

Sheridan Electric Cooperative

# LiveWire

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

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## The course we choose

by **Scott Westlund**

**T**hroughout life, we make choices on how to perceive the world and what we will do within it. Some choose to stay focused on the goals they have set for themselves, some focus on life, some focus on duty, and some take it one day at a time with no real direction.

Children are much the same, as we raise them to be adults. We can show them the way, but making them in our image is probably not the right thing to do. Children will watch, mimic and try to do things in the way they are taught, but will eventually find their own way of doing things.

As it is the with raising children, the same can be said for leading people.

Show them the way, set the expectations, measure the results. You may find that if you see a less than favorable result, it may not be that they don't want to do it, it may be that they are in the wrong positions and not in a position that plays to their strengths.

This has played out over and over in my tenure at this cooperative. Folks have retired and replacements hired, but in some cases the

position they were hired to do did not fit the personality of the person hired.

In most cases, we could attest that the people doing the hiring did not do their job, but I look at it differently. Suppose you have an individual who comes to interview for a position within the walls of this cooperative. This person does not quite fit the job requirements you have listed for the core competencies for the position, but the person possesses qualities that go far beyond what you are looking for.

This gives you flexibility within your employee ranks, and breaks you out of a shell of "silo mentality." Silo mentality is disastrous to any business. It is defined as keeping information and not working with anyone else. "This is my job, and you don't have any business asking questions," is the main theme for this kind of workforce.

The flexibility you look for will go beyond the basic requirement of filling a job and a chair. It builds future leadership, and also strengthens the possibilities of the workforce you already have.

A good example of this is when I was hired by Rick Knick. He interviewed me, hired me, then tore up the job description. He gave me the core responsibilities and said this, "The job description had many things contained within it. Do what you are good at and discard the rest. And always remember, where the rubber meets the road is out there with the membership."

Short sweet and right on the mark.

This is how we always should hire for positions within your cooperative. Let's go beyond the confines of filling a chair to exploring the possibilities beyond the chair. Let's see what the possibilities could be and make adjustments along the way, and always take a path less traveled. ■

## MANAGER'S CORNER

by Scott Westlund



# Step by step toward the goal

**T**hat is a pragmatist? Well, I have a good idea what it means, but I thought I would look it up.

## pragmatist

NOUN

1. *a person who is guided more by practical considerations than by ideals. "hardheaded pragmatists firmly rooted in the real world"*
2. *an advocate of the approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.*

Pragmatism is a term used by many, but understood by few. Pragmatism is the decoupling from "the way we have always done it" to looking at ways to do it better. In the cooperative world, which is rooted in many years of doing the same things over and over, we see entrenchment in the old, instead of sometimes looking at the new.

Your cooperative has many pragmatists working within its walls, past and current. These folks have done things that 40 years ago would never have been done. They analyze their respective departments and positions and look for the best ways to serve the membership. In some cases, a task may be reexamined, but its value to the membership in its current form, no matter how cumbersome, may still remain intact.

I am alluding to member engagement and just plain old face-to-face interaction.

This is the most important part of a cooperative's existence. It's not about streamlining a billing process, or collections, just only communicating through social media, or having a call center with recorded phrases. It's about people interaction.

I left a job and turned it over to Josh Johnson. Decidedly, it was the best job I ever had. Pragmatically addressing each task for a solution or improvement sometimes led us to question why we should improve what is not broken. It had me out with the membership daily, within the schools daily and shaking hands daily, saying hello, or riding a combine or helping herd cows.

Member interaction is the most important job within this cooperative.

Don't be fooled by my comment. It pleases me that I have worked with this young man for nine years, helped him to understand the importance of the cup of coffee at a member's table or the dialogues initiated when there is some bad news for a member, or good news, for that matter.

We are confident that this portion of the business is being covered, and covered well. Yes, there will be some hiccups, but we will overcome.

So, the title of the article is "Step by step toward the goal." Why that title, and what is the goal?

The goal is to have the best workforce in the state with programs that are the envy of other cooperatives looking for ways to engage their membership.

