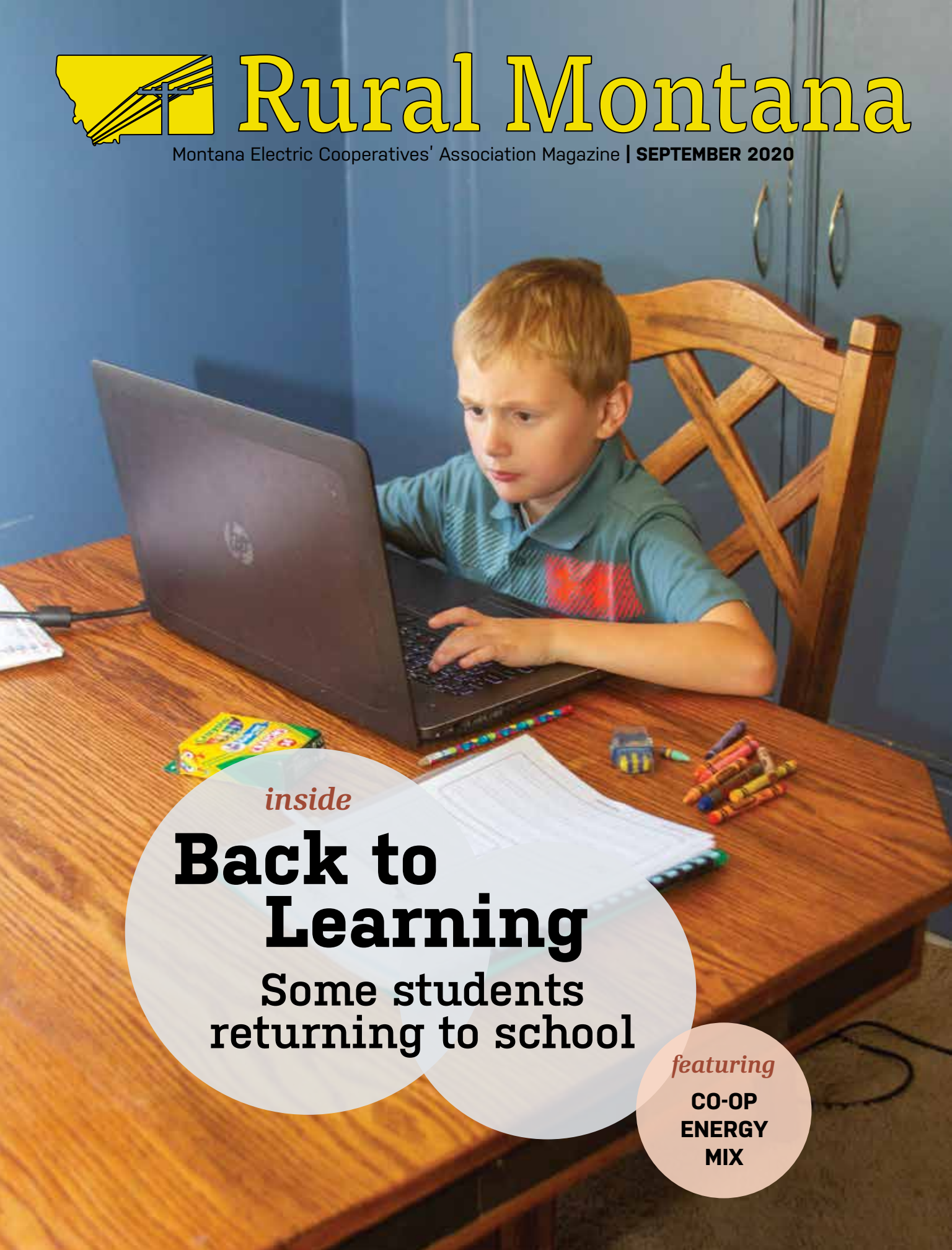


# Rural Montana

Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Magazine | **SEPTEMBER 2020**



*inside*

## **Back to Learning**

**Some students  
returning to school**

*featuring*

**CO-OP  
ENERGY  
MIX**

**Vol. 66 | No. 9**  
(ISSN0199-6401)

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Daustin Hall, age 7, (son of RM Editor Ryan Hall) demonstrates how he logged into a reading program while remote learning as a first-grader in the spring. | **PHOTO BY RYAN G. HALL**

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# Heart-felt gratitude

by **GARY WIENS**, CEO of Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association

*"None is more impoverished than the one who has no gratitude. Gratitude is a currency that we can mint for ourselves, and spend without fear of bankruptcy."*  
— Fred De Witt Van Amburgh

Recently, Montana's congressional delegation demonstrated leadership on behalf of our electric cooperatives amidst the current COVID-19 crisis. For this we extend our sincere gratitude.

Sens. Jon Tester and Steve Daines, along with Montana Congressman Greg Gianforte, all acted swiftly to support important legislation that will help our electric cooperatives hold down electric rates during this time of considerable and prolonged uncertainty.


Known as the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act, this legislation would allow rural electric cooperatives and telecommunications providers to refinance their existing U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service (RUS) loan debt at current market rates. By taking advantage of today's lower interest rates, rural cooperatives and businesses would gain flexibility in managing their cash flow, allowing them to invest in rural communities and pass savings on to co-op member-owners.

Simply put, the bill would provide our RUS borrowers with what most private lenders already offer with loans, the ability to refinance without penalty.

Close to half of the state's electric co-ops would benefit should it pass, resulting in a potential estimated savings of about \$25 million to Montana ratepayers.

Not only did our congressional delegation agree to co-sponsor this important measure (S. 4152/H.R. 7483), they were among the first to do so. Their early action was critical in building bipartisan support, especially among rural-state congressional delegations.

Although the bill is unlikely to pass as a stand-alone measure, electric cooperatives are working to have it attached to the next COVID-19 relief package. In that regard, Daines joined nine other senators in a bipartisan letter asking Senate leadership to include this bill as part of the legislative response to the COVID-19 economic crisis.

Once again, thank you to our entire Montana congressional delegation. We value your leadership, and it is encouraging to know our electric co-ops have trustworthy policymakers working for us in Congress! 

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# 'Montana students first'

## Community partnerships are essential to reopening Montana schools this fall

**ELSIE ARNTZEN** | *State Superintendent of Public Instruction*

**A**S Montana's Superintendent of Public Instruction, I am committed to ensuring that schools safely reopen this fall, and that student learning occurs. I want to thank the members of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association for their partnership with all of our communities. This effort to safely reopen Montana schools is truly a community partnership.

The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has been responsive to school needs regarding COVID-19 since February, before the virus even hit our state. I immediately pulled together a team of specialists from across the state to support the unique needs that go into serving students and teachers. I set up a dedicated COVID-19 webpage, which has now been revamped to support reopening Montana schools, [opi.mt.gov/re-opening-schools](https://opi.mt.gov/re-opening-schools).

When schools reopened with remote learning on May 7, I brought together two diverse task forces to create guidance for safely starting the 2020-2021 school year.

