

Sheridan Electric Cooperative

LiveWire

Sheridan Electric Cooperative - Medicine Lake, Mont. 406-789-2231

WHAT'S INSIDE?

- Youth Tour essay and interview process
- Boom or bust
- Statistical report

Thoughts from a Washington, D.C., Youth Tour applicant

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

The Washington, D.C., Youth Tour applicants have gone through the screening process and interviews, and choices have been made. I had the privilege of reading the applications. One applicant made an excellent attempt to describe what it would take to engage our youth in the cooperative world.

I fully believe that some of our

cooperatives are doing some of her suggestions already, but the concepts this young lady described were interesting.

The first idea described was a cooperative youth day.

Held on a school day, it would show what our cooperative does on a day-to-day basis. We would have something special for the kindergarten through fifth-graders, something different for the sixth-through eighth-graders, and then something more “hands on” for the older groups.

Expanding on this concept, the younger students would get exposed to writing and learning something about a cooperative, see bucket trucks, feel the equipment used by our workforce, and learn about how electricity works.

Older students would see firsthand how to construct something onsite at the cooperative. We have training poles which are used for certification training for our lineworkers.

Students could construct electrical circuits with our electricians, or help build a cross-arm with the lineworkers. In essence, they would

learn what the trade encompasses, which may stimulate some interest for the future.

This essay revealed something that I had never thought about and something that most kids are using these days: the creation of an Instagram account. It was suggested that this account be geared toward young people by posting events, projects and other great things that people of the cooperative world are doing every day.

Facebook and the website are very good venues for the posting of information, but it appears that we are missing an entire segment of our membership by not embracing these additional technologies.

Throughout the reading of all of the essays, I found that this topic for the Youth Tour stimulated some great responses from the younger groups.

We are always asking ourselves how we can engage the younger generation into the cooperative world. I fully understand now that these folks are, or always have been, telling us the whole time. We just were not listening.

I believe what really drove this topic home this morning was when one of our long-term employees said that her parents were members for many years, and until her interview here, she had never stepped foot into the building.

So what is wrong with this picture I have just painted?

Thoughts for the day. ■



Tips for Washington, D.C., Youth Tour interview of candidates

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

Every year, Sheridan Electric Cooperative uses a process to find the best two candidates for the Washington, D.C., Youth Tour. The Youth Tour is an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to learn about the nation's capital. As a tool to groom future leadership for our area and beyond, we have augmented the program to teach life skills beyond school.

The cooperative has added a professional interview process to give young people the chance to learn how to conduct themselves in a real job interview.

All applicants, members or non-members, go through the process and gain some feedback on what to improve upon if confronted with a real-life interview for a job.

Listed below is the letter that goes to all superintendents prior to the interview process. This information is passed to each young person who will be interviewed.

They are to prepare, just like any job interview. We are in the fourth year of this process and have seen lots of young people – some of them are repeats from the previous year. It is refreshing to see that the repeats from the prior year clearly remember the feedback from the previous year and have worked on those skills.

Interview questions

To all who have shown interest in the Washington, D.C., Youth Tour, we will be conducting a behavior-based interview with every student who has applied. This interview process will be handled as a job interview with direct feedback on how to improve for any interview process throughout any industry.

The first part of the process will evaluate how you present yourself for the interview. Professional attire is necessary to set the right impression that the candidate is serious about the position for which they are interviewing.

Secondly, prepare for the interview. Study what Sheridan Electric Cooperative is, its history and what we do. The website can help all candidates with this, as well as the Facebook page.

Next, study the following questions and prepare yourself on how you will answer them. Keep in mind

that these questions will not necessarily be asked in the order they are given, and may be repeated in a different manner throughout the interview. Always remember that preparation and practice are the key to a great performance.

1. What can you tell us about Sheridan Electric and what we do?
2. What are your future goals? (What are your plans after school?)
3. Tell me about three strengths you possess.
4. Tell me about three weaknesses you possess.
5. Define leadership for us.
6. Why should we send you to Washington, D.C., to represent Sheridan Electric Cooperative? (In other words, why should we hire you?)

These questions will be asked as open-ended questions that will lead to further questions, thus a behavior-based interview. Your answers take us to the next level from an interviewer standpoint.

Some things to practice and keep in mind with any behavior-based interview:

- If you have a question that may take some thought, take the time. Do not get flustered.
- Eye contact.
- Comfortable and confident posture while interviewing.
- Direct responses that are loud enough to be heard.

If the applicant is ready for how to turn an interview around, I will teach you that. Some applicants are not ready for this.

Good luck to all applicants. ■

Boom or bust: The changing economic landscape

BY SCOTT WESTLUND



Oil booms for northeastern Montana and northwestern North Dakota are not new to the history of this region. From the late 1950s to the present, this area has seen the boom of the industry and then, unfortunately, the bust. In both instances, small communities are dealt challenges to overcome, from housing a booming population to the leftover infrastructure when they leave.

