



**Capital  
Electric**  
COOPERATIVE

**NOVEMBER 2024**

Veterans Day recognizes the unwavering willingness to serve and the true patriotism of all veterans.



**HONORING ALL WHO SERVED**

# VETERANS Day

Serving in Vietnam when he was 24 years old, U.S. Air Force veteran **Wes Vettel** flew his O-2B aircraft in psychological operations (PSYOP) over enemy territory. He flew more than 200 missions in this aircraft and later served on a B-52G bomber out of Guam, where he flew 23 bombing missions over Laos and Cambodia.

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- University of Mary adds strength and conditioning
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# Capt. Vettel brings Vietnam War home

BY WES ENGBRECHT

Those growing up in the 1960s and 1970s either experienced the Vietnam War firsthand or watched neighbors and friends fly across the ocean to join the unknown battles to come. At that time, no one could imagine how devastating the war would be for countless U.S. families.

Without a true life discussion with war veterans, it is difficult to understand the significance of their sacrifice and the experiences veterans can't or may not ever forget. What the war was and still remains for those who returned – and for families whose loved ones did not return – requires the eyes and memories of a veteran.

## A time of service

Vietnam War veteran and Capital Electric Cooperative member Wes Vettel and his wife, Linda, live northeast of Bismarck. Wes served as a fixed-wing U.S. Air Force pilot, flying out of Phan Rang, South Vietnam, and Thailand in 1971 when he was 24 years old. He later flew B-52 bombers out of Guam, starting in 1973. He left the Air Force as a captain in 1974.

In South Vietnam, Wes was an O-2B psychological operations (PSYOP) pilot, dropping informational leaflets and using the plane's loudspeakers to offer relief to North Vietnamese soldiers. The message offered them the opportunity to leave extremely undesirable conditions for better ones American forces could provide.

Wes experienced dangerous conditions on many flights.

"I was flying at an altitude of about 2,000 to 3,000 feet and got caught in a wind downdraft. By the time I was able to regain control, I was approximately 100 feet above the jungle. These are moments you don't forget," he says.

"One of the most difficult aspects of the war was that it was very difficult to tell the difference between the forces we fought with and the enemy forces. In fact, there were times enemy soldiers would work with us during the day and fight against us at night," he says.



*Wes and Linda Vettel have been married for 55 years. After earning a Bachelor of Science degree from North Dakota State University, Wes proposed to his true love on a rooftop. They were married four months later. He and Linda kept in constant contact during the Vietnam War, as Linda compiled numerous news clippings and other information.*

### Providing aid to other veterans

Approximately 95% of those veterans on the ground returned home with some level of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The stories of those suffering from PTSD are numerous, and it takes time and understanding to help all who need care.

“My goal is to help improve these soldiers’ lives by encouraging them to share their feelings openly to begin the healing process. There is a contingent of veterans helping others in this way and many times it proves to be successful. The families of these soldiers have also suffered and need support as their relationships continue to heal,” Wes explains.

### Veterans will always be brothers

Camaraderie is vital to veterans who have served in the Vietnam War.

Wes continues to meet regularly with his military brothers who served with him in Phan Rang. Reunions offer them the opportunity to keep up with each other’s lives and provide support and healing to each other.

Participation in the Western North Dakota Honor Flight last year was an honor for Wes. The twice yearly Western ND Honor Flight’s mission is to transport America’s veterans to Washington, D.C., to visit those memorials dedicated to honor the service and sacrifices of them and their friends.

“I watched my friend, Brian Benesh, a veteran who was a medic in Vietnam, hold his hand to the memorial wall, kneel and ask for forgiveness. His prayer was that he had not been able to save all his patients,” Wes says.

They returned to North Dakota to a huge welcome home, which they never received 50 years ago. The tears were real as they felt their time in Vietnam was truly appreciated.

### Veterans Day brings it home

For the more than 58,000 soldiers who didn’t come home from the Vietnam War and the millions of survivors who served alongside them, as well as the millions of soldiers who served in other wars, Veterans Day is of the utmost importance. It is a day when all U.S. citizens who are forever grateful for their service and ultimate sacrifice show their respect.

As Nov. 11 approaches, share in their memories as we join as proud Americans on this special day. The staff at Capital Electric Cooperative thanks Wes and Linda for sharing their time and their stories. We appreciate their commitment to our country and the sacrifice of all who served. ☺



**Wes Vettel and Brian Benesh** join a large group of other veterans on the Honor Flight in Washington, D.C.



**Wes Vettel** prepares for a mission with his fixed-wing T-38 aircraft in pilot training. He is proud to have served as a pilot, as he worked alongside many brave soldiers.

An instructor takes an opportunity to encourage a hands-on learning experience.



