

## THIS ISSUE:

- Small change can change lives
- Youth opportunities
- A look back at 2025
- Meet new board members

# — HAPPY — Retirement

## VOLK RETIRES FROM SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

After 34 years of committed service to Slope Electric Cooperative, Dean Volk, operations manager and chief of staff, is retiring.

Volk began his career with Slope Electric in 1991 as a lineworker after working at KEM Electric Cooperative for seven years. Over the years at Slope Electric, Volk advanced his career from apprentice lineworker to operations manager and chief of staff. Volk has enjoyed providing an essential, critical service to members and maintaining that service.

"We are very grateful to Dean and all his contributions and steadfast leadership he has provided to the employees and members of Slope Electric. We thank him for his service and wish him all the best in retirement," says Travis Kupper, co-general manager/CEO.

We wish Volk the best of luck in the next chapter of life. On behalf of the Slope Electric membership, board of directors and staff, we thank Volk for his years of dedication to Slope Electric.



## MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

# Small change can change lives



**Jason Bentz**

Co-General Manager/CEO

The holiday season is finally here. It is commonly called the most wonderful season of all, because we associate it with family traditions and gathering with friends and loved ones. It's a time of giving and spreading joy.

But giving back reminds me of the many good things we have right in our communities and why it's so important to spread the good as far as we can, especially to the most vulnerable in our local area.

I'm also reminded of how wonderful our communities are and what a big impact we can have when we work together.

When you are a member of Slope Electric Cooperative, you help us spread the good during the holiday season and throughout the year. Through our Operation Round Up program, your donations help local organizations and individuals in need.

When you "round up" your monthly bill from Slope Electric and donate to this fund, you're making a big difference in someone's life. The cooperative principle, "concern for community," is one of the seven principles we follow as a cooperative. It defines who we are as

an organization.

When we first brought electricity to this community in 1948, the quality of life improved. But other issues also needed to be addressed, and this co-op has been at the forefront of bringing quality-of-life improvements to our communities through the years. It's why we created Operation Round Up.

We've given back \$318,620 to local community organizations with your help. Across the country, more than 350 electric cooperatives have an Operation Round Up program. Together, we've raised millions for local communities. This shows small donations from electric co-ops like ours can collectively make a big impact over time.

As a local cooperative, we have a stake in our communities. We hope you will think of Slope Electric as more than your electric provider, but also as a catalyst for good in our community.

I hope all our members have a joyous holiday season. May it be merry and bright! ■



## Join **MEMBER APPRECIATION** -US- **OPEN HOUSE**

Come enjoy a delicious meal on behalf of Slope Electric and visit with our board of directors, CEOs and staff as well as other members. Members will also receive a FREE gift.



**11:30 A.M.- 1 P.M. ON  
JAN. 29**



**Can't make it? Join us in Reeder from  
4:30- 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 26 at the  
Dakota Prairie Enrichment Center**



**KC HALL, MOTT**





## MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS: Join the Slope Electric Nominating/Resolution Committee



**Brooke Waltner**

Chief of Staff/ Manager  
of Member Relations

At the upcoming Dec. 17 Slope Electric Cooperative meeting of the board of directors, directors will appoint the Slope Electric Nominating/Resolutions Committee. The committee's role is to identify and nominate candidates interested in serving on the board of directors. This is your chance to play an active role in our cooperative's decision-making process!

Here's what you need to know:

**Representation:** Each director will appoint one member from their district, ensuring a range of perspectives. Additionally, we'll select up to two more committee members from districts with director elections.

**Visibility:** Your commitment will be recognized as we publish the committee member names in Slope Electric's local pages of *North Dakota Living*.

**Compensation:** We value your time and effort. That's why we offer a per diem and mileage reimbursement for both committee meetings.

The first meeting, scheduled for 11 a.m. on Jan. 20, 2026, will provide insights into the committee's functions, including the policies that guide us in nominating qualified members. The second meeting at 11:30 a.m. on Feb. 26, 2026, is when the committee will roll up their sleeves to make official candidate nominations for the cooperative's annual meeting.

If you're enthusiastic about shaping the cooperative's future or know someone who is, please reach out to us before Dec. 1. You can contact our office at 701-579-4191 or email us at [comments@slopeelectric.coop](mailto:comments@slopeelectric.coop). ■



The Nominating Committee meets to review candidates and resolutions for the annual meeting.

# CO-OP YOUTH PROGRAMS NOW AVAILABLE



## YOUTH TOUR

Youth Tour 2026 is calling, are you in?  
Slope Electric Cooperative is now  
accepting applications for the 2026 Youth Tour.  
Apply today and level up your summer!

