



**Capital
Electric**
COOPERATIVE

SEPTEMBER 2024

A true celebration is not complete without fantastic fireworks rising at midnight above this beautiful Wilton mural on the Memorial Hall.

Wilton's 125th anniversary celebration



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Capital Electric Cooperative member **Randy Olson** leads the Wilton Express Riders trail ride. The trail riders left Randy and SuAnn's house south of Wilton and made their way north. Four of the trail riders accepted the governor's proclamation at the North Dakota Capitol earlier in the day.



Wilton celebrates in a big way

BY WES ENGBRECHT

When a small North Dakota town reaches a milestone, it must be celebrated. Wilton celebrated in a big way in July to honor its 125th anniversary.

Think about 125 years ago when our ancestors immigrated to North Dakota and what was happening in the world at that time. Just as in many small North Dakota communities, Wilton's early residents were comprised of a melting pot of Ukrainians, Germans and Scandinavians. Many of us living here today still recognize our heritage.

At the turn of the 20th century, there were approximately 310,000 people in the state. Today, nearly 790,000 residents populate our state. North Dakota does not have a metropolis area where most residents live, and most current residents like it that way.

The city of Wilton's population holds steady at about 750. In 1920, 108 people called it home. The

city was platted in 1899, when the railroad reached the area. When founded, the town was named after Wilton, Maine, the hometown of an early settler.

The current mayor and lifelong resident, LeeAnn Domonoske Kellar, began the 125th celebration planning process two years ago. Using social media, she enlisted the help of many community members who had good ideas and the will to start planning.

The planning team promoted the celebration online, in the *Bismarck Tribune* and on KX News. Most importantly, they drafted and mailed an invitation to their long list of Wilton alumni, which was a key group they knew would attend.

"The group researched similar celebrations from other towns in North Dakota. One of the ideas we borrowed was to request a governor's proclamation to recognize the 125th year. A group of the trail ride team trailered their horses to Bismarck and onto the state Capitol grounds, where they were presented



A local band, All Aces, provided entertainment on Saturday evening. Capital Electric Cooperative member and All Aces lead singer **Travis Sorch** took a break from the street dance to enjoy the festivities with his son, **Trigg**.

with the document. This was an important part of recognizing the anniversary," Kellar says.

Later, those riders were joined by approximately 40 to 50 other riders and nine horse-drawn wagons.



The streets are lined with folks of all ages waiting for the parade to pass by. Small-town parades bring everyone together to start the party.

They made their way from Randy and SuAnn Olson's house north toward Wilton. The trail ride was a much-anticipated event and worked out well for those involved, in spite of the hot weather.

At least 2,000 attendees for the weekend events cleaned out the food vendors' inventory and posed for a community photo taken by a drone in the middle of town.

What seemed like an unlimited number of events happened during the weekend of July 12-14. Saturday's community parade attracted many folks, with the candy-seeking children being among the most interested crowd.

A beautiful sunny day attracted a downtown full of smiling faces enjoying the reverie. Capital Electric Cooperative joined the parade fun with a large bucket truck and by tossing candy to the crowd. Our co-op members were everywhere, and making that connection to them is so important.

Whether you are a resident or a visitor, this part of North Dakota brings a hometown feel. You feel like you are part of a personal experience in a close-knit community.

Midnight fireworks provided an exciting and well-attended conclusion to Saturday's festivities. The remaining opportunity for fellowship happened at Sunday morning's community pancake breakfast. Sounds like small-town North Dakota, doesn't it?

Capital Electric congratulates the city of Wilton and its residents on this 125th milestone. We appreciate the opportunity to provide electricity to many local people. Thank you for your continued work to keep your community going strong! ☺



Crew members pulled grapes off the stems to provide the fruit portion of the meal.

Dream Center provides rewarding opportunity

BY WES ENGBRECHT

Opportunities to share our time helping others are quite rewarding. Some of Capital Electric Cooperative's board members, their spouses and employees donated time to a worthy cause in July. The time was well spent at the Dream Center in Bismarck, cooking and serving a hot meal for approximately 200 people.

At this valuable community organization, meals are provided every day of the year, including holidays and during storms. Those served depend on a hot meal no matter what day or situation.