The Montana Learn Task Force consisted of parents, students, teachers and community members. It was tasked with addressing issues related to academic programming, physical safety and social-emotional support. The Montana Flex Task Force consisted of school administrators and state education partners who unwrapped state and federal regulations to see what flexibilities were necessary to fully support new learning models. The task forces' recom-



Elsie Arntzen is the state superintendent of public instruction | **COURTESY PHOTO**

“  
Increasing services to every classroom, including our most rural, will be the OPI's priority as we work with the congressional delegation and the 2021 Legislature.  
”

mendations were reviewed by the Montana School Safety Advisory Committee, which in addition to the above constituencies includes health and safety professionals. I listened to more than 100 Montana voices on how to safely open schools.

Currently, I have secured waivers for:

- School nutrition: Allowing students to safely get grab-and-go school meals.
- Assessment: Canceling federally mandated standardized tests.
- Seat time: Allowing students to flexibly distant learn at their own pace without penalizing schools.
- Transportation: Allowing school buses to deliver education materials,

school meals and technology to families.

Thank you to the members of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association who deliver reliable electric distribution services to every county in Montana, including many of our community school buildings. Reliable electric transmission powers the delivery of necessary educational tools, including reliable technology and a safe and comfortable learning environment.

Montana was one of the first states in the country to disburse our \$41 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds from the federal CARES Act. Additionally, we sent most of the state set-aside funds to schools to ensure that every district, including our most rural schools, received at least \$10,000, and that special education students are supported.

“Putting Montana students first” is the mission at the OPI. That is what we will continue to do this school year, in coordination with the Legislature, education and community partners. Increasing services to every classroom, including our most rural, will be the OPI's priority as we work with the congressional delegation and the 2021 Legislature.

Montana families are resilient. I am optimistic that this school year will bring new opportunities for learning, which will overcome the challenges we face. I have never been so proud of Montana's students, families and educators. Everyone stepped up in the face of unprecedented circumstances to ensure that the high-quality education our students expect still occurs.

RM

# State superintendent:

## Returning to school a local decision

**WHETHER** children should go back to school or continue to learn remotely during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic must be a local decision, according to State Superintendent of Public Schools Elsie Arntzen.

Arntzen said the pandemic taught administrators and teachers that they can't be so structured or focused solely on "brick and mortar" thinking.

"We were thrust into this flexibility and innovative model," she said. "The number-one thing that I believed everyone focused on because of flexibility and trying to be innovative in a digital world, is it must be focused on our students. It was about our children, wherever they were."

She said the remote learning model showed how flawed a proficiency-test-based system could be. She said tests should be an individual assessment of a student's proficiency, "not a bubbled-in paper."

"That crowd mentality of an age progression for proficiency is sort of out the door," Arntzen said.

She said the pandemic also taught educators that in a world where remote learning is likely to be incorporated into education for the foreseeable future, traditional barriers must be broken. For instance, class sizes are no longer about what teachers can handle in a classroom. In some cases, the ideal class size may be 10 students, in others it could be 50 kids.

Class times also can be flexible, maybe for older kids holding an online class with the teacher at 4 p.m. makes more than sense than an 8 a.m. one.

"We shouldn't have those barriers that are in statute or those barriers that are in rules," Arntzen said. "Because it should depend on that pod or that group of students if we do go



Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction Elsie Arntzen poses with a student on a school visit prior to schools moving to remote learning on March 15 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. | PHOTO COURTESY OF OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

“ I would never say it is wrong to have my child in school or wrong to have my child with a group of families trying to figure it out. But I know it would be very challenging trying to do it all myself. ”

– ELSIE ARNTZEN, *State Superintendent of Public Schools*

to that remote world.”

Arntzen added that she is a fan of local control, and whether students should return to school is a decision for local health departments, school districts, parents and the kids themselves. She added that the decision can vary by student. When asked, she said if her two daughters were still school age, Arntzen would send one daughter back to school this fall but not the other.

She said one daughter is a rule follower, and likely would do well return-

ing to a classroom with pandemic protocols and rules. The other daughter would likely do better with at-home instructions in a small group of family or community members.

"The challenges with the safety and with everything, I know that she would step across the line. It wouldn't be a fit for her," Arntzen said. "I would never say it is wrong to have my child in school or wrong to have my child with a group of families trying to figure it out. But I know it would be very challenging trying to do it all myself." RM

# U.S. CENSUS 2020

Make sure you count, respond today

By **RYAN HALL** | *Rural Montana Editor*

**T**HIS year's Census could be one of the most important in history for Montana, as a second U.S. House seat likely hinges on the results.

However, with Montana being a rural state, and door-to-door operations suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, things weren't looking good as of mid-August. According to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov), as of August 10 only about 57 percent of Montanans had responded to the Census by mail, phone or over the Internet. The traditional practice of knocking on doors had not yet occurred due to the pandemic.

Across the state, 20 of the 56 counties in Montana had less than a 50-percent response rate, with seven counties having less than 30 percent of residents responding. The top responding county was Yellowstone, with 70.8 percent of residents responding by mid-August. Neighboring Big Horn County had the lowest response rate in the state, at 20.4 percent. Though Montana has asked for an extension, as of mid-August the Census count was slated to stop at the end of this month.

As we told you in January, the Census is important to Montana and its residents. According to the Montana Census and Economic Information Center, for each person who fills out the Cen-

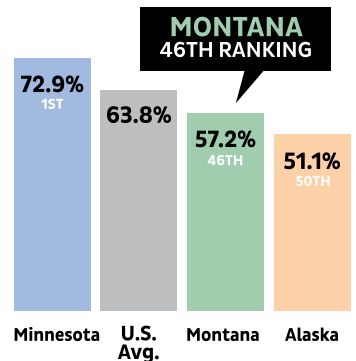
sus, the state of Montana will receive \$20,000 over the next decade. Mary Craige, director of the center, said that in the 2000 Census, about 14,000 people were missed, costing the state more than \$280 million.

Additionally, the Census also determines congressional representation, with the count being used to allocate U.S. House seats to states. In the January *Rural Montana* article, Craige said Montana is on the cusp of getting back its second federal House seat. Most models showed the second seat for Montana being the 433rd or 434th seat allocated out of 435. But if less than two-thirds of Montanans respond to the Census, that shot at a crucial second House seat disappears for at least another decade.

So what can you do? The answer is simple, be counted by filling out the Census. Fill out the form you received in the mail and send it back, call 1-844-330-2020 or go online to <https://my2020census.gov/>

There are just a few questions to answer, and depending on the size of your family it could take less than five minutes. Even with a family of five, I was done in less than 10 minutes. That seems like a reasonable amount of time to help our state get \$20,000 per person in federal funding over the next decade, and potentially another vote in the U.S. House. RM

## 2020 CENSUS STATS AS OF AUG. 16, 2020 RESPONSE RATE



## HOUSEHOLD RESPONSES

MONTANA  
**330,000**

SOURCE: 2020 CENSUS

GRAPHIC BY NICK DANIELS/MECA

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Sheridan Electric Cooperative

# LiveWire

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

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

- **Nominations made**
- **Absentee ballots available**
- **Statistical report**

## Unprecedented times by Scott Westlund

**W**e are in unprecedented times, dealing with a pandemic that has frozen our lives and the economy. This can also be said for your cooperative, in some ways.

This year, we have had to make some adjustments to how we will hold our annual meeting. Some co-ops have completely canceled their meeting, some have held a regular meeting, but with restrictions, and some have held drive-in meetings.

