

Sheridan Electric Cooperative

# LiveWire

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

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

- Scholarships and the new direction
- Energy Share benefits Montana
- Statistical report



## When do we know we are doing our jobs for the membership?

by **Scott Westlund**

**W**hen do we know that, as a cooperative, we are doing the job to connect with our membership and a younger generation of the region?

This was a question that I posed to Rick Knick the other day. How do we know we are doing our jobs? How do you measure it? How do we really know that the membership approves of the direction of the cooperative?

Though it was a robust discussion, I am looking for measurable results, and was still not sure how we would know.

Then I ran smack dab into a direct measurement, showing me how this cooperative is doing for the membership.

On Jan. 8, I attended a basketball game in Medicine Lake, Mont. Not having made many ballgames this year, I sat down on the bleachers where there was room to sit. Having chosen a spot toward the entrance of the bleachers, I saw many people. It amazed me that more than 20 people stepped up and shook hands with me, or said hello to me or even slapped me on the shoulder. Although I knew most of the people, some I recognized but could not put a name to them. Of all the people I met, or communicated with me, at least half of these folks were kids ranging from sixth grade to seniors, and kids out of school.

Several of these young folks professionally introduced themselves, as we taught them to do earlier last year, and previous years.

As time went by, several people I know from work came by me and stated that I was sitting on the wrong side of the gym. I replied that I was fine where I was. It wasn't until my wife, Tina, showed up with my grandson that we moved to the other side of the gym for a while.

As the night wore on, I began to ponder what had really happened where I was sitting earlier.

It was an effectiveness test of Sheridan Electric's work for the membership in this region.

First, we see people who want to make their appreciation known by coming out of nowhere to say hello. We see people from both teams, team supporters and students from both towns actively saying hello. I sense trust.

Second, and probably more importantly, we have the fabulous younger generation engaging their cooperative. They knew who I was, and were not afraid to show me what they had learned this past year.

Yes, there were Sheridan Electric board

members in the audience. Yes, there were Sheridan Electric employees there as well, and, yes, you could feel a connection when these folks came to say hi.

No matter what team is playing, no matter where you sit in the bleachers, no matter who wins or who loses, we are a majority of members in an electric cooperative.

This topic may seem lame to some, but was a good measurement of how effective we are for the membership of this cooperative. There is engagement of the young folks in all grades, in all schools, and this shows the fruits of the efforts this cooperative places on building relationships with membership engagement. ■



## Scholarships and the new direction

by **Scott Westlund**

**A**ll seniors in school have been exposed to scholarships for many years. This starts when the students face graduation from school to further their education into fields of study in which they wish to work.

For many years now, we have talked with students about their future goals when we present scholarships to them in a classroom setting. Some, if not most, of the young folks have an

idea of what they want to study, but some do not.

What I sense from the ones who do not is that they are embarrassed to say that they would like to be an electrician, lineworker, plumber, farmer or teacher. They are embarrassed to say that life within the region where they grew up is where they want to be, they are embarrassed that they do not have a clear direction for the future.

Like I said, it's been a few years of presentations for me to see clearly that this is an issue for some of these young folks.

Sensing this, a few years ago Riley and I started to see real shortages of services (trades) within the region. Thus, we started to identify a problem for this region, the problem some young folks are having just out of school, and where scholarship money could be funneled.

Some time ago, Riley and I tried to start a project, but our messaging was weak, and our framework not in place. This was placed on hold until we found the time to really flesh out a program that was sustainable far into the future.

A quote from Rick Knick when he started to see this take shape was this, "If you trimmed the higher education \$2,000 scholarships from six to one or two, what could you do with \$10,000 to tackle the needs for this region?" The discussion continued to develop as we talked about other entities donating toward the goal.

In late 2019, we started to put together a framework for a program to tackle the needs, and we took it to the board for input in November.

Upon the completion of that board meeting, it was clear the direction they wanted to take for advanced education, thus the direction toward teaching and the trades.

After that board meeting, I went to experts with our question, the superintendents of all 10 schools within the service territory. I would say that I received, almost immediately, responses from most of these schools. I was asking about direction of schooling, the percentage of students who fit this lane, and what would be the highest priorities for this region.

I assumed the priority would be teachers, but it was agronomy as the top choice, with teachers as the second, compiled from all of the information.

The next steps include picking a lane to start, with room to expand into the future. Thus, we will be putting together a coalition of superintendents (two or three) to brainstorm the best avenues to proceed. We know that the superintendents of our schools are the best resources for information in regards to potential young folks to enter these fields of study.

These folks, in addition to a few folks from the cooperative and one or two board members, will accelerate this program into full swing.

We will keep you up-to-date on the progress these extraordinary people will create in their endeavor to provide for the region, and for the young folks of all 10 schools. ■



## Membership search

Have you seen these members? We have lost track of them and need your help locating them to forward their capital credit checks. If you know them or have a contact, please contact the office at 406-789-2231.

Bighorn, Channon  
 Buck Elk, Carson  
 Dodge, Bill  
 Garrett, Dale T.  
 Hagen, Daniel C.  
 and Dulcy J.  
 Haugen, Brian  
 Lizotte, Alfred Jr.  
 Niemeier, Donald  
 Smith, Valarie  
 White Bear, Maynard  
 Young Bear, Dorine

**Thanks for your help.**

## Energy Share benefits Montana

**E**nergy 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(s). 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.

There are other programs 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.

The information that you collect may help a family in need and give them that helping hand. ■

# 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 **Lyle Hove** for winning this month's light bulb giveaway.



## Sheridan Electric Cooperative STATISTICAL REPORT

	January 2019	January 2020
Total miles of line	2,836	2,835
Consumers billed	3,090	3,156
Kilowatt-hours purchased	15,758,839	16,782,275
Kilowatt-hours sold	14,793,823	15,605,845
Average KWH per residential consumer	1,805	1,917
Average bill per residential consumer	\$145	\$151
Cost of purchased power	\$779,573	\$803,309
Margins year to date	\$281,607	\$292,150

### LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	January 2019	January 2020
Weather	5	32
Age or deterioration	3	2
Animals and public	3	1
Power supplier	0	0
Equipment	0	0

### SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	January 2019	January 2020	Year to date
Pole installations	3	32	67
New construction	0 ft.	2,100 ft.	2,100 ft.
Miles driven	20,350	22,722	22,722
New accounts	2	11	11
Accounts retired	1	11	11

### SHERIDAN ELECTRIC CO-OP

Medicine Lake, Mont. 59247  
406-789-2231

#### 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.  
 Sheri Shanks, Trustee..... Brockton, Mont.

#### EMPLOYEES

Rick Knick ..... Manager  
 Riley Tommerup..... Office Mgr./Accountant  
 Scott Westlund.....Marketing/Member Service Manager  
 Jamie Ator ..... Accountant  
 Lisa Salveold .....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