

Adams and Slope counties form livestock judging team

BY ANNE HANSEN

Rooted in the region's agricultural heritage, the combined Adams County and Slope County livestock judging team represents not only a passion for livestock, but the nurturing of essential life skills, forging a path toward success extending far beyond the 4-H event.

In the early 2000s, Adams and Slope counties united their efforts so more 4-H participants could experience livestock judging. The team ranges from second-graders to seasoned high school seniors, all drawn together by a shared love for livestock.

At the core of this endeavor is more than just the love of animals, says Alix Manthei, one of the team coaches.

"Livestock judging helps provide the judges with important life skills – problem solving, reasoning and public speaking," she says.

Earning a spot in Denver

In 2023, the senior team, which consists of Sophia Kennedy, Blake Larson, Mace Stuber and Grady Bock, scored a second-place victory at the state competition. The judges, equipped with an eye for detail, assessed cattle, sheep, goats, swine and more. They demonstrated their skills by delivering well-reasoned judgments and impressively racking up a total score of 1,798 points. Their dedication and expertise saw them narrowly miss the top spot by a mere seven points.

For the Adams and Slope county livestock judging team, qualifying for the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colo., in 2024 is a colossal achievement.

"It's more than a competition. It's an opportunity to proudly represent North Dakota on a national stage," Manthei says. "In the world of livestock, this is an aspiration that not every young judge gets to fulfill."

The road to success is not easy. It's paved with countless hours of practice, including live workouts, mock contests and intense reasoning sessions. They meet regularly to refine their skills, knowing true excellence is forged through dedication and hard work.

Looking ahead, the team's goals are clear – to recruit and nurture more judges, to shine brightly at the Denver show and to make 2024 a season to remember. ■



Slope Electric Cooperative Inc.

OUTLOOK

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Manager's message: Playing it safe online



Travis Kupper

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting other valuables, such as your identity, banking, health records and other sensitive information, from digital attacks and theft.

In addition to pumpkin spice lattes and crisper air, fall is the time of year we often see a rise in phishing scams. While taking necessary steps to protect our personal information is a year-round practice, Slope Electric Cooperative uses this time to share helpful cybersecurity reminders across our team of employees.

Given our increased reliance on internet-connected devices and gadgets, I'd like to share a few cybersecurity tips and let you know how Slope Electric is working to boost our own cybersecurity efforts.

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, an agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which is responsible for strengthening cybersecurity and infrastructure protection, these are the four best ways to keep you and your family safe online.

1. **Turn on multi-factor authentication or two-step verification on your accounts.** The additional layer of protection makes it much harder for criminals to access your information. Even if hackers obtain your password, they may be unable to access your accounts if multistep verification is enabled.
2. **Update your software.** This is one of the easiest ways to protect your personal data. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that created it. Beware of fake popups that request urgent downloads. Better yet, turn on automatic updates.
3. **Think before you click.** Most successful cyberattacks start with a phishing email. Don't take the bait when cyber criminals go phishing. Avoid emails (or texts) that look too good to be true, oddly

- urgent, poorly crafted or include unusual requests.
4. **Use strong passwords.** Use long, unique and complex words or phrases. Consider using a password manager to save time. It works across all devices, protects your identity and notifies you of potential phishing websites.


For the young people in your household

Just as you would talk with your children about safety in the physical world, discuss ways to stay safe online. Help them understand the public nature of the internet. Young people need to know what is shared online stays online and is difficult (if not impossible) to take back. Just as you would guard your money or valuables, children need to learn to guard their personal information, especially on social networks. As a parent or guardian, help your children learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks and gaming sites.

Keeping electric grid and your data secure

We're doing our share on the cyber front. Part of offering excellent service is keeping that service secure and reliable. For Slope Electric, reliability means repairing wear-and-tear, upgrading our equipment to withstand storms and severe weather, and using technology and best practices to keep our system secure from cybersecurity issues. We also work together with co-ops across the country to develop new technologies and infrastructure, learn from each other and keep the grid's network secure.

While we can't stop a storm or predict every disruption, as a co-op, we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. Because if we all do our part, our interconnected world will be safer and more secure for everyone. ■



Need help with your heating costs? LIHEAP can help



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 make ends meet. Thankfully, there are programs to help members make ends meet.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as LIHEAP, can help low-income and eligible individuals when it comes to heating and insulation costs. Through the N.D. Department of Human Services, human service zone offices and Community Options, individuals can be helped with a variety of services when it comes to heating assistance.

Services offered

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

“For example, if someone lives in a 100-year-old home with outdated windows, LIHEAP can help cover some of the costs for new windows as well as insulation and furnace repairs. These upgrades make the home more energy efficient and reduce their heating costs,” says Shannon Rolandson, outreach officer at Community Options.

The assistance program may also help with the

costs of furnace and chimney cleaning, emergency assistance and energy cost-reduction devices.