My number one concern is for the safety and well-being of our members and the employees of your cooperative, and I will not compromise that safety.

Our sister co-op in Circle, Mont., McCone Electric, conducted a drive-in meeting early this summer. They did it in such a way that all business was taken care of, and the members could still attend.

A drive-in meeting is much

like a drive-in movie. Cars come in, park and all business is conducted over an FM radio station. Motions are made and seconded either by the use of the horn, or a red flag will be given to each car for a visual recognition.

The downside will be that there will be no guest speakers, no Miss Montana, and possibly no welcoming address by the mayor. But, you will be able to see the business meeting, see your board members, and still see your employees.

The particulars are not set yet, but when they are, you will be notified.

We had an extra special meeting planned this year until this came up. We were going to talk about some new programs that enhance the communities in our region, some school programs that help them retain and recruit teachers, and show

you that we have come full circle, touching every relatable area that our communities need.

We are there, and will continue to be there when a need arises.

Next year, we will celebrate these programs.

On another note, the \$100 bill credit was approved by the board for attendance of the meeting. Remember, it has to be the person whose name is on the account in attendance or the bill credit does not work. If you are not on the household account, and you will be there as a husband or wife, please sign up for joint membership. Call Jamie at the office to start this process. But you will have to be in attendance.

Unprecedented times call for unprecedented actions. Please bear with us as we ALL travel this pandemic together. ■

## The coming days by Scott Westlund

**T**he days ahead will be different for your cooperative. Changing personnel and expectations will be the new norm as we cruise into a new era of leadership. These are some

things that we will be working on as we proceed into the future.

Member services will continue to be the highlight of your cooperative. We are there for the most important part of the

program, the development of new young raw talent within our schools. The programs that have been developed will continue to be the heart and soul of the

*continued on next page*

*continued from previous page*  
future for many generations to come.

Our focus will continue to be on the development of the people we have to their highest potential, opening doors, and showing them the possibilities of the future. Rick Knick started to do this when he put his team together as manager of this cooperative. He turned out many candidates that were fully

qualified to run this cooperative, in a short 12 years. This program will continue, as there are many cooperatives who will be looking for leadership in the coming months. He embraced the ideal that if you are not looking for your replacement within your walls of your cooperative, developing people in the same manner, you are not doing your job.

We have to really highlight the

work that the previous manager did for your cooperative. Troublesome days of the past were long dead when he took over. Troublesome long-term problems were quickly solved, and a new path was realized.

The road ahead will be filled with potholes, speed bumps, and may be dusty at times, but all-in-all, we will adhere to the work done by the previous manager to the best of our ability. ■

## District Nominating Committees report *by Scott Westlund*

**E**very year, you have the opportunity to vote for three directors at the annual meeting. The directors serve for a three-year term. The directors whose terms expire this year are District 1, (Dagmar), District 4, (Raymond, Plentywood and Reserve), and District 7 (Outlook and Redstone).

There are several steps we go through to help members get on the ballot. First, we appoint a Nominating Committee.

This committee is made up of members in each district who are your neighbors. These committee members then hold a meeting and nominate who they think would be good board members. These nominations then appear on the printed ballot at the annual meeting. This year, all of the incumbents were nominated.

In District 1, incumbent Rod Smith was nominated. In District 4, incumbent Kerrey Heppner was nominated. In

District 7, Harlan Skillingberg was nominated.

There were no further nominations

We want to thank the district nominating committees for assuming the responsibility of nominating these candidates. Finding members with the time to serve on the board is difficult. We hope to see you, the members, at the annual meeting Oct. 10 so you can vote on these candidates. ■

## Absentee ballots Sheridan Electric Cooperative Inc.

**E**very year, Sheridan Electric Cooperative has trustee elections as three-year terms expire. Although trustees can be nominated for additional terms, other candidates can also run for the positions.

One component of this process is the absentee ballot process. In this process, members of Sheridan Electric can vote by proxy if they cannot be present at the scheduled annual meeting.

The process is simple, but has to be requested by the member when needed. Below is the section pulled from the Sheridan Electric bylaws that describes the process thoroughly.

“Absentee Ballots for elections of officers are available upon request. Absentee Ballots will only be issued upon request of a member. Ballots will be mailed to the member no more than 45 days nor less than 15 days

before the annual meeting of the members. Absentee ballots must arrive at the cooperative offices no later than five (5) days before the annual meeting of the members.”

We encourage any member of Sheridan Electric Cooperative to use this feature for voting by proxy. Just call Tasha or Jamie at 406-789-2231 and they will help you.

Thanks for all of your support. ■



# Transition by Scott Westlund

**A**s I sit at my desk, I ponder what the next years will bring in regard to filling the vacant role left by the previous manager. Did he have the entire cooperative working at top performance when he left? Yes, he did. Were there any looming threats to this business that were not already addressed, or in the works to be solved? No, there were not.

In my entire career prior to the cooperative world, I have been moved into these same types of positions, but under different circumstances. Those circumstances were to move in and clean up a troublesome plant that fostered problems with people or the market. This is different, and has me off my game.

There are no short timeframes to get the plant back into the black after operating in the red for many years. There are no pressing employee issues to deal with in an explosive format. There are no large financial burdens that do not already have a solid plan in place for repayment. There are no construction problems that do not have a solid work plan attached.

There is only a continuance of the planned course.

As described, Rick Knick built your cooperative to what you see today. He hired professional employees to represent the cooperative anywhere they may go. He hired only people who could be managers down the road, and he paid them

well to stay and develop into those managers.

Will that continue? Absolutely.

As with Rick's career, mine has a past track record of building and developing leadership. In my nine years at this cooperative, that is what I started within a couple weeks of starting in the cooperative world. People are the most valuable resource, and if you are not evaluating and developing your people to their highest potential, you are not doing your job. When Rick announced retirement, the board did not look outside for his replacement. They had five internal candidates from which to choose, all developed by Rick Knick. He did his job.

It has been said that this state is short of managers to take the roles of retiring managers. When a vacancy is on the horizon, most folks will advertise throughout the nation to recruit one from somewhere else. Then we find out that nationwide, managers are hard to find. It is a vicious circle that someone needs to break. So again, if we are not looking to our people for development, paying them well to stay, we are not doing our jobs.

So, we are in a transition at this cooperative. Will the employee group be somewhat apprehensive? Yes, they will be, but they also all know me. Will my leadership style deviate from what I presented before? No, it will not because I know every one of them and I know their capabilities. I also know that

they are the best in the business by creating programs and services to the membership that is talked about across the state. I also know their goals and where they want to be in five, 10 or 20 years from now. They also know that I stand behind them in all cases even when mistakes are made. Known to all employees of this cooperative is my intent to "empower them to fail," which means that mistakes are OK to make as long as we learn from them and do better next time. I fully believe that if we are not making any mistakes, we are not doing anything.

Please do not misread this statement. We are an electric utility cooperative where mistakes on the line can be deadly. Only the best will be within these ranks, the best who know the threats and contain the risks. This is what I see within this team now.

As we assume new roles within the cooperative walls, we will have new faces at member organizations like the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association or Upper Missouri Power Cooperative. These new faces will carry the same values I did when I was in those position, although more diplomatically. They will carry the message of this membership to these new areas that they will be exposed to. They will learn the cooperative business model, and integrate themselves into the business world.

