

Sheridan Electric Cooperative

LiveWire

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

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Electrical wiring department charges into construction season

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

*A construction task being completed for grain bins.*

Construction season at Sheridan Electric Cooperative not only means line work, it also means serving the membership in other areas. With good crops being harvested, the folks of this area have seen that storage will be an issue.

Our electrician department has been inundated with grain bins needing to be wired after the bin has been erected. On July 29, I met with my electrician team to see how many bins we had yet to complete. With 12 grain bin projects ready for us to be there, we quickly decided this number could double in the next few weeks, thus a planning session to cover all bases needed to happen.

With several other types of projects in front of this team (multiple school projects and service calls), we quickly developed a plan to serve the region.

Members or not, the electrician department serves this area. These folks specialize in any wiring project or service call. And, we wire in grain bins.

If you are erecting grain bins this year because of the great crops for storage, and need some help wiring them, call us early instead of at the last minute.

Call us, and we will be there for you.

You can contact Josh, Lisa, or Scott at the office at 406-789-2231. ■



Kali Edge, Walker Ator, Ashtyn Ator on location in Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., Youth Tour completed

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

Every year, Sheridan Electric Cooperative sends two individuals to Washington, D.C., to tour our nation's capital. Teamed up with North Dakota delegates, these young folks travel to study the sites, but also to develop lifelong friendships along the way. Co-ops all over the nation participate in this project, which has gone on for many years. So, along with 23 other co-ops from Montana, and a number of North Dakota co-ops, our team converged on the East Coast.

The program consists of selecting at least one candidate to represent his or her co-op for the trip. In some cases, co-ops select two, or even three delegates, but it typically is only one. The co-ops send information about the Youth

Tour to the schools to be dispensed, and some meet with the schools. The youth write an essay on the selected topic, describing their thoughts, then the essays are submitted to the cooperative for a selection. The selected essays are then sent to the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) for selection. The association selects one outstanding essay to also sponsor the trip, called the Willy Wired Hand recipient.

At this co-op, we do things a bit differently. I personally meet with all of the students in a group school setting and describe the program in detail. From start to finish, I will talk to sophomores and juniors about the steps to learning about the nation's capital and leadership. I then meet with the English departments, who I encourage to participate so the essay is used as part of the curriculum. Those who embrace this part of the process grade the essays as a teaching tool, then forward them to the co-op.

The next part of the process is something that the schools have really embraced: professional interviews. Each student, member or not, who has submitted an essay to the school and then to us will receive a professional interview from myself and one other individual. This setting is a real-world scenario that can be intense for these young folks. At the end of the interview, we give them three to four areas to work on to enhance their interview skills. The best interview and essay from a Sheridan Electric member's child will be selected to go to Washington, D.C., to represent the co-op. The best interview and essay chosen from a non-member child will win \$100. We will choose one nonmember outstanding performance per school. This gives all participants, members or not, a chance to win something for their efforts.

So, our process is not all about the trip; it's about a real-life experience.

This year, we had about 18 applicants. Out of these applicants, two were selected, Ashtyn Ator (Culbertson), and Walker Ator (Medicine Lake). A special note is that we interviewed Ashtyn last year and she remembered what to work on for this year. It was a remarkable performance.

These essays were sent to MECA and Walker won the Willy Wired Hand selection process, which was the first ever for this co-op.

So, this left an opening for us to make another selection. Kali Edge (Westby) was a runner-up in our selection process. This was another young woman who remembered what she learned the previous year in regard to improving her interview skills. It was another outstanding performance, and her growth from last year

to this year was tremendous.

So, for the first time, three outstanding representatives went to Washington, D.C., and three returned with stories to tell.

To even further outstanding performances, Walker showed an interest in the Youth Leadership Council (YLC), which is a council that represents all states to further learn about the nation's government. The recipient receives intense leadership training. Walker performed his speech at the beginning of the Youth Tour, and won this competition to represent all of Montana at the council. Having a

YLC member was another first for this cooperative.

Walker came back from the June trip, only to turn around and go back a few weeks later. He will attend the MECA annual meeting in October, giving a speech to the membership. He will then speak at the Sheridan Electric annual meeting. In February/March 2020, he will attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting in New Orleans, La., where he will speak again.

Part of Walker's training for the YLC was to interview CEO Rick Knick. I would surmise that any time

that you can get a young person in front of you for a discussion, it is an opportunity to develop that person into a future leader.

