



DECEMBER  
2020

**May your homes — and hearts  
— be filled with warmth  
this holiday season.**



*Merry Christmas, and have a safe, prosperous and happy New Year, from the board of directors, managers and staff at Slope Electric Cooperative.*

Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc.

# OUTLOOK

116 E. 12th St. • New England, ND 58647 | 701-579-4191 • [www.slopeelectric.coop](http://www.slopeelectric.coop)

## **In this issue:**

- **Consider serving on the Nominating/Resolutions Committee**
- **Student scholarships available**
- **Line crews patrol power lines**
- **Meeting minutes and more**



From left, Slope Electric employees **Drew Madler**, **Chris Backhaus** and **Lyle Kovar** change a pole near Amidon. This job included a site visit from the safety services team at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, as part of its Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP).



COURTESY PHOTO

The departure of **Chris Backhaus** and his family is a loss for the cooperative and community. Chris has served as a volunteer for New England Fire and Rescue since 2006.

PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY

## Chris Backhaus heads to MDU in Linton

BY CARMEN DEVNEY

In October, Slope Electric Cooperative said thank you and goodbye to Line Technician Chris Backhaus, who has worked out of New England headquarters since 2006. A native of Strasburg who married a woman from Linton, both from KEM Electric Cooperative families, the couple was able to finally move “home.” Chris took a job working as a service technician in Linton for Montana-Dakota Utilities. His first day on the job with MDU was Oct. 26.

Prior to graduating from Pollock High School in Pollock, S.D., Chris made the decision as a junior to pursue line work. His uncle, Tim Dockter, was a lineman at the time for KEM Electric, and he had shared

how projects changed from day to day.

“I think him being a farm boy, and being the outdoors type the way I was, that played a role,” Tim says. “It’s worked out well for him.”

Chris attended the Bismarck State College lineworker program and took his first job with 3C Construction. 3C is a cooperative-owned business that employs linemen who travel across the service areas of Slope, Roughrider and Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperatives, plowing cable and assisting with projects as needed. Occasionally, they are hired by other employers and travel farther.

Chris remembers one job in particular working on Devils Lake,

where he had to retire power line in the water.

Chris worked for 3C Construction for four years, spending much of his time in Bowman and Dickinson. When an opportunity arose to move to Bismarck and work for MDU as summer help, he applied and was hired. He worked there until he received a phone call from a friend, encouraging him to move back to southwest North Dakota and work for Slope Electric.

He did, and that same week, he proposed to Andrea Glatt. The couple married and have two children: Ava and Blake.

For the past 14 years, Chris has mentored fellow line technicians at Slope Electric, as they worked to build and maintain the system. Committed to community, Chris also volunteered on the Building Committee for New England Public School, on the New England Kids Rodeo Committee, and on his kids’ day care board. Perhaps of greatest significance, Chris has volunteered



**Chris Backhaus** digs a hole for trench-box training.

for New England Fire and Rescue since 2006.

Andrea works as a registered nurse at West River Health Services clinic in New England.

Their departure is a loss for the clinic, the cooperative and the community — and a newfound treasure for Emmons County.

Leaving New England was not an easy decision, although Chris and Andrea had hoped to move closer to family for many years. They both have family in the Linton area, and Blake and Ava will go to school with many of their cousins, and see grandparents much more often.

In gaining family, Chris says goodbye to his Slope co-workers, who have become his second family. He shared a memory from many years ago, before safety standards changed the hours they could work. He and Line Technician Lyle Kovar were working an all-nighter to restore electric service. They went out about 9 p.m. in a rain storm and worked all night. They got home at 8 a.m. to get some rest, and were called back to work at 10:30 a.m. to

restore more outages.

“When we finished getting everyone back on, we were supposed to be in Bowman for the annual meeting at 4:30 p.m. We pulled into Bowman at 6 p.m., just in time for the last bit of supper,” he says.

They stayed for the meeting, and to visit with members, before heading home and going to bed.

That was commitment to community. While safety standards

have changed over the years, Chris’ commitment to the members never wavered. He got to know some of the members so well, he says they will be lifetime friends.

Operations Manager Dean Volk says Chris’ can-do attitude made him a leader at Slope Electric.

“Chris is a person anyone could go to; he is always willing to lend a hand. He is a team employee and friend,” Dean says. “He will certainly be missed.”

Chief of Staff/Key Accounts Executive LaWanna Wilhelm says Chris is a fast learner who learned the cooperative’s four-county service area quickly.