These folks will be your new general managers for the future. ■

# 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 **Cliff and Pam Torgerson** for winning this month's light bulb giveaway.



## Sheridan Electric Cooperative STATISTICAL REPORT

	June 2019	June 2020
Total miles of line	2,835	2,835
Consumers billed	3,112	3,182
Kilowatt-hours purchased	10,099,969	8,841,360
Kilowatt-hours sold	9,292,474	8,315,007
Average KWH per residential consumer	807	906
Average bill per residential consumer	\$107.00	\$109.00
Cost of purchased power	\$491,841	\$469,478
Margins year to date	\$2,390,326	\$1,899,125

### LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	June 2019	June 2020
Weather	21	14
Age or deterioration	6	2
Animals and public	11	4
Power supplier	1	1
Equipment	0	0

### SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	June 2019	June 2020	Year to date
Pole installations	36	159	700
New construction	4,363 ft.	261 ft.	27,471 ft.
Miles driven	23,256	25,748	141,986
New accounts	6	3	15
Accounts retired	5	14	62

### SHERIDAN ELECTRIC CO-OP

Medicine Lake, Mont. 59247  
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Rick A. Hansen, V. President.....Froid, Mont.  
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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.

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Jamie Ator ..... Accountant  
Lisa Salveold ..... Office Assistant  
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Torie Waller ..... Work Order Clerk  
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## July storm brings down 36 Big Flat poles

It was Tuesday, July 7, and all the weather apps predicted a major thunderstorm with potential hail.

When it arrived, high winds and micro-bursts caused severe damage around the system. More than 30 Big Flat Electric Cooperative poles were snapped, tearing down line mainly in the Phillips County service area. Hays had minor damage.

Big Flat Electric Line Superintendent Darren Demaris said, "We lost 36 poles ranging from meter poles to three-phase poles, all the way from Hays to north of Hinsdale."

He further stated, "It started at 4 p.m. on July 7, and we got the last occupied house back on at 4 p.m. on



The power of Mother Nature is shown south of Dodson, where poles were snapped in two.

**PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG FLAT ELECTRIC**

**Big Flat Electric**



July 9."

Big Flat Electric wishes to thank all those who went without power for their patience as the crews worked to restore service after the storm.

## MECA welcomes Mark Lambrecht aboard

Mark Lambrecht began work as Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association's (MECA) new government affairs officer on Sept. 1.

Lambrecht was previously employed as director of government affairs by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Prior to joining the foundation, Lambrecht served as executive director of the Treasure State Resource Industry Association (TSRA), of which MECA is a long-time member.

Lambrecht also has experience lobbying for the electric industry.

He served from 2005 to 2009 as manager of regulatory affairs for PPL Montana. He later worked as a con-



Lambrecht

**Statewide**



tract lobbyist for Northwestern Energy.

His government-affairs-related career began in 1989, when he began work in Washington, D.C., for Montana Sen. Max Baucus, serving as a legislative assistant and correspondent.

Lambrecht also has deep roots in Montana's electric cooperatives. His grandfather, George Lackman, served on the Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative's board of trustees, and represented the co-op on the board of the predecessor organization to MECA.

## GEC Linemen perform rescue training

Glacier Electric Cooperative is committed to being safe, competitive, reliable and innovative for its membership. Its crew and employees undergo monthly training each year to cover a variety of topics from CPR and first aid to emergency outage response.

In late July GEC linemen from Browning and Cut Bank performed the pole-top and bucket truck rescue exercises.

Each lineman must climb a 30-foot pole and perform a poletop rescue on a life-size 180-pound mannequin within three minutes. The mannequin represents an unresponsive lineman who may have been electrocuted or suffered an injury.

Alongside the poletop rescue, linemen must also perform a ground control bucket rescue. When doing



Apprentice Lineman Jay Monroe guides a mannequin to the ground during the training.

**PHOTO COURTESY OF GEC.**

**Glacier Electric**



bucket work, lineman control the bucket from inside the bucket. If the lineman in the bucket was to become unresponsive, another lineman on the ground would be able to bring the bucket to the ground using the controls on the truck.

## Remembering employee, friend Myllymaki

It is with great sadness that Vigilante Electric Cooperative informs co-op members statewide about the passing of longtime Vigilante Electric Cooperative employee Tim Myllymaki.

Tim came to work for Vigilante Electric in May 1995, as a staking engineer. Tim was one of those people who once you met him, you remembered him and, chances are, you liked him. He was blessed with a tremendous sense of humor and a great smile. Regardless of the situation, his



Myllymaki

**Vigilante Electric**



presence made those around him feel better. Tim may have lost his battle with cancer, but he put up one tremendous fight. Driven by his love and commitment to his family, he battled to the very end. Tim left those who knew him with many enduring memories, and a valuable lesson to live life with humor and courage. He will be deeply missed.

# TASTE THE LOVE



## Organic garlic farmers see spike in demand during the pandemic

Story and photos by **CHARLIE DENISON** | Contributing Writer

**F**OR the past eight years Paul Armstad and Jill Smith have grown garlic at their home outside Forest Grove.

This pastime — now known as Surenuff Organic Gourmet Garlic — started as a passion project, but through the years has become more than they ever imagined.

“We built up the crop for a couple years and then put a booth together for the farmers’ market, the Chokecherry Festival and other local markets,” Jill said. “From there, our garlic exploded with popularity.”

Their many repeat customers — who they refer to as “garlicaholics” — can’t get enough.

“We had one customer refer to herself that way the other day,” Paul said. “She called and said, ‘my name is Vicki. I’m a garlicaholic.’”

There is a reason Vicki and many other customers love Surenuff Organic Gourmet Garlic.

“I talk to it, I sing to it, I put loving energy into every bulb,” Jill said. “You can taste the love.”

For Jill, getting up and going out to her garlic is the highlight of each day.



“Working with the garlic in the vegetable garden — barefoot and grounded — is the best therapy ever,” she said. “I’m so in love with each and every bulb, and all the love that goes into it goes back out to everyone who orders it.”

As cathartic as this process may be,

**ABOVE:** Jill Smith takes pride in her garlic and puts much love into the garlic as it grows. ‘I sing and dance with them,’ she said. | **PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON**



Paul Armstad and Jill Smith are seeing an uptick in demand for garlic during the pandemic. Garlic, Jill says, is an immune-boosting crop. | PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON

*Knowing how much the garlic helps people warms our hearts, especially as we battle a global pandemic.*

— Jill Smith, co-owner of Surenuff Organic Gourmet Garlic

Jill admits it's not easy.

"It's hard to dig 8,000 garlic by hand in the hot sun," she said. "You should see my leg muscles before harvest and after. I think I gain five pounds of muscle per leg!"

"It's a lot to dig it all by hand," Paul added. "But it's satisfying and rewarding work."

Growing and preparing garlic comes with many arduous tasks, some of which are more time-consuming than others. Cultivating, Jill said, can be especially tiring.

"You're never done cultivating," she said. "Once you've got the garlic all dug up, you have to tag them all, hang them and dry them. Once they are all cured then you have to take them all down, chop the tops off and take a toothbrush to every one of them to clean them. I mean...the process seems never-ending."