We will have a well-trained workforce with people ready to take over positions at a moment's notice. These folks will not only train outside of the cooperative, but will cross-train within the cooperative to understand each department's roles. In essence, we will be ready. The previous CEO/manager had it right.

Hire only the best, pay them well, unleash their creative power, and turn them into the future managers of cooperatives for the state of Montana.

This is pragmatism in action. Simple, direct, concise.

So, the goal and pragmatism go hand-in-hand. One cannot exist without the other. As we travel this new road, we will see extraordinary things come from this group.

So, the steps we take now, or in the future, will be steps for strengthening your cooperative and its future. ■

# The Honker Pit shares values

by **Scott Westlund**

**T**he Honker Pit, a restaurant that gained new owners and a makeover a year ago, brings much more than the best food in town. It brings the opportunity for young people to learn work ethics, communication skills and how to serve people.

Tim and Hope Ereth, the new owners of the establishment, have made it their duty to do the very best they can for their community of Medicine Lake, Mont.

Hope finally had to hire someone to help her as she worked from 6 a.m. until after suppertime in the evening. Tim, her husband and an employee of Sheridan Electric Cooperative, did all of the remodeling, repairs and equipment installations himself. Busy was an understatement of how this

couple came together and made it happen.

Once business was established (and it really took off), Hope began hiring young folks out of school in the summertime, or kids just out of school. It was apparent that she was teaching these kids how to work, how to communicate and how to serve people, without a phone in their hands. Not only did they teach it, but modeled themselves.

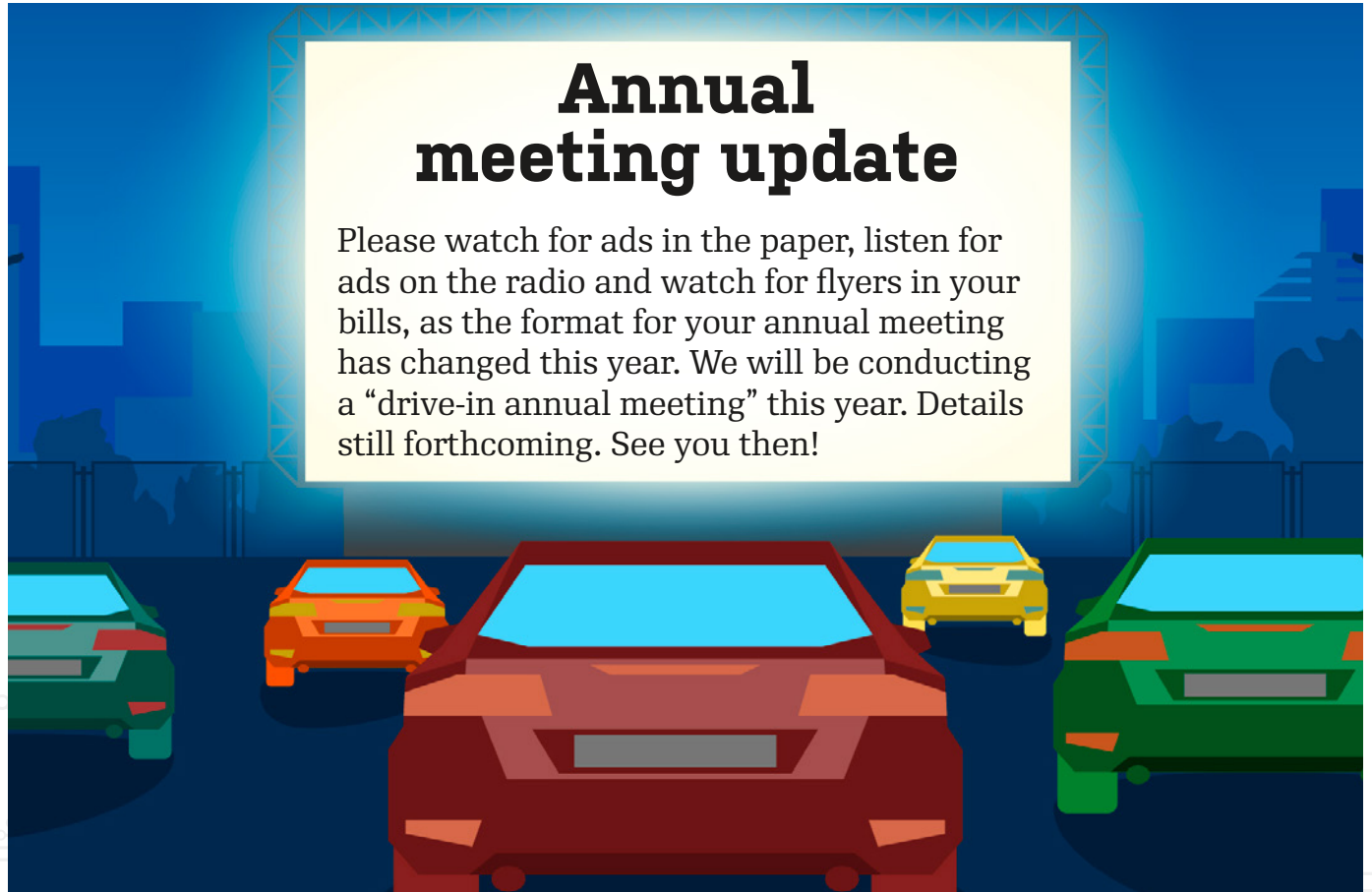
This restaurant and your cooperative have the exact same values. We both support the communities, we both serve people, and we both teach young people about the real world.