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: JAN. 16**

**SCAN ME**



## HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year, Slope Electric offers a  
variety of scholarships for high school seniors.  
Whether you're attending a four-year university,  
technical college, or trade school, there are  
various scholarship opportunities available.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: JAN. 31**

**SCAN ME**



Scan the QR codes above or visit **[slopeelectric.coop](http://slopeelectric.coop)** for  
more information and details on each of these initiatives.



## MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS: A look back at 2025



**Andrew Sonsalla**  
Operations Manager

As I settle into my new position as operations manager, I would like to introduce myself to our membership. I know many of you, as I have called New England home and continue to live here with my wife, Alicia, and our two daughters, Taylor and Rylee.

I began my career at Slope Electric Cooperative in 2006 as an apprentice lineworker and have had the opportunity to advance my career through the cooperative, earning

my journeyman lineworker certificate in 2010. Since 2017, I have worked as a senior staking technician, where I have been able to further my relationship with members across our service area.

I was fortunate to work with Dean Volk throughout my career, and he taught me many lessons about the trade. One of the key points I learned from Dean that I will keep top of mind is his unwavering commitment to safety. When Dean was the lead lineworker, he helped me understand the safety and well-being of his co-workers, the public and himself are the No. 1 priority, no matter the severity of a situation or the sense of urgency.

He reminded everyone to slow down, take one task at a time, not to be in a hurry and never take shortcuts. He ensured everyone on the crew understood the scope of the work, so everyone gets to go home at night to their loved ones.

As operations manager, I look forward to working alongside our great team of employees to provide excellent service to our membership, and to continually upgrade our electrical systems to provide the most reliable electrical service we can to our members.

### Reflecting on 2025

This past year, we made significant strides on projects outlined in our work plan, but also faced some unplanned instances. Here are a few projects we completed to ensure safe and reliable electric services to you, our members.

### Pole testing

Earlier this year, utility pole testing was conducted. Pole testing allows us to find poles that are an

issue and replace them before they begin to fail. As of October, 153 utility poles have been replaced throughout our system, with crews and contractors continuing to replace and update poles.

### Underground conversion

Throughout 2025, Slope Electric installed 16 miles of underground utility cable. That included converting 14 miles of aged overhead three-phase line to underground cable out of the Langberg Substation south of Rhame. Additional underground projects included adding new services, service upgrades and underground cable replacement. Converting to underground cable allows for additional safety and reliability to our system.

### Storm restoration

In June, our service area endured hail, thunderstorms and high winds that resulted in damaged infrastructure and power outages. The damage impact to Slope Electric's system included 27 utility poles in Adams and Bowman counties that were replaced and a large number of broken power wires due to falling trees and flying debris.

### Technology updates

In a step toward enhancing reliability for our members, Slope Electric has begun the planning process of installing supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) technology within our substations over the next several years. SCADA acts as a remote monitoring and control system within our substations, allowing for enhanced service throughout Slope Electric's service area for isolating issues, outage detection and enhanced safety.

Looking to the remainder of 2025, you may spot Slope Electric line crews conducting annual line inspection and working on projects as the weather allows.

As a friendly reminder, if you see any cooperative equipment that looks unsafe and should be assessed by the cooperative, be sure to call the office at 701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191. We hope outages are few and far between this winter, but want to encourage you to report outages through SmartHub or by calling the office.

Thank you for your support throughout 2025. We look forward to ensuring safe and reliable electric services for you all in 2026! ■

## SAFETY STARTS WITH ME: Holiday cybersecurity tips

Did you know the average household with internet access owns about 17 connected devices? That figure covers a wide range of electronics, including smartphones, computers, streaming devices, smart speakers, home assistants and more. Given our increasing reliance on internet-connected technologies, the likelihood of new cyberattacks is ever-present.

"We are committed to ensuring our local system is safe and secure at Slope Electric. We routinely monitor and manage cyber risks, and we work together with other co-ops to share the latest advancements in cybersecurity measures that make us stronger," says Kennedy Fricke, member services representative. "But members can help, too. When we all work together to stay safe online, we lower the risk of cyber threats to our systems, online accounts and sensitive data."

During the holiday season, people across our service territory increase their online shopping or manage personal accounting through the web. We'd like to share a few cybersecurity tips to help you bolster your online safety during this busy season.

- **Think before you click.** Phishing occurs when criminals use phony emails, direct messages or other types of digital communications that lure you to click a bad link or download a malicious attachment. Avoid messages that look too good to be true, oddly urgent, poorly crafted or include unusual requests.
- **Create strong, unique passwords.** When it comes to passwords, remember length trumps complexity. Strong passwords contain at least 12 characters and include a mix of letters, numbers and symbols. Create unique passwords for each online account you manage and use phrases you can easily remember.
- **Enable multifactor authentication when available.** Multifactor authentication (also known as two-factor authentication) adds an extra layer of security to your online accounts. These extra security steps can include facial recognition, fingerprint access or one-time codes sent to your email or phone.
- **Update software regularly.** Software and internet-connected devices, including personal computers, smartphones and tablets, should always be updated to reduce the risk of infection from ransomware and malware. When possible, configure devices to automatically update or notify you when an update is available.
- **Stay protected while connected.** Whatever the network device, the best defense against viruses and malware is to update to the latest security software, web browser and operating systems. Sign up for automatic updates if possible and protect your devices with anti-virus software. Another way to stay safe while connected to outside networks is to use a virtual private network or VPN.