The Dream Center required funds and staffing to cover food expenses, kitchen supplies and utility costs. In March, the Dream Center was awarded an Operation Round Up grant from the Capital Electric Charitable Trust. The trust's board of directors

approved the request to provide four banquet meals. As unbelievable as the numbers sound, the Dream Center provided 76,000 free meals during 2023. Thousands of these meals were provided to Capital Electric members.

In addition to daily meals, the Dream Center distributes groceries to low-income households. It also has entities, such as Northland Health, Job Service and Bridging the Dental Gap, onsite to provide easy access to other important services.

Its vision is to be a comprehensive resource center connecting people with services in the community that addresses hunger, poverty, unemployment, nutrition, health/dental care, abuse, finances, addiction, faith and more. Its programs are provided free of charge with financial help from



The Capital Electric Cooperative team was the kitchen and dining room crew for the evening. It was exhausting, yet rewarding, work for all.



Everyone loves ice cream, and Engineering Manager **Greg Owen** and his hard-working daughter, **Eliza**, brought smiles to faces all night.

local communities.

Why does Capital Electric get involved?

No matter how hard you work, when you are given the opportunity to interact with people who may currently be in need, it's a gift. The saying, "people help people," is something we should all embrace. Capital Electric has been helping our members for 78 years by providing them with electricity every day, even during the worst weather conditions.

In the case of the Dream Center, as much as we provided help to others, those we served provided insight on maintaining strength, resiliency and gratitude.

While eating his meal, a young man named Barrett provided great insight to the strength he has needed in his life.

"I came here from Vegas, mainly because I didn't like what was going on in Sin City. I lived in Bismarck before, and I respect the people and the job opportunities," he said. Barrett was here without a home and without much money. He already has two job interviews arranged and is anxious to make a life here. His smile was all I needed to understand him, and his final comment said it all: "I am here and alive, and that's a great place to start."

Making a difference in the communities we serve is an important aspect of the cooperative mission, commitment to community. We will continue to focus on that commitment in the future. €



Putting smiles on fifth- and sixth-grade students' faces during our office tour for the Light of Christ summer kids club was a pleasure. The tour was part of the "career exploration" portion of the program.

Light of Christ students tour headquarters

BY WES ENGBRECHT

As we all remember, leaving the classroom for a tour was a positive learning experience, but also a great way to have fun together. Elementary school students from the Light of Christ summer kids club visited Capital Electric Cooperative's headquarters for a facility tour in July.

"We are teaching students during career exploration that job opportunities are out there, but you have to do the work to make it happen," explained Renee Vokal, group leader. "I explain to them that if you do what you love, you will never work a day in your life!"

The students were shown the shop and equipment yard, as well as the warehouse where our water heaters and other consumer products are stored. The big trucks and the all-electric Ford Lightning were big hits. The hands-on experience was exciting for the kids.

Some of the students expressed interest in working for a cooperative in some capacity. They realized there are several opportunities, and they commented on how much fun it appeared the employees were having.

"They are still talking about how much fun it was," Vokal said following the tour.

Coming off the bus, the first student made it clear that her mom worked for Montana-Dakota Utilities. As they left, she admitted we had some cool stuff here. Her comment reinforced the fact utilities work together to make sure everyone receives the best possible service.

Thank you to System Supervisor Lance Diebold, Warehouse Materials Coordinator Seth Lothspeich and Energy Services Technician Jared Nygaard for taking the lead on this enjoyable event. €

Music teacher enjoys reduced electricity costs

BY WES ENGBRECHT



Longtime Capital Electric Cooperative member **David Poffenberger** prepares for another piano lesson. He has been teaching piano and trumpet since high school.

Music is considered the universal language, and Capital Electric Cooperative member David Poffenberger and his wife, Stacey, live that out every day. The couple teach piano and trumpet lessons to adults and students in their home. David has been teaching music since high school. In addition, he has a master's degree in education from the University of Mary.

Working from home has many benefits, such as saving money on studio rent, travel costs and more. Another factor to consider about working from home is the increased use and cost of electricity. The Poffenbergers use more kilowatt-hours at home, but a lot of it is off-peak consumption, which is billed at a lower rate.

Capital Electric Business Manager Luke Steen utilizes David's music expertise for his children. After a conversation about his water heater and electricity usage, Luke suggested David talk to Energy Services Manager Josh Schaffner.

