

Sheridan Electric Cooperative

# LiveWire

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

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

- **Two go to Washington, D.C.**
- **Presentation sends a message**
- **Statistical report**

## How did they do it?

BY SCOTT WESTLUND



I have often wondered how the early settlers came to this portion of the United States and made a life. The photos I have seen show sod houses in the middle of nowhere.

So how did they do it? How did they bear the loneliness and isolation of no people and the harsh weather that the eastern Montana plains offer?

As we go through the storms of winter, heavy blowing snows and 30- to 40-below temperatures, and not a thing to burn for heat, I find that we are spoiled compared to the lives they had to endure.

After studying the history, I found there were several answers for heating. Hay or grasses were often twisted into tight bundles called “cats.” These burned slowly due to the tightness of the bundle, but had to be monitored

quite frequently.

Another method of heating was the use of buffalo chips. It was said that before winter, the family would spend several weekends gathering these from the prairie for fuel. When buffalo became scarce, cow chips were used when found.

Corn was also used. If the prices of corn were down, the entire corn plant was used after being dried. If prices were up, the cob was used as a fuel source. A problem quickly became apparent with corn, as the resins in the cob burned very hot, burning holes in stoves of that time.

The use of sod for homes might seem a poor way to house a family on the great plains, but after study I found that they were very easy to heat. The sod walls and roof were a good insulator from the cold and held heat well. The thick root structure of the sod dried into very compact, brick-like materials for the home. Stacked on a foundation, and supported by scarce wood, the sod proved to be what it took to withstand the brutal weather in northeastern Montana.

These pioneers were built of solid stuff. They were beyond tough, and did not quit. Some of the names of these folks live on today, within the membership of this cooperative, still living that pioneer mentality every day. ■

## Energy Share benefits Montana

Energy Share of Montana is a private nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to help Montanans, faced with energy emergencies, meet their needs and move to self-reliance. In the past 34 years, Energy Share has distributed \$19 million in emergency bill assistance to nearly 57,000 families.

Often, your neighbors experience a financial emergency when unexpected expense occurs and they are unable

to pay their home energy bill. By donating to Energy Share, you help them stay warm. When an application is approved, payment is made directly to the energy provider on behalf of the client.

Other programs are available, but this is the one most commonly used. If you have further questions about this program, or any other programs that we may have, please give us a call. ■

## Two go to Washington, D.C., in 2018

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

From 11 applicants, two emerge victorious in an intensive screening and interview process that is designed not only to glean the best to represent Sheridan Electric Cooperative, but also to teach life skills for interviewing in the real world.

Sydney Labatte and Katie Nielsen were the two victorious individuals who showed strong interviewing skills, even with the most direct and tough questions posed to any applicant.

They will represent Sheridan Electric Cooperative during the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., this summer.

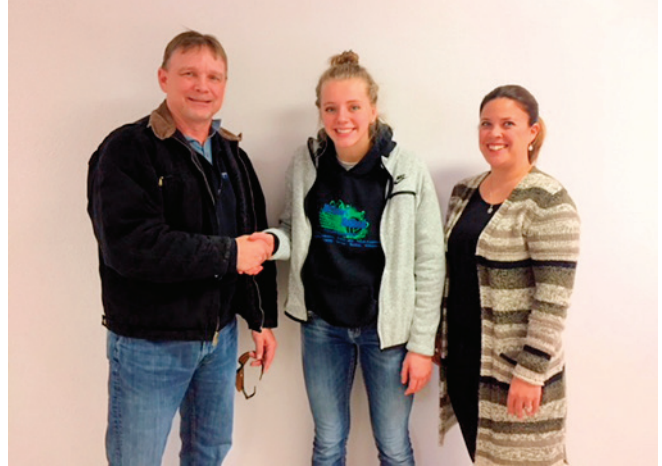
Sydney Labatte is the daughter of Grant and Laura Labatte of Froid. Sydney is a sophomore who had no prior interview training for this event. Once the applicants were interviewed in Froid, Jamie Ator and I started our long work to glean the best for our representatives. It was clear at the beginning that this individual was in the running for one of these coveted spots. As a side note, Sydney's sister, Haley, went through the same process and emerged victorious to represent Sheridan Electric in 2017.

Katie Nielsen is the daughter of Eric and Cindy Nielsen of Westby. Katie was an applicant last year and went through the intensive interview process that ended with some feedback for her when faced with interviews in the future, such as eye contact, speaking clearly and showing confidence (how to sit, display knowledge of the material and how to drive home the topics). Katie worked on these points. With this knowledge, Katie soared above the rest by displaying strong interview skills and sent a message that she was the one to send on the trip to represent Sheridan Electric.