However, all the hard work pays off, as Paul and Jill are continually amazed by the response of their loyal fans. Their garlic is constantly in demand.

"People have told me, 'I always thought garlic was garlic until I had yours,'" Paul said. "It doesn't take much for them to taste the difference. It takes one clove to change their whole meal."

"And once people taste it...they can't get enough," Jill added.

### **An essential product**

Selling garlic at the local farmers' market, the Chokecherry Festival and around central Montana has given Paul and Jill a new mission. They're honored to serve Fergus County with a crop they consider vital for public health.

The recent coronavirus pandemic

has furthered their cause.

"It's always been our passion to grow something that is so good for people medicinally," Paul said. "Garlic has a profound influence on digestion and circulation, and is proven to boost the immune system. Also, when it's raw, it's strikingly anti-bacterial. Garlic is good for just about everything."

The long list of health benefits involved with garlic helps inspire Paul and Jill to keep going with such a labor-intensive crop.

"Knowing how much the garlic helps people warms our hearts," Jill said, "especially as we battle a global pandemic."

Considering the wellness incentives involved with their crop, Jill said she's not surprised they've seen a spike in business since March.

"One lady even called us from New Jersey, saying she couldn't find any garlic anywhere in her state and hoped we had some available to ship," Jill said. "We've also had people request we stop selling so much because they're concerned we won't have enough for them."

It seems garlicaholics can't get enough of a good thing, and when it's also good for them, who can blame them?

Surenuff Garlic is available at Mari-gold Market, Winifred Grocery, Ol' Mercantile in Grass Range and The Breaks General Store in Winnett.

For more information, contact Jill Smith on Facebook or by calling 406-538-9877. RM

# RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES WORD SEARCH

The electricity that powers our homes is generated by a variety of fuel sources, including renewables. Renewable energy comes from natural resources, like the wind and the sun. Can you find all the renewable energy-related words in the puzzle below?



G	S	X	H	O	F	S	X	G	F	E	X	W	E	A
N	N	O	Z	L	S	K	R	S	N	Q	I	T	L	S
O	O	R	L	A	B	T	S	I	Q	N	K	S	B	I
L	A	I	M	A	R	X	B	H	D	Y	W	T	A	V
K	O	O	T	S	R	R	A	E	V	O	G	B	W	Y
S	I	S	P	A	U	E	N	F	R	S	B	H	E	L
B	D	C	Q	T	R	E	N	Q	B	X	X	Y	N	H
F	L	F	D	N	R	E	D	E	D	E	Y	D	E	B
Y	H	N	M	G	J	P	N	U	R	L	B	R	R	X
D	I	B	Y	Q	A	D	Y	E	H	G	M	O	Z	D
W	Z	A	W	D	E	Z	M	J	G	T	Y	P	R	F
S	O	L	A	R	P	A	N	E	L	S	U	O	X	J
L	A	M	R	E	H	T	O	E	G	B	T	W	O	B
N	F	X	W	R	D	I	P	V	Y	J	J	E	C	Q
C	T	I	W	S	A	L	H	K	M	U	F	R	G	O

## WORD BANK:

- HYDROPOWER
- WIND TURBINE
- RENEWABLE
- SOLAR PANELS
- WIND ENERGY
- GEOTHERMAL
- BIOMASS
- GENERATION
- SOLAR ENERGY



## THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

*In July, the Trump Administration suggested either cutting federal funding to schools that did not reopen for in-person instruction, or making additional funds available to schools that do reopen. What is your opinion on these proposals?*

### Senator Jon Tester



#### Contact Senator Tester

311 Hart, Senate  
Office Building,  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
[www.testersenate.gov](http://www.testersenate.gov)  
Ph: (202) 224-2644

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' recent threat to withhold funding from local school districts that are considering at-home instruction because of public health concerns is a very bad idea, propagated by someone who has never worked a day in public education.

Withholding funds won't help anyone, and denying the seriousness of this crisis or refusing to take measures such as wearing masks and social distancing will only make things worse. The decision to reopen schools — like every decision regarding this public health crisis — must be driven by science. A top-down mandate from politicians in D.C. is not the answer.

Local school districts and their elected

school board officials are going to have to take stock of their specific circumstances, and make decisions based on their community's needs, and following their local health department's recommendations, not recommendations from the White House swamp.

As a parent and a former school teacher, I know that educating our kids is one of the most important things we do as a society.

I'll be working hard to ensure we support educators and administrators as they work through this challenging situation, and doing everything I can to help ensure students, teachers and staff can stay healthy and safe while learning this fall.

### Representative Greg Gianforte



#### Contact Rep. Gianforte

1222 Longworth,  
House Office Building,  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
<https://gianforte.house.gov>  
Ph: (202) 225-3211

We are living in an unprecedented time. The coronavirus crisis has upended our lives in ways we couldn't have predicted in January. Folks are losing their jobs and paychecks through no fault of their own. Small business owners are having to close their doors. And our kids — from our youngest kindergarteners to our college students — can't be sure they'll be learning from an educator in a classroom.

I believe two goals should guide our approach to this pandemic. First, we must protect the most vulnerable, including seniors and individuals with conditions that put them at higher risk. Second, we must take personal responsibility in confronting this invisible

enemy, and I trust Montanans to do what's best to take care of themselves, their loved ones and their neighbors.

As we consider reopening schools, we should remember that each community is different. We must recognize that a school in Bozeman faces different challenges than a school in Geraldine. If schools can reopen safely, we should let them — something the leading national pediatricians' organization supports for our kids' development. I hope local school leaders, parents, educators and public health experts can work together to decide how to reopen safely with a plan to keep our kids and school staff healthy.

### Senator Steve Daines



#### Contact Senator Daines

320 Hart, Senate  
Office Building,  
Washington, D.C., 20510  
[www.daines.senate.gov](http://www.daines.senate.gov)  
Ph: (202) 224-2651

As the next school year rapidly approaches and our nation combats the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that we address the public health safety needs of Montana families on the decision to reopen our schools. I helped secure important funding for K-12 schools in the CARES Act earlier this year, and I am working to ensure Montana schools have the resources necessary to safely reopen this fall as Congress negotiates another COVID-19 relief package. Protecting our students and parents is essential as schools and local communities consider options to safely reopen and provide Montana students with a high quality education in per-

son, virtually or via a hybrid approach.

Local communities and school boards should have the freedom and flexibility to assess the needs of their community and consider the options necessary to provide a quality education for all Montana students. Input and guidance from our local education leaders and parents on this important decision should be paramount.

I will continue working to prioritize this issue in Congress as we negotiate a phase four COVID-19 relief package, and ensure Montana has the resources it needs during this ongoing pandemic.



# COVID-19 UPDATE

## Impact on electric co-ops varies across state

**T**HE COVID-19 pandemic has impacted electric cooperatives across the state in many ways.

Many have seen no positive cases among their workforce, while some have had to quarantine nearly the entire staff because an employee contracted the virus.

Some electric co-ops have seen almost no financial impact and have accepted no federal COVID relief funds. Others have relied on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to ensure their employees continued to get paid while the offices were closed or they were quarantined. Many electric co-ops reported little change in the number of past-due accounts and revenue in general as a result of the pandemic. However, at least one electric co-op saw a significant decrease in revenue as fears of spreading the virus kept a large portion of the area's summer seasonal businesses closed.