Upon review of their situation, Schaffner determined

they would benefit from our coincident peak rate. In October 2023, they transitioned to the new rate structure. Since the change, the Poffenbergers have saved between \$55 and \$60 per month. During the last nine months, they have saved a total of \$527, a significant savings.

How did they do it?

"During the peak time periods called by Capital Electric, we don't use our dryer, dishwasher or oven. We use our microwave during that time. We also move our thermostat from 76 to 78 degrees during that time. Otherwise, it's business as usual. You sure can't teach lessons in the dark," David says. David obviously is pleased with the results of these changes and hasn't lost his sense of humor.

David and his wife live north of Bismarck and have two children, Chloe, 17, and Chanson, 12. As you would expect, both children are proficient in music.

If you would like to find out more about the possibility of decreasing your electricity costs, please call us at 701-223-1513 and ask for our energy services department. ☺



The sign on the door recognizes the value of music and encourages students with a positive welcome.

Board minute excerpts JULY 22

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Capital Electric Cooperative was held on Monday, July 22, at Capital Electric headquarters, 7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck.

All directors were present at that time except Director Greg Dehne.

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, and Attorney Zachary Pelham of Pearce Durick PLLC, who acted as recording secretary.

Financial Review: Prior to the board meeting, Directors Dwight Wrangham and Bret Weiland reviewed the June check register and expenditures. The financial review was approved as presented.

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

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

Revenue was behind the budgeted amount for June, as \$3,704,425 was generated in comparison with the budgeted figure of \$4,016,033 (unfavorable variance of \$311,608 or 7.8%).

Capital Electric Cooperative's June net load factor was behind the budgeted value by 2.04%.

The operating margin for June was \$-206,937, which was ahead of the budgeted amount of \$-323,029. The total margin for June was \$352,782, which was ahead of the budgeted amount of \$-304,618.

Capital Electric began billing 36 new services in June. This brings active services to 22,327 versus 22,087 at this time last year, or a net increase of 270 accounts over the most recent 12 months.

Estate Retirements: Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by management, a total payment of \$762.04 of capital credits to two member estates was approved.

Quarterly Write-offs: After discussion, total write-offs of \$6,258.76 from the second quarter were approved. The total 12-month write-offs are \$25,909.84.

Operations Report: Holzer reviewed the written report from the operations department. Holzer reported crews completed an overhead to underground line conversion south of the Bismarck airport, monthly substation inspections were completed and four three-phase transformers were set.

Safety Report: The safety report was reviewed. There were no lost-time accidents since the last board meeting.

Engineering Services Report: Owen reviewed the written report from engineering services. Fourteen works orders were completed in June. Owen reported on ongoing and upcoming projects, including three-phase extension to Summit Point development near Hawk Tree, preliminary design and easement collection for an overhead to underground line conversion project south of the Bismarck landfill, and replacement of old cable at Imperial Valley west of the airport.

Energy Services: Schaffner reviewed the energy services report. Forty-eight service orders were completed in June. Schaffner reported on ongoing efforts to help and respond to members questions related to rates, update on load control transponders changeout process, and work for a member on potential installation of a geothermal heat pump.

Communications and IT: Engbrecht reviewed the communications and IT report. Engbrecht reported on Capital Electric's participation in local parades, volunteer work at the Dream Center and a meeting with Chamber leaders on the local issues committee.

Budget: Steen reviewed equity management strategies and an overview of the 2025 budgeting process.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative: Fitterer reported on Basin Electric matters, including likely increases to 2025 rates and the upcoming August

annual meeting. Dehne was selected as Capital Electric's delegate, and Sara Vollmer was selected as an alternate to Basin Electric's annual meeting.

Central Power Electric Cooperative: Dave Charles reported on the upcoming July board meeting. Charles was selected as Capital Electric's delegate for District 3 caucus at the Basin Electric annual meeting; Kyle Tschosik was selected as an alternate.

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

North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives: Vilhauer reported on the summer meeting.

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA): Fitterer reported on the NRECA regional meeting set for Sept. 16-18 in Minneapolis, Minn.

National Information Solutions Cooperative: Fitterer reported on the recent board meeting.

CoBank: Fitterer reported on the CoBank director election. ☺

CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

7401 Yukon Drive
Bismarck, ND 58503
Website: www.capitalelec.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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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

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