“He is friendly and outgoing with the membership, as well as in the community. We will miss his enthusiasm! Our ‘team’ won’t be the same without him,” she says.

While goodbyes are never easy, this is a great opportunity for Chris and Andrea and their family.

Chris, on behalf of the Slope Electric Cooperative membership, we thank you and wish you the best. You will be missed. ■



Slope Electric employees **Chris Backhaus** (left), **Lyle Kovar** (right) and **Drew Madler** prepare to replace a compromised pole.

## Are you interested in serving on the Nominating/Resolutions Committee?

The Slope Electric Board of Directors will appoint the Nominating/Resolutions Committee at their Jan. 28, 2021, Board meeting. Each Director shall appoint one member from his/her District, and the Board at large will select up to two additional committee members from the District(s) with director election(s). The committee member names are then published in Slope Electric's local pages of the *North Dakota Living* magazine.

The Nominating/Resolutions Committee meets twice. The first meeting will be held Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021, to explain the functions of the committee, including policies that will aid you in selecting qualified members to be nominated. The cooperative will pay you a per diem, along with reimbursing you for mileage for both meetings. The second meeting will be held Thursday, March 25. The purpose of this meeting will

be to make the actual nominations for the election to be held at the cooperative's annual meeting, and to approve resolutions to be printed in the annual meeting report.

If you or someone you know is interested in serving on the Nominating/Resolutions Committee, please notify the office at 701-579-4191 or email [comments@slopeelectric.coop](mailto:comments@slopeelectric.coop) prior to Jan. 28, 2021. To serve on the Nominating/Resolutions Committee, you must be an active member of Slope Electric with your name being listed on the membership.

Two directors' terms from Slope County will expire in 2021.

Members can also be nominated to serve as director by filing a petition with 15 members' signatures. Filing must be done 30 days prior to the annual meeting and posted at the office. Members may also be nominated to serve as Director from the floor at the



You can make a difference!

annual meeting. To serve on the Slope Electric Board, you must be a bona fide resident receiving service from Slope Electric at your primary residence, and you must be a named member of the cooperative. ■

### Report from

## THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OCT. 29, 2020

- Approved the agenda with one addition.
- Approved minutes of the Sept. 24, 2020, Board meeting.
- Approved four capital credit estate retirements.
- Approved special equipment for meters.
- Co-General Managers/CEOs gave updates on the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the Cooperative, and the status of Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Dakota Gasification Company. Director Angela Carlson was congratulated for completing the NRECA Board Leadership Program, and Directors Wegner and Larson commended for milestone years of board service.
- Heard reports from Directors who participated in various meetings.
- Discussed estate retirement budget.
- Approved a 2020 capital credit general retirement.
- Approved the deferral of revenue.
- Scheduled the 2021 annual meeting for June 3, 2021; location to be determined.
- Accepted the 2019 Form 990.
- Approved donations to the Bismarck State College Foundation lineworker program and Farm Rescue.
- Tabled one policy review until the next meeting.
- Discussed upcoming meetings and director attendance.
- Reviewed and accepted the September financial report.
- Heard senior staff reports.
- Heard legal department report.
- Held Executive Session.
- Scheduled the next Board meeting for Nov. 19, 2020.
- Adjourned.

# Cooperative offers scholarship opportunities



**Slope Electric Cooperative is offering \$6,000 in college scholarships to area students whose parent(s) or guardian(s) are members of the co-op.**

***Slope Electric will award two \$500 Luck of the Draw scholarships*** to be drawn at the annual meeting. All area high school seniors who are dependents of a Slope Electric member are eligible for this scholarship. Students must attend Slope's annual meeting, accompanied with at least one parent or guardian, and are encouraged to RSVP prior to the meeting. No application is required.

***Slope Electric will also award six \$500 scholarships*** through area high schools to seniors who are dependents of a Slope Electric member. One graduating senior will be selected from each school in Slope's service area: Bowman, Hettinger, Lemmon, Mott-Regent, New England and Scranton. Students should contact the school counselor for requirements.

***Slope continues to award a \$1,000 scholarship sponsored by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.***

Scholarships are awarded to a high school senior or college freshman already enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time graduate or undergraduate program, and who are dependents of a Slope Electric member. The student must attend an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school. Completed application is required.