### Yellowstone Valley Electric

The state's second-largest electric cooperative took as many precautions as it reasonably could, but being one of the fastest-growing electric co-ops in the nation presented challenges.



Wittman

"For the most part it was business as usual," said Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative CEO Brandon Wittman, noting that the co-op's growth slowed for only about two weeks before the calls for new

services returned to the normal rate. "If we hadn't chosen that route for our particular co-op, we would have been so backlogged, we just couldn't have been as responsive to our members."

Director of Marketing Jennifer Sayler said that when the pandemic began, an all-employee email went out, making employees aware of their options. Office cleanings by a janitorial service were doubled in frequency. In addition, all of the employees were provided with personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks.

Sayler added that the layout of the office was conducive to social distancing, with Wittman noting that any employee who was concerned about the virus was given the option to stay home.

"We didn't force anything on anyone as far as you had to come to work," Wittman said.

The office has remained closed to the public since the beginning of the pandemic, but employees have continued to work in the office. The drive-through was also closed for a period, but is now open.

He added that since the cooperative's operations and outside employees are in one building and the inside employees, such as member services and accounting, are in another building, it helped minimize the risk.

Despite Yellowstone County having the highest number of cases in the state at the time of this writing, none of the more than 45 employees at the Huntley-based co-op had tested positive.

"We've been fortunate that way," Wittman said. "That's a tribute to the employees and their self-responsibility, and what they do away from work. I think that is out of respect for their coworkers that they aren't going to do anything to put anyone in jeopardy."

Things have gone just as well financially, according to Wittman. The co-op is on track with previous years, with past-due accounts down year over year.

"That part has gone very, very well," he said, adding that despite there being a disconnect moratorium during the pandemic, customer service representatives have kept in contact with members to discuss options if their bill becomes past due. That has helped keep accounts current.

### Glacier Electric

Glacier Electric Cooperative in Cut Bank is one of the more financially impacted cooperatives in the state as a result of the pandemic. Typically, summer is a busy time for the co-op, which serves most of the east side of Glacier National Park. However, the east side never opened this year due to the pandemic.



Anderson

"As of June our revenue stream was down \$500,000," said Glacier Electric Manager Hugo Anderson. "We've taken quite a hit on the closures."

He added that even though revenues are down, most expenses don't



change.

“Your fixed costs as a utility remain the same,” Anderson said.

Glacier Electric Cooperative was among those who applied for and received PPP money. Anderson said the relief funds allowed his employees to continue being paid during a 30-day office closure at the beginning of the pandemic, and again following a positive COVID-19 test for an employee.

“I did quarantine the entire employee group for two weeks,” Anderson said. “I’m not taking any chances to spread it.”

Anderson said that he knows the PPP wasn’t a good fit for every electric cooperative, but for Glacier Electric it kept employees financially secure and prevented the co-op from having to pass on costs to members at a time when margins are about \$400,000 below normal.

“Without the PPP loan, we probably would have been looking at raising rates or putting a surcharge on every meter we serve just to break even this year,” Anderson said, adding that Glacier Electric serves a Native American reservation, and a county that is among the poorest in the nation. Any increase in their bills during a pandemic could be crippling to co-op members.

“That was what it was there for, was to stabilize a bad situation,” Anderson said.

### Missoula Electric

Missoula Electric Cooperative in Missoula, is on par with an average year financially, despite the pandemic.



Hayden

“It is quite surprising we are so close to last year,” Manager Mark Hayden said. He added it is difficult to forecast the financial picture for the rest of the year because it is unknown what impact the recent expiration of additional unemployment benefits will have on members being able to pay their bills.

“We won’t know that for a while,” Hayden said.

In terms of safety, separation has been the strategy for Missoula Electric. Hayden said the office was closed for a time in compliance with the governor’s directive. Additionally, outside crews are separated into pods that do not mix, so if a crewmember tested positive there would be other, unexposed, crews available.

“We are just trying to maintain as much separation as we can,” Hayden said, adding Missoula Electric employees have had no instances of a positive COVID-19 test. “We’ve been able to stave it off.”

### Flathead Electric

The state’s largest electric cooperative in terms of number of members, Flathead Electric Cooperative in Kalispell, has managed to stay healthy financially and medically during the pandemic.



Johnson

Manager Mark Johnson said his board instituted a pandemic plan about five years ago, which prepared the co-op for 2020.

“We thought we’d just throw it on the shelf and never use it, and boy it came in handy,” Johnson said. He said Flathead Electric closed its office in the spring in accordance with the governor’s directive, and split its line crew into two groups. Each group worked for two weeks, then had two weeks off.

“The office has been and remains closed,” Johnson said Aug. 19. He added that employees were given the option to return to work voluntarily earlier this summer, or continue working remotely. When cases in the county increased in July, those employees who could work from home transitioned back to working remotely. The co-op’s drive-through lane has remained open throughout the pandemic.

Johnson said financially the co-op has seen a bit of a decrease in its small

commercial account consumption, but has experienced a slight uptick in residential consumption.

“The financial impacts to us have been minimal,” he said, adding that the mild winter had more of an effect on the co-op’s financials than the pandemic.

In terms of staying healthy, Johnson praised the cooperative’s 156 employees and their families for staying vigilant. He said no employee or their family members have tested positive for COVID-19.

“I think that’s a testament to the hard work of our employees to try and maintain the policies we implemented in the pandemic,” Johnson said.

### Big Flat Electric

Big Flat Electric Cooperative in Malta has experienced a mix of good and bad during the pandemic.

Big Flat Electric Manager Gretchen Boardman said that financially the cooperative is on par with a typical year to date.



Boardman

“We’ve actually been pretty good there,” Boardman said. She added that the electric co-op applied for PPP, but returned the funds since Phillips County went about four months with no cases.

The cooperative’s office has been closed at times during the pandemic, extra PPE was purchased for the employees and masks are provided to visitors when the office is open. Additionally, most of the monthly board meetings have been held via teleconference.

In August, Phillips County became a hot spot in the state with nearly 70 cases over the matter of a few days. Despite its precautions, Big Flat Electric was impacted.

There were positive tests among employees, and several more employees had to quarantine at some point during the pandemic due to direct contact with COVID-positive individuals. RM

# THE RACE FOR U.S. HOUSE

**Question:** What role would you like to see the House take in developing Montana's energy sector?



Kathleen Williams

<https://kathleenformontana.com/>

**E**NERGY plays an important role in all of our lives, and in Montana's economy.

We have work to do to ensure we're ready for the energy consumers of the future. The transition will not be immediate, but the markets are already showing us that consumers want affordable energy from renewable sources.

We need to get ahead of those market trends, so we can capitalize on them in terms of investment and jobs. I read a recent article about one of the Colstrip investors withdrawing from there and investing in wind in Wyoming.

We need to keep those investments in Montana. We need to capitalize on these changes, not become victims of them, and ensure our economy and communities are strengthened in the process.

I have always been an advocate for win-win-win solutions, and "beneficial electrification" is an example. While we work to meet the needs of the energy consumers of the future, we can address climate concerns, build a more resilient grid, contribute to the electrification of our transportation sector (the largest emitter of greenhouse gasses in the U.S.), and foster job creation in infrastructure, manufacturing and more.