Yes, we are patrons to this establishment because of the values they exhibit.

Well done, Tim and Hope Ereth. ■

## Annual meeting update

Please watch for ads in the paper, listen for ads on the radio and watch for flyers in your bills, as the format for your annual meeting has changed this year. We will be conducting a “drive-in annual meeting” this year. Details still forthcoming. See you then!



# 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 **Lee Lampert** for winning this month's light bulb giveaway.



## Sheridan Electric Cooperative STATISTICAL REPORT

	July 2019	July 2020
Total miles of line	2,835	2,835
Consumers billed	3,121	3,185
Kilowatt-hours purchased	10,081,447	8,908,066
Kilowatt-hours sold	9,548,806	8,126,423
Average KWH per residential consumer	825	880
Average bill per residential consumer	\$107	\$110
Cost of purchased power	\$537,129	\$497,511
Margins year to date	\$2,652,043	\$2,087,342

### LINE DEPARTMENT STATS

	July 2019	July 2020
Weather	24	38
Age or deterioration	4	5
Animals and public	1	4
Power supplier	3	4
Equipment	0	0

### SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

	July 2019	July 2020	Year to date
Pole installations	16	22	722
New construction	1,343 ft.	7,765 ft.	35,236 ft.
Miles driven	23,326	24,828	166,814
New accounts	4	2	17
Accounts retired	3	7	69

### 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

Scott Westlund ..... Manager/ CEO  
Riley Tommerup ..... Office Mgr./ CFO  
Kory Opp ..... Operations Manager  
Josh Johnson ..... Member Service and Marketing Manager  
Torie Waller ..... Work Order Clerk  
Jamie Ator Kleppen ..... Accountant/Utility Billing Clerk  
Lisa Salvevold ... Accounts Payable/Electrician Billing Clerk  
Tasha Roness ..... Customer Service Rep/  
Accounts Receivable Line Personnel  
Vicky Haddix ..... Custodian

#### LINE PERSONNEL

Bryan Lenz ..... Line Foreman  
Steve Augustin ..... Line Sub Foreman  
Nick Oelkers ..... Staking Tech  
Shawn Sansaver ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Dan Roeder ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Josh Marottek ..... IT Tech/Journeyman Lineman  
William Baillie ..... Apprentice Lineman  
Josh Ming ..... Journeyman Lineman  
Nolen Drury ..... Apprentice Lineman  
Carter Nickoloff ..... Apprentice Lineman  
Tim Ereth ..... Equipment Operator/Utility Man  
Rod Luft ..... Warehouse Material Handler

#### ELECTRICAL PERSONNEL

Tom Hinds ..... Electrician Foreman  
Tristan Ereth ..... Electrician

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 