## University of Mary program one of only 18 in United States

From the high school and collegiate level to private and public fitness centers and health care facilities, the need for a certified strength and conditioning coach or specialist has skyrocketed recently in North Dakota and across the nation.

Someone aspiring to be in that career field must first pass the national strength and conditioning exam from an accredited higher education program. Opportunely, the University of Mary's Biomechanics-Strength and Conditioning program just became the first school in North Dakota and one of only 18 across the United States to earn accreditation. Two-thirds of the programs are located outside the Midwest.

"The market for strength and conditioning specialists is expanding across the country. Many programs and schools are hiring these professionals to help the athletes get ready for their sport or activity," says Dr. Rachel Johnson Krug, chair of athletic training and kinesiology at the University of Mary. "We are excited to be accredited and want to see our students be leaders in the field."

A certified strength and conditioning specialist is an entire sports medicine team packed into one health care professional, according to program officials.

"Just as we have seen the recent need for athletic trainers at the high school and collegiate level treating injured athletes, now there is a huge demand for certified strength and conditioning coaches across the country in our high schools that allows teams at that level to be proactive and help athletes prevent injury through proper strength and conditioning," says Alicia Wells, University of Mary's strength and conditioning program coordinator and instructor. "Typically, sport coaches or teachers most likely had

weightroom supervision added onto their already busy schedule. This stress can be alleviated by hiring a certified strength and conditioning specialist to assume this role. Now, with competition so high for athletic scholarships at the collegiate level and the NCAA's new name, image and likeness policy, high school athletes and their schools are demanding there be a strength and conditioning specialist on staff running workouts that are scientific-based with the primary goal of enhancing the athlete's performance and proactively helping prevent injury."

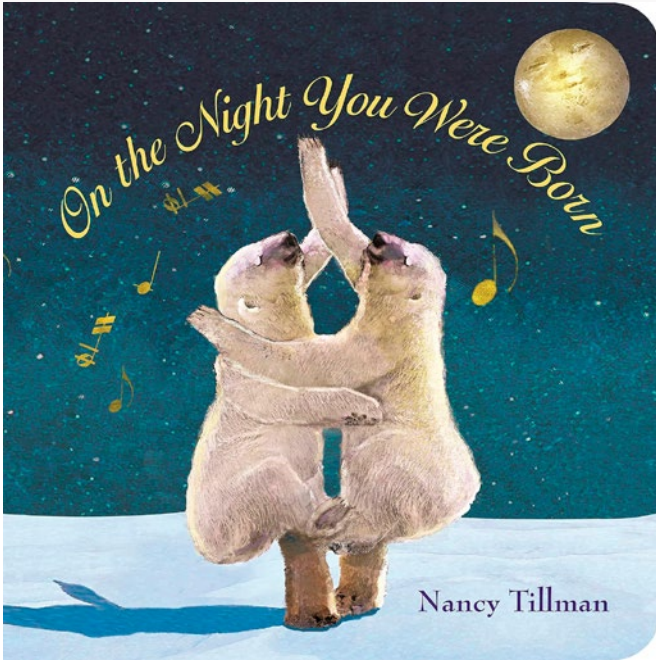
Certified strength and conditioning specialists can take the burden from team coaches so they can focus on what they do best, which is coach. Now, the athlete works with the strength and conditioning coach to properly build strength, conditioning and endurance, while helping prevent injury.

Adding to the highest standards required by the Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning, accreditation is the student's access to state-of-the-art technology and equipment within the University of Mary's program.

Numerous cameras mounted at various angles on the ceilings and specific machines finely capture and measure vertical and horizontal movement, while computer programs spit out the data onto desktop computers and monitors. Students can learn from scientific research and train to become the best strength and conditioning specialist before they graduate, guaranteeing employers a highly specialized skillset.

For more information, visit [www.umary.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/biomechanics](http://www.umary.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/biomechanics), email [enroll@umary.edu](mailto:enroll@umary.edu) or call 701-355-8030. ☎

# Operation Round Up rolls on



An Operation Round Up grant recipient, Books for Babies will add smiles to new parents as they hand them a book, "On the Night You Were Born." "A Barnes & Noble customer approached me with the idea, and I knew it could be done," says the program's organizer, Linda Ness, explaining how the idea surfaced.

**D**o you ever think about how 1 million dollars is accumulated? The obvious answer is one penny at a time. When thousands of Capital Electric Cooperative members combine their pennies each month, the results are astounding.

As cooperative members, we know how important it is to be part of a community. Those who participate in the Operation Round Up program truly reflect how a community helps those members who need it.

Capital Electric's Operation Round Up program was started in 1997, and participation has increased every year since. The program is about to reach the \$1 million mark in cumulative donations granted to meet community needs.