Being cyber aware is an essential practice year-round, but it is important to be additionally vigilant during busy times of the year. We hope these cyber tips help you stay safe this holiday season and everyone has an enjoyable holiday! ■



# Meet your newest board members!

Board members' commitment to fostering collaboration and driving innovation is invaluable. With their diverse expertise, they bring fresh perspectives that enhance our decision-making processes and help us better serve our members.



**Elected June 2024**

## *Ryan Jacobson, District 3*

Occupation: Rancher, with cow/calf and stock cattle operations

*I enjoy meeting people and working with the Slope Electric board. Everyone has a different train of thought. I also enjoy learning about the process and where our power comes from.*



**Elected June 2025**

## *Kevin Thompson, District 4*

Occupation: I am a fourth-generation homestead farmer/rancher. We raise small grains and certified Piedmontese feeder calves.

*Serving on Slope Electric's board of directors continues my family's values of service to the broader community. My ancestors served the region in various capacities from helping to create the town of Bowman, to World War I, to the N.D. State Legislature, to the creation of the nursing home in Bowman and providing leadership to Bowman County Public School. I look forward to serving the membership of Slope Electric to ensure we have the best and most efficient electric services that allows our communities to prosper and grow!*



**Elected June 2024**

## *Cheryl Van Daele, District 3*

Occupation: Ranching and farming; owns and operates a school bus service for Bowman County School District, in addition to working for Encompass Therapy out of Hettinger

*Having been born and raised in southwest North Dakota, and always served by Slope Electric, I felt serving on the board of directors would be a valuable learning experience and a way to gain further knowledge of our cooperative. I felt it would be a way for me to give back to our community and our membership by striving to represent our cooperative in a positive manner. Being a part of the cooperative spirit, dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all our members, and having the members' best interest at heart are all important to me.*



## SLOPE ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS SEPT. 29

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Slope Electric Cooperative was held on Sept. 29 at the cooperative's office in New England. President Angela Carlson called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. A quorum was present. Slope Electric's General Counsel Jennifer Grosz was appointed recorder for the meeting. Also present were Slope Electric co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Chief of Staff Dean Volk, Operations Manager Andrew Sonsalla, Member Relations Manager Brooke Waltner and Board Liaison Connie Hill. Matt Gilley from Great Co-ops attended a portion of the meeting virtually as a guest.

**Consent agenda:** An amendment was proposed to the consent agenda. The consent agenda was approved as amended.

**Strategic items:** Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on a joint electric and broadband cooperative meeting, impacts of the June storms, the North Dakota Rural Electric Political Action Committee, power supplier updates

and more. Several Basin Electric Power Cooperative reports and board documents were available for review.

**Department reports:** Craigmile provided a financial report. Volk provided a report, including an update on line maintenance, service changes and other projects. Waltner provided a report on member services projects, member engagement and cooperative programs. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report. Grosz provided an update on the status on legal topics and projects.

**Action items:** Gilley provided a strategic plan update. The board reviewed and resolved various items.

**Discussion/general information:** The board discussed the strategic plan, workforce policies and other items.

**Executive session:** The board entered an executive session during the meeting.

The meeting concluded with adjournment. Secretary Charlotte Meier certified the accuracy of the minutes.

**Next meeting date:** The next meeting is at 8 a.m. on Dec. 18 in New England. ■



*Slope Electric offices will be closed Dec. 24 and 25 as well as Jan. 1. We hope everyone has a joy filled holiday season!*



116 E. 12th St.  
New England, ND 58647

Phone: 701-579-4191  
or 800-559-4191  
Fax: 701-579-4193

Email us:  
[comments@slopeelectric.coop](mailto:comments@slopeelectric.coop)  
UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATES  
800-795-0555 or 811

### SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Angela Carlson, President  
Anthony Larson, Vice President  
Charlotte Meier, Secretary  
Chip HJ Fischer, Treasurer  
Ryan Jacobson, Director  
Kevin Thompson, Director  
Cheryl Van Daele, Director  
Steven Wegner, Director

### MANAGEMENT

Jason Bentz  
CO-GM/CEO

Travis Kupper  
CO-GM/CEO

[www.slopeelectric.coop](http://www.slopeelectric.coop)



Become a fan of Slope Electric Cooperative  
to learn timely co-op news!

*Slope Electric Cooperative Inc.  
is an equal opportunity provider.*