHub notification.

Is the forecast tool guaranteed to predict the peak? There can't be a guarantee when dealing with predictions. We are aiming to identify the highest probability timeframes during the upcoming days. While we expect greater than 80% accuracy, we do not expect the predictive model to be perfect. Members who are desiring a higher level of accuracy may want to consider our load control program, which boasts a significantly higher level of success, but does require a greater number of hours of control.

We strive to serve our members with tools to keep your electricity costs as low as possible. We will continue to monitor the peak event process and provide continuous communication. As always, if you have questions or desire to explore more cost-saving options, please call us at 855-937-1736. ☎

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Capital Electric Cooperative was held on Friday, Feb. 27 at Capital Electric Cooperative. All directors were present except Director Dwight Wrangham.

**Also present were:** Manager Paul Fitterer, Operations Manager Jeff Holzer, Engineering Services Manager Greg Owen, Energy Services Manager Josh Schaffner, Manager of Communications 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 Greg Dehne and Luke Ellenbaum reviewed the January check register and expenditures. The financial review was approved.

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

**Business Department Report:** Fitterer presented the January financial and statistical report to the board.

Revenue was behind budget for January, as \$4,786,0821 was generated in comparison with the budgeted figure of \$4,886,227 (unfavorable variance of \$100,145 or 2%).

Capital Electric's January power costs were under budget for the month by 1.3%.

The operating margin for January was \$95,091, behind the budgeted amount of \$179,945. The total margin for January was \$93,089, which was behind the budgeted amount of \$213,549.

Capital Electric began billing 19 new services in January, bringing our active services to 22,823 versus 22,536 at this time last year, or a net increase of 287 accounts over the last 12 months.

The cash flow statement was reviewed.

**Estate Retirements:** Payment of capital credits totaling \$8,910.45 to nine members' estates was authorized.

**Operations Report:** Holzer reviewed the written report from the operations department. Holzer reported on work to complete the annual line inspection, replacement of leaning and rejected poles in the Goodrich area and completion of the annual inspection of underground switchgear.

**Safety Report:** There were no lost-time accidents since the last board meeting. The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) safety instructor held first-aid CPR training on Feb. 19. The safety report was reviewed.

**Engineering Services Report:** Owen reviewed the written report from engineering services. Two work orders were completed in January. Owen reported on ongoing and upcoming projects, including the status of grants and potential loads.

**Work Order Inventories:** Inventories 517, 517A, 518 and 518A were approved as presented.

**Energy Services:** Schaffner reviewed the energy services report. Schaffner reported on continued engagement with members on calls related to rate increases, plans to host a booth at the Bismarck-Mandan Home Show and two distributed generation projects passing safety tests.

**Communications:** Engbrecht reviewed the communications and public relations report. Engbrecht reported on the Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship winner, the upcoming Member Advisory Committee meeting and the upcoming Operation Round Up meeting.

**IT Report:** Kensmoe reviewed the IT report. Kensmoe reported on the GIS server upgrade completion and updated on the security camera system.

**Strategic Planning Update:** Fitterer reviewed and summarized efforts and progress to achieve the goals identified during strategic planning. The board approved the renewal of the resolution to balance infrastructure needs with rising costs.

**Basin Electric:** Fitterer reported on Basin Electric matters.

**Central Power Electric Cooperative (CPEC):** Dave Charles reviewed CPEC's February board meeting.

Director Charles was selected to serve on CPEC's board of directors. Director Dehne was selected to serve as the alternate director on CPEC's board of directors.

The board also selected Director Charles to serve as Capital Electric's delegate at CPEC's annual meeting and selected Director Dehne to serve as alternate.

**NDAREC:** Deon Vilhauer reviewed NDAREC matters, including a review of the annual meeting and February board meeting.

**National Rural Electric Cooperative Association:** Fitterer reported on the upcoming regional meeting.

**National Information Solutions Cooperative:** Fitterer reported on annual meeting.

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

**RESCO:** Vilhauer updated on capital credit retirements and the February board meeting. ☺

## CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Deon Vilhauer, Pres. ....	Bismarck
Sara Vollmer, V. Pres. ....	Wing
Kyle Tschosik, Sec.-Treas. ....	Bismarck
Greg Dehne, Asst. Sec.-Treas. ....	Bismarck
Dwight Wrangham.....	Lincoln
Bret Weiland.....	Bismarck
Dave Charles.....	Bismarck
Whitford Dwyer.....	Bismarck
Luke Ellenbaum.....	Bismarck

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