As your congresswoman, I look forward to working with Montana's and the nation's co-ops and utilities to make sure we are creative, competitive and successful in shaping the energy economy of the future.



State Auditor  
Matt Rosendale

<https://mattformontana.com>

**I**N Montana, we are blessed with an abundance of natural resources, including a wealth of traditional and renewable resources.

It is critical that we responsibly harness our natural resources for energy production, taking an all-of-the-above approach to meet America's energy needs, that includes traditional energy sources such as clean coal, oil and natural gas. Unfortunately, over the past decade environmental extremists have fought to pass crushing regulations, which have decimated our energy industry, cost Montanans thousands of jobs and driven up the cost of energy for consumers across our state.

I believe that Congress must work to remove many of the onerous regulatory burdens that exist on the development and production of energy. This includes permanently expediting the permitting and environmental review processes for new job-creating energy projects, limiting the ability of political activists to kill new projects through endless litigation and continuing work to rein in the Environmental Protection Agency, which under the last administration was used against Montana's energy producers.

I also believe it is important that Congress provide the resources to allow us to focus on optimizing and modernizing our power grid. Existing infrastructure needs to be examined to identify inefficiencies so improvements can be made and energy can be delivered in the most efficient and effective manner possible in order to increase our energy security and help reduce consumer costs.

# ENERGY MIX 2019

## ALL 25 MECA MEMBER COOPERATIVES

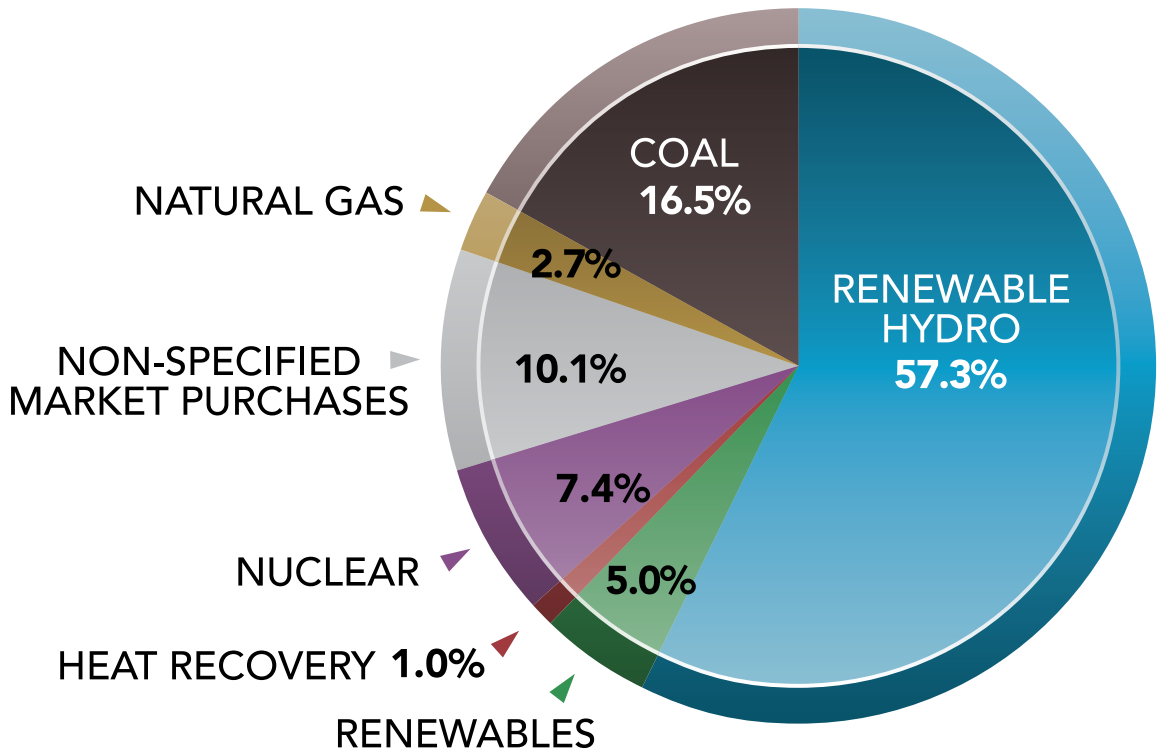
### Nearly 71 percent of power sold statewide was carbon-free

In 2019, more than 70 percent of power (measured in kilowatt hours) sold by Montana's electric cooperatives was carbon-free. A survey conducted by the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association showed that more than 57 percent of the power sold was produced by hydroelectric dams, upwards of 7 percent came from nuclear generation, 5 percent was wind or solar power, and 1 percent was heat recovery.

Of the carbon-based sources, 16.5 percent was coal – about

the same as in 2017, and down three percent from 2014 – and 2.7 percent was natural gas.

Non-specified market purchases, which now makes up the entire generation portfolio of two electric cooperatives, was up four percent from 2017, and five percent from 2014. Non-specified market purchases consist of both carbon-free and carbon-based generation, depending on what is available on the open market at the time. RM



GRAPHIC BY NICK DANIELS/MECA

**CARBON FREE**

- RENEWABLE HYDRO
- RENEWABLES
- HEAT RECOVERY
- NUCLEAR

**EITHER OR BOTH**

- NON-SPECIFIED MARKET PURCHASES

**CARBON BASED**

- NATURAL GAS
- COAL



## Zucchini Crust Pizza | ★ 1st Place

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 lb. shredded zucchini
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 3 eggs slightly beaten
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. garlic salt
- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 8 oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 tsp. oregano
- 1 green pepper, seeded and cut into strips (optional)
- 1/4 lb. sliced mushrooms (optional)
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

**TIP:** You can use any of your favorite pizza toppings.

### DIRECTIONS

Shred zucchini (about 4 cups). Squeeze out any moisture. Mix with 1/2 cup each of the mozzarella and cheddar cheeses, and eggs. Press into a greased pan. Bake in a 400-degree oven for 10 minutes. Sprinkle with salt and garlic salt.

Brown beef until crumbly. Add onion and cook until translucent. Discard fat. Stir in tomato sauce and oregano, season to taste. Pour over zucchini crust. Top with remaining cheeses, green pepper and/or mushrooms.

Bake at 375 degrees for 15-30 minutes, or until cheese is melted and golden brown.

Elaine Peterson | **LIVINGSTON**  
and Amy Damm | **FROID**

Recipes for *RM magazine* are submitted voluntarily by cooperative members across the state. First, second, and third place monthly winners are awarded \$30, \$20, and \$10 prizes, respectively. Send your recipes to *RM Recipes*, Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403, or email rural@mtco-ops.com. Please include your phone number, along with your address. **For October, send your favorite Mexican-style recipes by Sept. 8.** Coming in November, your best pie recipes.

*To be sure your recipes are considered, please enter early. Try to limit to 11 ingredients and 50 words for the directions. Please include a photo, if possible.*



## Green and Gold Flips 2nd Place

Dori Abrahamson | **LIBBY**

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups grated zucchini, drained
- 1 cup grated carrots
- 1 pkg. dry spaghetti mix (or Italian seasoning)
- 2-3 eggs
- 1/2 cup flour
- Butter for frying

### DIRECTIONS

Mix all ingredients in a frying pan and melt a tablespoon of butter.