All of the applicants we talked to were very strong. It was apparent that the Westby school prepared the young people for this event. I was told that they conducted multiple mock interviews to prepare for our arrival. In all cases and in all schools where I had talked to the individual last year, they all remembered what we had told them to improve and they did.

In almost every instance, both Jamie and I were looking at each other and saying, "Wow, they remembered!"

It was difficult to come up with distinct winners of the contest, but we did. Congratulations to all contestants and the job you did for us. Well-done. ■



*Sydney Labatte and Principal Janessa Parenteau*



*Katie Nielsen*

# Presentation sends a message

BY SCOTT WESTLUND



In past articles, I have written about the need to build future leaders within our communities. The theme has always been, “Who will take over when we are gone?”

We are continuously looking for the next candidate as a future leader. Our eyes are always on who would be the best to take over someday as a board member, manager, IT leader or accountant for this cooperative and beyond.

In late November, I attended a school board meeting in Culbertson. During the meeting, an agenda item included a presentation from Aaliyah Moon. As a cheerleader for the school, she was handed a project that had been in process for many years. This project consisted of funding new cheerleading uniforms to replace the aging uniforms the school was presently using. As a leader of this group, she had attained some high praise for her performances. Her goal was \$1,100 to pay for the upgrades to the program.

As I watched this individual present her proposal to the school board, I was amazed at the ease in which she

performed. With no professional experience in public speaking, she delivered an outstanding performance. The way she used the space to move while she talked, to the hand gestures that drove home a point, it was mesmerizing. With a waning budget, the board found \$600 of the \$1,100 she needed to complete the project.

As the meeting progressed, I took my time to let the school know that Sheridan Electric Cooperative is always there to help with a school's need. We may say no, but always do hear the request, as we know school budgets are tight and also know that future leadership is within these walls.

At the end of the meeting, I found Aaliyah Moon sitting across from me asking how we could possibly help with her project.

Now, the cooperative does not usually invest in uniforms of any kind, or sponsorships other than tournaments, but we do invest in leadership and the future.

Sensing an outstanding future leader, I invited her to the cooperative board meeting that would be held in late November to personally do a presentation and ask the board for the remaining \$500 for her project. She accepted.

In late November, Aaliyah and one of her teammates came to the cooperative just before the board meeting. Both dressed as though involved in a professional interview, they were prepared.

Aaliyah came to my office and stated that she was nervous and wanted to know how to address a group she did not know.

My answer was simply, “Be yourself,

and drive home your topic. Answer any questions that come up, but always land the answer back on the topic you are there for. Measure your audience and structure your talk around what you see from them.”

I would say that she hit a home run.

Within minutes of her finishing, the board approved the remaining \$500 to complete her project. I would also add that this project had been ongoing for years, until Aaliyah was given the task. She completed this task in four weeks, just with her and her teammates' drive and talents.

Now, you would wonder why we invested in this project in the first place. The answer is very simple.

We really don't care about the uniforms and how they will be used, but we do care about finding and grooming future leadership within our region. This is an outstanding individual who possesses unique traits that will be a future leader within this region.

This was our way of forcing someone of that caliber to step outside of her comfort zone and become something larger, which she did. She has now been exposed to the leadership of Sheridan Electric and she did an outstanding job learning what it takes to do a presentation in front of an unknown crowd. She also learned that she has a talent to persuade and engage people toward a goal.

It is Sheridan Electric's way of investing in the future. It is no different than the professional interviews we do for the Washington, D.C., Youth Tour and scholarships.

This is about the legacies we leave behind as a foundation for the future.

Very nice, Miss Moon. ■

# 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 **Gary Rust** for winning this month's light giveaway.*



## Sheridan Electric Cooperative STATISTICAL REPORT

	January 2017	January 2018
Total miles of line	2,833	2,831
Consumers billed	3,091	3,098
Kilowatt-hours purchased	14,717,284	14,647,585
Kilowatt-hours sold	13,419,562	13,872,234
Average KWH per residential consumer	2,002	1,974
Average bill per residential consumer	\$172.07	\$156.23
Cost of purchased power	\$714,545	\$654,316
Margins year to date	\$333,959	\$252,203

### LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	January 2017	January 2018
Weather	6	5
Age or deterioration	0	7
Animals and public	0	0
Power supplier	0	1
Equipment	4	0

### SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	January 2017	January 2018	Year to date
Pole installations	1	1	1
New construction	15,467 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.
Miles driven	21,994	20,160	20,160
New accounts	5	0	0
Accounts retired	0	0	0

### SHERIDAN ELECTRIC CO-OP

Medicine Lake, Mont. 59247  
406-789-2231

#### 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