Not new to these events, the communities that we serve weather the storms that both extremes present. In late 2009, hydraulic “fracking” took hold in the Bakken, creating an oil boom much like the boom in the late 1980s.

This again stimulated the communities to mobilize infrastructure to support the needs of many people.

Sheridan Electric was dealt its own

set of hurdles to overcome by ensuring that the electric needs of the core membership were met, and yet build for the commercial needs as well.

This forced the cooperative to modify a policy called “aid to construction,” so members had to pay for any new builds before any construction started. On the commercial side, this protected the cooperative from any heavy debt burdens that always come with large-scale builds. Housing developments, man camps, those needing long line construction and large company headquarters were all required to pay upfront for any line construction. Also during this time, our core membership was required to follow the same policy, forcing a change from past requirements

Some of these large-scale projects took hold and did well, while some others found it hard to survive once

the economic landscape changed and the boom faded.

Within our service territory, the city of Bainville annexed a large portion of a man camp and housing complex. The housing complex now has many houses unoccupied, and the man camp is all but deserted.

The city of Culbertson also had a large housing development that now has sparsely rented properties.

In both cases, Sheridan Electric built large infrastructures to power these projects, and in both examples had the money upfront to do so. Again, it was to protect the cooperative from a heavy debt burden and support the needs at that time.

The list of these two examples goes on and on.

In 2012, the cooperative identified a need to build a transmission line from just north of Bainville to Fortuna and on to Ambrose. This was a reaction to the oil boom, plus an opportunity to replace a tired old line that developed many outages over the years. In this case, the transmission line is primarily paid for by a charge to the oil industry. Very little affects the core membership, but the reliability has improved greatly.

You can call it boom to bust, or we can label it as a simple changing economic landscape cycle. The 1980s and the 2000s showed the area prosperity and famine. It has also shown us that we have a great natural resource to be developed even further than it has been.

We are fortunate to live in such an area where opportunities are born. ■

Lighting to be given away



In the spirit of efficiency, Sheridan Electric Cooperative is giving away light-emitting diodes (LEDs) each month. Each month's winner will receive 12 new LED bulbs.

So this month, take a moment to complete and mail the coupon. Maybe you'll be this month's lucky winner and save on your energy costs. Good luck. ■

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Account number: _____

Congratulations to **Randy Snellman** for winning this month's light giveaway.



Sheridan Electric Cooperative STATISTICAL REPORT

	December 2016	December 2017
Total miles of line	2,833	2,831
Consumers billed	3,092	3,100
Kilowatt-hours purchased	15,009,277	13,975,106
Kilowatt-hours sold	13,559,943	12,372,034
Average KWH per residential consumer	2,055	1,665
Average bill per residential consumer	\$170	\$135.81
Cost of purchased power	\$707,518	\$673,893
Margins year to date	\$3,830,595	\$4,174,361

LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	December 2016	December 2017
Weather	24	9
Age or deterioration	2	1
Animals and public	5	0
Power supplier	2	0
Equipment	0	0

SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	December 2016	December 2017	Year to date
Pole installations	0	8	113
New construction	0 ft.	92 ft.	72,614 ft.
Miles driven	22,372	18,690	318,635
New accounts	0	2	48
Accounts retired	0	5	15

SHERIDAN ELECTRIC CO-OP

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TRUSTEES

Wayne Deubner, President Brockton, Mont.
Rod Smith, V. President Dagmar, Mont.
Rob Rust, Sec. Alkabo, N.D.
Kerrey Heppner, Treas. Plentywood, Mont.
Alan Danelson, Trustee Scobey, Mont.
Andrew Dethman, Trustee Brockton, Mont.
Rick A. Hansen, Trustee Froid, Mont.
Harlan Skillingberg, Trustee Plentywood, Mont.

EMPLOYEES

Rick Knick Manager
Riley Tommerup Office Mgr./Accountant
Scott Westlund Marketing/Member Service Manager
Pam Lund Billing Supervisor
Jamie Ator Accountant
Lisa Salveold Office Assistant
Tasha Ronnes Customer Service Representative
Torie Waller Work Order Clerk
Kory Opp Line Superintendent
Bryan Lenz Line Foreman
Nick Oelkers Staking Tech
Tim Erth Operator/Utilityman
Josh Johnson Electrical General Foreman
Tom Hinds Electrical Foreman
Steve Augustine Line Sub Foreman
Tristan Erth Apprentice Electrician
Ronnie Gillett Journeyman Lineman
Dan Roeder Journeyman Lineman
Shawn Sansaver Journeyman Lineman
Josh Marottek Journeyman Lineman
Bill Baillie Apprentice Lineman
Josh Ming Apprentice Lineman
Jim Bakken Material Specialist
Vicky Haddix Custodian

OUTAGES • CALL 24 HOURS A DAY
406-789-2231

OFFICE HOURS: 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative