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2025



Fall fun

The **Michael and Crystal Sonsalla**
family welcomes visitors to their
Slope County pumpkin patch.

FALL FUN:

Pumpkins, Pets and Pals

BY SAMANTHA VANGSNESS

As farmers continue to harvest crops and fields of autumn gold shine in the sun, members across Slope Electric Cooperative's service territory begin to embrace fall. These cooler months signal some familiar activities, such as enjoying a hot cup of coffee accompanied by brisk morning air, the scent of freshly baked apple crisp and exploring the pumpkin patch with family and friends.

In Slope County, Michael and Crystal Sonsalla, Slope Electric members, find themselves leaning into fall festivities this time of year.

After a local pumpkin patch closed, the Sonsallas saw the opportunity to ensure families can continue to make lasting memories. In 2022, the Sonsallas opened Pumpkins, Pets and Pals on their ranch near Marmarth. This pumpkin patch, tucked among the hills of Slope County, features farm animals, activities and a place for everyone to enjoy the fall.

When considering what activities they wanted to provide, the Sonsallas reflected on what excites their four children, not only at pumpkin patches, but on the ranch as well. They then found a way to translate those activities into their pumpkin patch. Some of the fun to explore includes a bounce house, zipline, trackless train, "bales of fun" and more.

"We have been operating for three years and each year, we try to add something new," Crystal says. "This year, we will have a pumpkin slingshot."

Although most of the activities are geared toward children, the Sonsallas were looking for something to engage young adults. To further draw this age group, they decided to create a corn maze. During their second season with a corn maze, they will now offer a haunted corn maze from 7-9:30 p.m. every Saturday in October, with a bonus night on Thursday, Oct. 16.

It's not quite a pumpkin patch without a vast field of pumpkins and squash, which is exactly what the Sonsallas have created. Visitors are welcome to pick their own pumpkins or choose from the ready-to-purchase selection. The Sonsallas plant many different varieties of pumpkins and squash in a unique way.

"Everything is planted randomly throughout the patch," Crystal says. "This allows people to walk through and see different kinds."

In addition to the games and pumpkins, the Sonsallas have a petting zoo. This section usually depends on the animals they have around at the time.

You can expect to see chickens, goats and sheep, but there is something new this year.

"We will have a surprise animal this year," Crystal says.

The Sonsallas have also used the pumpkin patch as an opportunity to showcase agriculture in a fun, engaging way. Guests can learn more about the animals and crops through their discussions with the family or by reading informational signs.

People come from near and far to enjoy what the Sonsalla family has created. The family enjoys seeing the community appreciate and make memories on their ranch.

"I love to see the kids enjoying themselves," Crystal says. "If they're kicking and screaming when they leave, I know they had a good time."

Pumpkins, Pets and Pals is open noon-6 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday through Oct. 26, as weather allows. For further details about Pumpkins, Pets and Pal, visit Facebook, where you can find additional information on the haunted corn maze, private bookings and more. ■



To learn more

Location: 7708 172nd Ave. SW, Marmarth

Directions: 1 mile south of Marmarth where Highway 12 turns south to the Camp Crook Road. It is the first approach at the top of the hill. You will be welcomed by the pumpkin patch sign. Enter the driveway and follow the signs to the pumpkin patch.

An exciting addition to Pumpkins, Pets and Pals is private bookings during the weekdays. This can be for field trips, birthday parties or other groups interested in exploring the pumpkin patch.

ENTER YOUR YOUTH TOUR ERA



WASHINGTON MONUMENT



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JUNE 14-20, 2026

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7 days.
1 unforgettable trip.

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Learn more at ndyouthtour.com.

To enter the essay-writing contest:

- You must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Slope Electric Cooperative.

Essay question:

As member-owned organizations, electric cooperatives are always seeking new ways to engage their members. What are some ways electric cooperatives can better communicate and connect, especially with students and young adults?

The application deadline is Jan. 16, 2026.

Questions? Please contact Brooke Waltner, Slope Electric Cooperative, at 701-579-2252 during regular business hours.

Email entries to Brooke Waltner at bwaltner@slopeelectric.coop or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, 116 E. 12th St., P.O. Box 338, New England, ND, 58647-0338.



MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

Co-ops power communities with purpose



Jason Bentz

Co-General Manager/CEO

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies and some communities can even be found in virtual spaces, such as social media groups. Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Slope Electric Cooperative is committed to our members, and we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community.

In October, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the United States are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses. But more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric cooperatives are nonprofit utilities built by the communities they serve. Slope Electric's mission has always been to provide you with reliable electric service. We care about your quality of life. And because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond providing electrical services, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because our employees live here, too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives and additional programs that make our community a better place to call home.

All co-ops, including Slope Electric, are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values

and spirit of the cooperative movement.

These seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities, while remaining true to our purpose.

Open and voluntary membership: Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.

Democratic member control: Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members for the members.

Member economic participation: Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it operates smoothly now and in the future. At Slope Electric, this happens through paying your energy bills.

Autonomy and independence: Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.

Education, training and information: Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.

Cooperation among cooperatives: Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other in times of need, because we want other co-ops to thrive.

Concern for community: All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

As we celebrate National Co-op Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is people and the local communities we're proud to serve. ■



ELECTRIC CO-OPS PROVIDE POWER WITH PURPOSE.



MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS: **LIHEAP is here to help**



Brooke Waltner
Manager of Member Relations

As the fall weather arrives, Slope Electric Cooperative members will be faced with colder temperatures in the coming months. For some, anticipation of the winter months causes stress and anxiety as they wonder how to ensure a warm home. Thankfully, there are programs to help members.

Through the N.D. Department of Human Services (NDDHS), the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can help low-income and

eligible individuals when it comes to heating and insulation costs in the winter. Individuals can obtain home energy assistance with a variety of services, including home heating.

Services offered

LIHEAP offers a variety of service assistance. Not only can the program help curb the costs of your heating and cooling bill, but it also help households with weatherization services, making homes more energy efficient.

The assistance program may also help with the costs of furnace and chimney cleaning, emergency assistance and energy cost-reduction devices. Homeowners and renters are eligible to apply for assistance.

Apply for LIHEAP

Upon applying for LIHEAP, an outreach specialist from NDDHS will visit your home and assist in gathering necessary documentation for the service. From there, an application will be sent to the state for review, and the results will be provided within a week or two.

Check with your local human service office for more information regarding these services.

Applications are now being accepted year-round and can be found online at applyforhelp.nd.gov or by request at the local human service zone office. ■

**Scan the QR code
or reach out to your
local human service
zone office for more
information and to apply.**



Additional resources



Southwest Dakota Human Service Zone: Serving Adams, Bowman and Slope counties

Adams County office

609 Second Ave. N., Suite 2, Hettinger, ND 58639
Phone: 701-567-2967 or 711

Slope/Bowman County office

104 First St. NW, Suite 8, Bowman, ND 58623
Phone: 701-523-3285 or 711

Roughrider Human Service Zone: Serving Billings, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger and Stark counties

Hettinger County office

309 Millionaire Ave., Mott, ND 58646
Phone: 701-824-3276

MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS: **Powering together**



Dean Volk

*Chief of Staff/
Operations Manager*

Every October, electric cooperatives across the country celebrate National Co-op Month and reflect on the unique advantages of being part of a cooperative. As an electric cooperative, we are guided by the seven cooperative principles. One of those principles is cooperation among cooperatives, which is something we do every day.

Slope Electric Cooperative and three neighboring electric cooperatives are proud owners of Innovative Energy Alliance

Cooperative (IEA), Maintenance Solutions Cooperative (MSC), West Dakota Utilities Services (WDUS) and 3C Construction. You have probably read about these strategic partnerships in the past, but we would like to highlight the partnerships that help us ensure safe, reliable electric services for our members.

Each day, employees at Slope Electric collaborate with employees of IEA, which provides various services and support to the cooperative. On the operations side, we work closely with IEA's engineering department to analyze, update and plan for system maintenance and expansion. We also work with the information technology team to ensure secure, efficient and reliable operation of all computing systems, hardware and software at our cooperative. Other departments within IEA Slope Electric works closely with includes managerial, employee services, finance and accounting as well as others.

But it doesn't stop there. We also partner with MSC, which is a dedicated team delivering comprehensive maintenance and technical solutions. MSC's experienced team builds and maintains our metering systems within substations, ensuring these critical components operate smoothly and efficiently. MSC also verifies meters on our system, ensuring accuracy and integrity of metering equipment.

When our fleet of vehicles and equipment needs attention, WDUS certified technicians, who specialize in a variety of services, are here to keep us running. From N.D. Department of Transportation inspection certifications to utility vehicle repair and maintenance, WDUS's multi-faceted repair shop ensures our cooperative vehicles are always ready.

When we need additional hands to complete a project or repair storm damage, 3C Construction, a construction contractor, is ready to assist our cooperative. Its crews provide reliable solutions for plowing underground cable and for outage restoration efforts. By providing additional manpower and advanced equipment, 3C Construction helps reduce project time and ensures efficient operations to help us continue powering our communities.

Through these partnerships, we can better serve you with cost savings, while maintaining quality of service to our members. By working together, sharing resources and supporting one another, we build a stronger cooperative. During National Co-op Month, we are proud to celebrate what we have accomplished and with whom we have accomplished it! ■



SAFETY STARTS WITH ME: Generator safety

The safety of our members and our employees is a top priority at Slope Electric Cooperative, especially during uncertain situations. When storms impact our area, Slope Electric employees work safely and diligently to restore electric services as soon as weather conditions allow.

When line crews are working on impacted infrastructure, such as downed power lines, they take necessary precautions to ensure their safety. First, they verify a circuit has been de-energized and proper switches are opened and tagged to isolate the circuit from the system. Then, they place grounding straps on the circuit, on both sides of the lineworkers, to make sure the power line cannot be energized while work is being completed.

“Our team works to ensure a safe working environment during every job,” says Shay Olson, apprentice line technician. “But members can also assist in keeping everyone safe.”

Portable generators, which are widely used during an outage, can prove fatal to both line crews and members when used improperly.

Although portable generators can be helpful during outages, we urge you to follow these safety guidelines:

- **Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use.** A generator connected to a home's wiring or plugged into a household outlet can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone who comes into contact with the line, even if the line seems de-energized. Have a licensed electrician install the equipment necessary to safely connect generators to your home.
- **Plug appliances or equipment directly into generators.** Turn off appliances or equipment before plugging them into the generator or turning off the generator.
- **Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords.** Make sure extension cords are free of cuts or tears and the plug has three prongs.

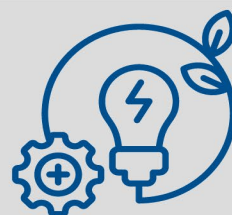


- **Never overload a generator.** A portable generator should only be used when necessary to power essential equipment or appliances.
- **Keep the generator dry.** Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure.
- **In case of a fire hazard, have a fire extinguisher nearby.**
- **Never refuel a generator while it is operating.** Turn the generator off and allow it to cool before refueling.
- **Carefully read the manufacturer's instructions.** Follow the manufacturer's instructions to ensure safe operation.

Rest assured when a storm hits our area, Slope Electric crews are ready to safely restore power to homes and business, but we need your help to remain safe. When we work together for safety and the good of our communities, we all benefit. ■

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

As winter approaches, now is the time to inspect your home for air leaks around windows. Caulking and weatherstripping are simple, effective methods for sealing windows.



SLOPE ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS JULY 22

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Slope Electric Cooperative was held July 22 at the cooperative's headquarters in New England. President Angela Carlson called the meeting to order at 8 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/Operations Manager Dean Volk, Member Relations Manager Brooke Waltner and Board Liaison Connie Hill.

Consent agenda: Amendments were 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 the North Dakota managers meeting, power supplier meetings and more. Several additional Basin Electric Power Cooperative board documents were available

for review.

Department reports: Craigmile provided a financial report. Volk provided a report, including an update on projects. Waltner provided a report, including a staff, program and events update. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report. Grosz provided a legal report.

Action items: The board reviewed and resolved various items, including upcoming delegates for annual meetings and board policies.

Discussion/general information: Omar Abdallah and Nicholas Disanti from the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation provided the board with a cost-of-service study update. The board discussed other items, such as resolutions and sponsorship opportunities.

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 Oct. 30 in New England. ■



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Email us:
comments@slopeelectric.coop
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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

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