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 with important needs.

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

Longtime co-op member LeAna Hug has served

on the Operation Round Up board of directors for several years.

"I have seen Operation Round Up help many individuals and nonprofit organizations. At the check distributions, I have seen organization workers interact and realize they can benefit their clients by working together. All the good work enabled by the Operation Round Up grants is only possible because of the generosity of Capital Electric members," Hug says.

The amount collected has increased dramatically and now totals approximately \$75,000 annually. Each application is limited to a grant of \$2,500. However, the board of directors can increase the grant level in special cases. During 2024, the board has granted \$70,500, 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 and we will be happy to add you to the list of 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 difference in our communities. €



***This group of Operation Round Up check recipients is an indication of how much good your rounded up Capital Electric Cooperative bills are doing in the community. We thank you for your continued commitment to yet another example of the cooperative way.***



Members showing an interest in the co-op's activities is the purpose of the Member Advisory Committee.

## Member engagement vital to cooperative

Operating an electric cooperative is a community effort. Co-op employees and managers handle the day-to-day work, and the board of directors oversees this process. But beyond these public-facing figures, thousands of members have voices to be heard.

Capital Electric Cooperative welcomes a contingent of these co-op members to pose their questions and share ideas to be heard and discussed. Those serving on the Member Advisory Committee (MAC) meet twice each year to become educated on current co-op topics and express their honest opinions relating to those topics.

In September, the MAC met at Capital Electric

headquarters to continue this tradition of member involvement.

"We welcome our members and look forward to an open discussion of issues we face and how our efforts are making a difference. We expect honesty, as that's the way we learn," explains General Manager Paul Fitterer.

A wide variety of topics populated the agenda in this session, including co-op financial statement details, legislative issues, updates on the power grid, available grants, the future of data centers and cryptocurrency needs on the system, market alerts and rates. These topics are covered in detail, as everyone should be heard.

Capital Electric's communications methods are discussed as well.

"We do our best to provide all data to ensure transparency to members. Between our monthly local pages in *North Dakota Living*, our website ([www.capitalelec.com](http://www.capitalelec.com)), our social media presence, billing inserts and direct letters to members, we feel we are covering all bases," says Manager of Communications, Public Relations and IT Wes Engbrecht.

When members call the office, they will speak to a person on a 24-hour basis. This is a service we feel is vitally important to being heard.

If you are interested in joining the Member Advisory Committee, please call Wes at 701-712-7923. A member will serve a three-year term on this committee. We appreciate feedback from all members at any time, as we are your cooperative and we are here to serve you. ☺

## Touchstone Energy Cooperatives greet smiling Norsk Høstfest attendees

Countless people from across the United States, Canada and other countries impatiently wait for the Norsk Høstfest each September. Minot welcomes their smiling faces, and Touchstone Energy Cooperatives provide their own special welcome.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, led by the staff of Verendrye Electric Cooperative in Velva and Minot, bake and serve 20,000 cookies during the four-day event. Commemorative buttons and prize drawings are also a part of the co-op booth. Attendees follow the smell of the chocolate chip cookies in droves, as

co-ops try to keep up with demand.

Norsk Høstfest celebrates Scandinavian culture and heritage of the five Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Each nation is represented in one of the halls where the festival takes place, and each is named after that country's capital city. The individual styles of each country's entertainment, food, clothes, art and jewelry can be found throughout Norsk Høstfest and in the Scandinavian Heritage Park, the only park in the world representing all five Nordic countries. ☺



## Update on January rate increase

**A**s noted at the June annual meeting, Capital Electric Cooperative is facing significant cost pressures for 2025, mostly due to rate increases from our wholesale power providers, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and Central Power Electric Cooperative.

Basin Electric is experiencing significant load growth and is already in the process of building new power generation and high-voltage transmission in North Dakota.

WAPA finds itself having to buy more power on the market due to inadequate water levels needed to satisfy its contracted power.

Finally, Central Power Electric is investing in substation and transmission infrastructure, including Capital Electric's Menoken substation and the substation expansion in the city of Lincoln. Central Power is also building an outpost in northeast Bismarck, which will locate transmission lineworkers and substation electricians in Bismarck to better support Capital Electric's high-voltage operations.

Overall, the required increase will average 8%, but will vary by each service. For more detail, including rates, visit [www.capitalelec.com/rates](http://www.capitalelec.com/rates). Additionally, members will be mailed a customized letter that explains their expected impact.

So, what is Capital Electric doing to minimize the effect?

- We've recently been awarded two federal infrastructure grants for grid reliability. These two grants, amounting to \$1.5 million, will offset a significant portion of Capital Electric's construction work for 2025, which reduces depreciation and

interest costs moving forward. We have also applied for two additional reliability grants.

- We've scoured our income statement and identified areas where we can save on expenses. Some examples include sending Capital Electric's annual report as part of another mailing, sending ballots to only those members who wish to vote, eliminating two software platforms and performing more of our own tree trimming and snow removal.

### What can you do to reduce your bill?

The cooperative offers several strategies to assist your cost-mitigation efforts. For instance, you may benefit from the optional coincident peak rate, adding a load controller to avoid peak costs, pre-cooling or using timers. If you are interested in pursuing mitigation efforts, please visit our website, [www.capitalelec.com/opportunities-save](http://www.capitalelec.com/opportunities-save), email [cec-rates@capitalelec.com](mailto:cec-rates@capitalelec.com) or call 701-223-1513 and we will be happy to assist you.

### What else can help?

Believe it or not, printing, envelopes and postage, at \$150,000 annually, is still a significant part of our costs, even though electronic options are available. Contact our office or login to SmartHub to go paperless. If you go paperless, you will be notified electronically when your bill is ready, and you can open your SmartHub app to see the details if desired. While you're there, please make sure your contact information is updated.

We don't take these increases lightly and are here to help you with any questions you may have. ☺

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Capital Electric Cooperative was held on Friday, Sept. 27, at Vollmer Angus Ranch, Wing. 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 Kyle Tschosik and Kayla Pulvermacher reviewed the August 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 August financial and statistical report to the board.

Revenue was behind the budgeted amount for August, as \$4,072,605 was generated in comparison with the budgeted figure of \$4,194,342 (unfavorable variance of \$121,737 or 2.9%).

Capital Electric's August load factor was behind the budgeted value by 1.04%.

The operating margin for August was \$-97,072, which was ahead of the budgeted amount of \$-290,595. The total margin for August was \$-83,192, which was ahead of the budgeted amount of \$-157,052.

Capital Electric began billing 44 new services in August. This brings active services to 22,445 versus 22,131 at this time last year, or a net increase of 314 accounts over the most recent 12 months.

The cash flow statement was reviewed.

**Estate Retirements:** Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by management, seven estate retirements totaling \$6,828.51 were approved.

**Operations Report:** Holzer reviewed the written report from the operations department. Holzer reported crews worked to retire 1 mile

of idle overhead line, completed annual regulator inspections and worked to quickly restore power due to late August thunderstorms that resulted in six broken Capital Electric poles and nine broken Central Power transmission poles.

**Safety Report:** The safety report was reviewed. There were no lost-time accidents since the last board meeting. A North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) safety instructor, Mike Koenig, performed field observations on Sept. 19. Without objection, the safety report was approved.

**Engineering Services Report:** Owen reviewed the written report from engineering services. Sixteen work orders were completed in August. Owen reported on ongoing and upcoming projects, including continued three-phase extension work for Summit Point development, repair of damaged circuit breakers at the Gibbs substation and updates on grant funding for the conversion of three-phase overhead line to underground along Highway 36 near Wilton.

**Energy Services:** Schaffner reviewed the energy services report. Thirty-nine service orders were completed in August. Schaffner reported he presented to the Capital Electric Member Advisory Committee meeting. Energy services works with homeowners on HVAC equipment projects and work is completed for EV training at the N.D. State Fire School.

**Communications and IT:** Engbrecht reviewed the communications and IT report. Engbrecht reported on the recipients of Operation Round Up funds, attendance at the Chamber of Commerce Local Issues Committee and review of cybersecurity topics.

**2023 Tax Filings:** Steen reviewed IRS Form 990 and IRS Form 990T. Following discussion, authorization of the filings were approved.

**Policies:** Steen reviewed Policy IV-01-03 Coincident Peak Rate. Following discussion, the policy was approved. Steen reviewed proposed Policy E-25 Employee Education and Assistance. Following discussion, the policy was approved.

**2025 Budget:** Steen reviewed the 2025 budget, and no action was taken. Steen reviewed the need for a rate adjustment for commercial, heat, CP and demand. Following discussion, the

policies were approved as presented.

**Basin Electric Power Cooperative:** Troy Presser reported on Basin Electric matters and discussion and questions were presented to Presser by the board on Basin Electric's rate increases, cost-cutting efforts and the status of the Dakota Gasification Company. Fitterer reported on Basin Electric matters.

**Central Power Electric Cooperative:** Dave Charles reported on the September board meeting.

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

**NDAREC:** Fitterer reviewed an update on a combined meeting with North Dakota electric and broadband cooperative managers, and an update on the REPAC meeting.

**Mid-West Electric Consumers Association:** Fitterer reported on the upcoming annual meeting.

**National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC):** Fitterer reported on the recent NISC member information conference. ☺

## CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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