***In addition, Slope Electric is awarding a \$500 scholarship sponsored by 3C Construction.***

Eligible applicants are high school seniors who are enrolled or planning to enroll in a certified vocational or technical school pursuing a career as a lineworker, and who are dependents of a Slope Electric member. Completed application is required.

***Plus, Slope is awarding a \$500 scholarship sponsored by West Dakota Utility Services.***

Eligible applicants are high school seniors who are enrolled or planning to enroll in a certified vocational or technical school pursuing a career as a mechanic, and who are dependents of a Slope Electric member. Completed application is required.

Students can get the applications from our website, [www.slopeelectric.coop](http://www.slopeelectric.coop), or call the office in New England.

Applications can be filled out online and emailed to [comments@slopeelectric.coop](mailto:comments@slopeelectric.coop), or printed and mailed to Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc., Attn: Scholarship Committee, PO Box 338, New England, ND 58647.

**Please return completed applications to Slope Electric Cooperative by Jan. 31, 2021.**



# SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS & COLLEGE FRESHMEN

## Rules & Eligibility:

- Applicant must be:
  - A dependent child of a member-system consumer or employee.
  - A student who is enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time graduate or under graduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school in the fall of 2021.
- Complete required criteria and the scholarship application.
- Essay is not to exceed one standard 8½ x 11 typewritten, double-spaced page at 12 point font on the topic: **Describe how a cooperative can be economic engines for their local communities.**

## Submit your entry in hard copy or electronic format to Slope Electric.

- Applications available at [www.slopeelectric.coop](http://www.slopeelectric.coop)
- Email entries to [comments@slopeelectric.coop](mailto:comments@slopeelectric.coop)
- Mail hard-copy entries to:
  - Slope Electric Cooperative
  - Attn: Scholarship Committee
  - PO Box 338
  - New England, ND 58647-0338
- Entries must be received by **January 31, 2021.**

If you have any questions, contact us at 701-579-4191 or 1-800-559-4191.

SPONSORED BY:



## Need Help with Heating Costs?

**LIHEAP can help.**

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps eligible low-income households with home heating costs.

- Heating assistance
- Weatherization services (insulation, weather stripping, etc.)
- Furnace and chimney cleaning
- Furnace repair and replacement
- Emergency assistance

Applications are accepted from October 1 through May 31 for each heating season.

For help filling out and submitting the LIHEAP application, call 1-800-823-2417 ext: 140.



[www.communityoptionsnd.com](http://www.communityoptionsnd.com)



## Snowbirds, have you signed up for SmartHub?



**M**embers, are you leaving home for all or part of the winter? Make sure you are signed up for SmartHub to receive important cooperative updates, like planned power outages,

while you are away! You will receive a text message or email notifying you of important information related to your electric service.

Now's a good time to also make sure Slope Electric has your current contact information! To verify your telephone number or email address, or request an update, call 701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191. Or, log into your SmartHub account to update your information.

If you do not have a SmartHub account, set one up by going to [www.slopeelectric.coop](http://www.slopeelectric.coop) and selecting Your Account, Ways To Pay and SmartHub.

Slope Electric also has a Facebook page! Please like and follow to learn timely cooperative and community news.

Members, thank you for staying in touch and helping us keep you informed! ■

## Youth Tour update



Due to circumstances surrounding the pandemic, the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour essay-writing contest and trip has been sidelined for 2021. Safety is the culture of Slope Electric Cooperative, and while we are disappointed at this turn of events, we know better years are ahead for our students and our chaperones. Members, thank you for your understanding as we navigate these ever-changing times.



116 E. 12th St. - PO Box 338  
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Phone: 701-579-4191  
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Email us:  
comments@slopeelectric.coop

**UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATES**  
800-795-0555 or 811

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### SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Lauren Klewin, President  
Steve Wegner, Vice President  
Anthony Larson, Secretary  
Jerome Caron, Treasurer  
Angela Carlson, Director  
HJ "Chip" Fischer, Director  
Dale Hande, Director  
Charlotte Meier, Director

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### MANAGEMENT

Donald A. Franklund  
CO-GM/GEO

Travis Kupper  
CO-GM/GEO

[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.*



Our entire organization wishes our member-owners a very Merry Christmas, and a safe and Happy New Year!  
In observance of the holidays in December and January, Slope Electric Cooperative will be closed:

**Thursday afternoon, Dec. 24,  
and Friday, Dec. 25, for Christmas**

**Friday, Jan. 1, 2021, for New Year's Day**

**Members:** Line crews will be available in case of an emergency or power outage.