Drop by tablespoon until brown on one side flip and fry on the other side. Repeat. Serve like a potato pancake.



## Carob Zucchini Bread 3rd Place

Misty Hammerbacker | **JEFFERSON ISLAND**

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 lg eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup olive oil
- 3 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 cup carob powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 2 1/2 cup flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 2 cups shredded zucchini

### DIRECTIONS

Grease two 8x4x2 inch loaf pans. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Beat sugar, oil, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until well combined.

Mix in the dry ingredients until well blended. Add zucchini and mix well.

Divide mixture between the two prepared loaf pans.

Bake for 50-55 minutes, or until it tests done. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from loaf pans.

# Events Calendar

## NORTHWEST

### September 1 - 31

**Museum Events** — Northwest Montana History Museum, [nwmthistory.org](http://nwmthistory.org). | **KALISPELL**

**Upcoming Events** — Interpretive Center, 727-8733 or [lewisandclarkfoundation.org](http://lewisandclarkfoundation.org). | **GREAT FALLS**

**Library Events** — Imagine!F Libraries, 758-5820 or [imagineiflibraries.org](http://imagineiflibraries.org). | **KALISPELL**

**Upcoming Events** — Conrad Mansion Museum, [conradmansion.com](http://conradmansion.com). | **KALISPELL**

**Museum Events** — C.M. Russell Museum, 727-8787, [cmrussell.org](http://cmrussell.org). | **GREAT FALLS**

**Museum Events** — Hockaday Museum, 755-5268, [hockadaymuseum.org](http://hockadaymuseum.org). | **KALISPELL**

**Summer Experience** — Imagine!F Libraries, 758-5820 or [imagineiflibraries.org/summer-experience](http://imagineiflibraries.org/summer-experience), free, all ages. | **BIGFORK, COLUMBIA FALLS, KALISPELL**

### September 1, 8, 15, 22

**Farmers Market** — Legion Park, 4 to 7 p.m., 271-4054. | **CONRAD**

### September 12

**Arts on Fire** — Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., 727-8255. | **GREAT FALLS**

### September 18-20

**Teton Antique Steam & Gas Threshing Bee and Bazaar** — TASGA Show Grounds, 7 a.m. - 5 p.m., 590-4488 | **CHOTEAU**

### September 27

**Lincoln, Reagan, Trump Sunday Dinner** — NW MT Fairgrounds - Expo Center, doors open 11:30 a.m., meal at 12:30 p.m., 250-2601. | **KALISPELL**

## SOUTHEAST

### September 5

**Burn The Point Car Show** — MetraPark, Montana Park, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 256-2422. | **BILLINGS**

### September 11 - 13

**Professional Bull Riders** — MetraPark, Fri: 7:45 p.m., Sat: 6:45 p.m., Sun: 1:45 p.m., 256-2422. | **BILLINGS**

### September 11 - 13

**Home Improvement Show** — MetraPark Expo Center, Fri: noon to 8 p.m., Sat - Sun: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 860-3915. | **BILLINGS**

### September 11 - 13

**Gun Show** — MetraPark Montana Pavilion, Fri: 1 to 5 p.m., Sat: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sun: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 256-2422. | **BILLINGS**

### September 17

**Calves to Cure** — Donated cattle benefit to find a cure for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Billings Livestock Commission, 9 a.m., 660-1208. | **BILLINGS**

### September 17

**Toby Keith: Country Comes to Town Tour** — MetraPark, First Interstate Arena, 7 p.m., 256-2422. | **BILLINGS**

## SOUTHWEST

### September 3, 10, 17, 24

**Sunday Farmers & Craft Market** — Seeley Lake Community Foundation lawn, Hwy. 83, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 317-2756. | **SEELEY LAKE**

**September 3, 10, 17, 24**  
**Farmers Market** — Highway 12, north of the Copy Cup, 3 to 6:30 p.m., 422-7933. | **TOWNSEND**

### September 18 - 20

**The Artists Along the Bitterroot Studio Tour** — 17 studios in the Bitterroot Valley from Lolo to Hamilton, see [www.artistsalongthebitterroot.com](http://www.artistsalongthebitterroot.com) for more information, 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., 351-0073. | **BITTERROOT VALLEY**



## SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS

To list an event, send it to: RM Events, PO Box 3469, Great Falls MT 59403 or email us at: [rural@mtco-ops.com](mailto:rural@mtco-ops.com) — Submit early (Sept. 8 for October events). Include date, time, site, city and contact number with your event. Events without such info will not be used.

## STATEWIDE

### September 1 - 31

**Blood Drives** — Various locations, see website for full schedule, [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org).

**Blood Drives** — See website for full details, [vitalant.org](http://vitalant.org).



Photo by  
**SANDRA PAYNE**  
of Whitefish

# Young Montanans



Rachel Stahl, 13, Gildford | HILL COUNTY ELECTRIC

RM invites youngsters to send in original art and poems.

If we use it, we'll pay you \$10.

**Mail to:** Young Montanans, P.O. Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403.

**Email:** rural@mtco-ops.com

**Include:** Your name, age, address, phone number and your cooperative.

**Currently Accepting:**

Fall and Thanksgiving drawings and poems.



Audrey Sinclair, 11, Billings | YELLOWSTONE VALLEY ELECTRIC



Toly Abramchuk, 12, Whitefish | FLATHEAD ELECTRIC



Naomi Wood, 15, Wilsall | PARK ELECTRIC

RURAL MONTANA READER

# SHOOTER SHOWCASE

Photographer Andrea Dyrdaahl took these assorted wildflower photos in the Sun River Game Range/Sun River Wildlife Management Area. She used a Leica V-Lux with a fixed 25-400 mm lens. Her tips for taking good wildflower photos are to

choose a large aperture (low F-Stop number) to get a sharp subject and blurred background, shoot from a low angle, get close to the subject and don't pick the wildflowers. Leave them for others to enjoy.



**Send us your fall and Thanksgiving photos**

Include a street address in your email so we can send your check. Send to: [rural@mtco-ops.com](mailto:rural@mtco-ops.com). Subject line: RM Photo Page. No more than 20 MB at a time. Cover entries to RM Cover Contest. If you get our front cover, we pay \$100. High-resolution vertical for the cover, no prints please.

Visit us online: [www.mtco-ops.com](http://www.mtco-ops.com)

Email: [rural@mtco-ops.com](mailto:rural@mtco-ops.com)

“This is one of the best areas  
in the nation to raise bees.”

— Dusty Backer, Backer Bees


Environment isn't just a buzz word at Basin Electric.

Backer Bees has bees at Glenharold Mine, a reclaimed coal mine that used to supply coal to our first power plant. The reclaimed pasture has a variety of flowers—alfalfa, clover, sunflowers, wildflowers—making it one of the best areas in the nation to raise bees.

Environmental stewardship has always been a guiding principle for us. That's why we're committed to reclaiming and restoring land back to its natural state, like Glenharold Mine.



**BASIN ELECTRIC  
POWER COOPERATIVE**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Your energy starts here.

[basinelectric.com](http://basinelectric.com)