We are extremely proud of our three representatives and the impression they made on the chaperones and Washington, D.C.

Please come to the Sheridan Electric annual meeting this year and hear from all three of these outstanding individuals as they describe their trip, and see the growth that I see in every one of them.

These are our future leaders for this cooperative and beyond. ■

Preparing for the future

BY SCOTT WESTLUND

Recently, I read an article in the *RE Magazine*, a publication of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, about the aging workforce and the retirements of baby boomers from co-ops. The article featured a Kentucky co-op that is taking this problem to the furthest level by preparing for a wave of retirements from the workforce.

As I read the article, I saw exactly what Sheridan Electric Cooperative has been doing for the past 12 years.

Rick Knick, the current CEO, took the position 12 years ago, after the previous CEO retired. Rick recognized two issues right away, as he started to build his team. First was ensuring he had the right people in the right positions to help him bring the wishes of the board to reality. Second was making sure he had new leadership and critical positions throughout the co-op prepared when he retired.

This endeavor has been successful.

In the *RE Magazine* article, a paragraph stands out as the most important part of this process, which we had achieved, and one that the co-op in the article has started to put into action.

The paragraph reads, "I am constantly looking at the future," Wright says. "If they have aspirations (employees), I need to know it, their supervisors need to know it, and the management needs to know it. And if you have aspirations, what are you going to do about it? Are you

attending some supervisory classes? Are you getting your bachelor's or master's degree? It shows initiative on the employees' part: Yes, I want to be promoted and this is what I am going to do." (*RE magazine*, June 2019, page 22)

The author of this article has described an organization that understands. They get the fact that every department head should be training their replacement, no matter where they are in their career. They understand that vacancies occur, maybe even when the department head makes his or her dreams come true. They get the fact that trends within the United States have our baby boomers retiring soon. They also understand that people will need hands-on training, but also professional schooling.

Your co-op has invested greatly in its employees. Several are currently in school or have completed levels of education that enhance the future of this cooperative. Right now, we have an employee receiving formal training for the highest-level job within these walls, and we have another completing high level accounting. We have had employees complete their higher-level schooling, and are ready for the next steps in the cooperative process. Yes, this is paid by the membership, but the dollars spent are spent wisely, and used to continue to fully prepare to operate the cooperative into the future

We faced the problem head-on and we are now prepared. ■

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 **Roger Britton** for winning this month's light bulb giveaway.*



Sheridan Electric Cooperative STATISTICAL REPORT

	July 2018	July 2019
Total miles of line	2,836	2,835
Consumers billed	3,089	3,121
Kilowatt-hours purchased	9,504,962	10,081,447
Kilowatt-hours sold	8,984,465	9,548,806
Average KWH per residential consumer	1,040	825
Average bill per residential consumer	\$125	\$107
Cost of purchased power	\$502,953	\$537,129
Margins year to date	\$2,256,887	\$2,652,043

LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	July 2018	July 2019
Weather	55	24
Age or deterioration	4	4
Animals and public	4	1
Power supplier	4	3
Equipment	0	0

SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	July 2018	July 2019	Year to date
Pole installations	6	16	64
New construction	150 ft.	1,343 ft.	21,873 ft.
Miles driven	28,919	23,326	147,158
New accounts	2	4	23
Accounts retired	0	3	16

SHERIDAN ELECTRIC CO-OP

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TRUSTEES

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

EMPLOYEES

Rick Knick Manager
 Riley Tommerup Office Mgr./Accountant
 Scott Westlund Marketing/Member Service Manager
 Jamie Ator Accountant
 Lisa Salvevold Office Assistant
 Tasha Roness Customer Service Representative
 Torie Waller Work Order Clerk
 Kory Opp Line Superintendent
 Bryan Lenz Line Foreman
 Nick Oelkers Staking Tech
 Tim Ereth Operator/Utilityman
 Josh Johnson Electrical General Foreman
 Tom Hinds Electrical Foreman
 Steve Augustine Line Sub Foreman
 Dan Roeder Journeyman Lineman
 Shawn Sansaver Journeyman Lineman
 Josh Marottek Journeyman Lineman
 Josh Ming Journeyman Lineman
 Bill Baillie Apprentice Lineman
 Nolen Drury Apprentice Lineman
 Tristan Ereth Apprentice Electrician
 Rod Luft Warehouse/Utility
 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