It is important to remember this program is not only for homeowners, Rolandson says.

“This program not only helps low-income homeowners with energy costs, but renters as well,” she says.

Apply for LIHEAP

LIHEAP eligible members can apply from Oct. 1 through May 31.

“Some individuals can be referred to the program, but anyone is welcomed,” Rolandson says.

Upon applying for LIHEAP, an outreach coordinator will go into your home and assist you in gathering necessary documentation for the service. From there, an application and supporting documents are sent to the state for review. Results may take up to 45 days to review and process.

“This year, the team has been very busy with outreach activities across the state to share information about Community Options programs with our clients and our partnering agencies,” Rolandson says. “We started scheduling appointments to help those who are on a fixed income with their LIHEAP applications in September. Our goal is to share the most information to the most people about the economic assistance programs available.”

Last year, Community Options processed a total of 607 household applications, and 385 were approved for LIHEAP. If you, or someone you know, would like to apply, visit your local human service office for more information.

Applications will be accepted from Oct. 1 through May 31 and can be found online at www.applyforhelp.nd.gov or by request at the local human service zone office or Community Options office. ■



Scan the QR code to connect with Community Options for service assistance.



Shay Olson, apprentice line worker.



Brad Schmitt, apprentice line worker.

National Apprenticeship Week

Slope Electric Cooperative is celebrating National Apprenticeship Week Nov. 13 to 19 in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor. Apprenticeships provide demand-driven education, allowing apprentices to earn while they learn – helping to close the gap between the skills job creators seek and jobs seekers need.

National Apprenticeship Week provides an opportunity to spotlight how apprenticeships can help employees grow in knowledge and skill to succeed in today's workplace. In exchange, these employees have

the opportunity to learn from veteran employees and mentors and earn wages and benefits that sustain families. Those family members work, go to school, purchase goods from area businesses, volunteer in our communities, and ultimately sustain our smaller towns and improve our quality of life.

Slope Electric is proud to highlight apprentice lineworkers Brad Schmitt and Shay Olson. We thank all the apprentices who are helping electric cooperatives provide safe, reliable and affordable electric service. ■

Help shape the future of Slope Electric

At the upcoming Dec. 15 board of directors meeting, Slope Electric Cooperative board of directors will appoint the Nominating/Resolutions Committee. This is your chance to play an active role in our cooperative's decision-making process!

Here's what you need to know

- **Representation:** Directors 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 per diem and mileage reimbursement for both committee meetings.

The first meeting, scheduled for January 16, 2024 at 10:30 am, will provide insights into the committee's functions, including the policies that guide us in nominating qualified members. The second meeting, Feb. 29, 2024 at 9:00 am, is when the committee will roll up their sleeves to make official 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. ■

Safety Starts with ME: Generator safety

Slope Electric Cooperative works year-round to keep your electricity flowing and accessible, but sometimes weather conditions hinder lineworkers' response times. The safety of our members and our employees is a top priority at Slope Electric, especially during dangerous times. When storms hit our area, Slope Electric rushes to your aid as soon as weather conditions allow our lineworkers to travel and make repairs safely.

Our line crews take necessary precautions before they work on downed power lines.

"First, they verify a circuit has been de-energized, and that proper switches are opened and tagged to isolate the circuit from the system. We place ground chains on the circuit – on both sides of workers – to make sure the line cannot be energized while work's being done," says Kennedy Fricke, member services representative for Slope Electric.

Safety Starts with ME (and YOU)

Even though lineworkers are taking all the safety precautions, they still need help from you to make sure they are safe when generators are in use.

"Slope Electric is proud of our outstanding safety record, but sometimes, no matter how many steps we take to keep everyone safe, the very people we are there to help unknowingly put our lives in danger," Fricke says. "Portable generators, widely used when power lines are down, can prove fatal to lineworkers and your neighbors when used improperly."

And Slope Electric employees are not the only ones in danger when a portable generator is used improperly. Generator owners themselves may be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules.

Portable generators can be very helpful to consumers during outages. But we urge you to follow these safety guidelines when using one:

- **Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use.** This can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including lineworkers making repairs. Have a licensed electrician install the equipment necessary to safely connect emergency generators to your home.



- **Always plug appliances directly into generators.** Connecting the generator to your home's circuits or wiring must be done by a qualified, licensed electrician who will install a transfer switch to prevent backfeeding.
- **Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords.** Make sure extension cords are free of cuts or tears and the plug has three prongs. Overloaded cords can cause fires or equipment damage.
- **Ensure your generator is properly grounded.**
- **Never overload a generator.** A portable generator should only be used when necessary to power essential equipment or appliances.
- **Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.**
- **Keep the generator dry.** Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure.
- **Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.**
- **Never fuel a generator while it is operating.**
- **Read and adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for safe operation.** Never cut corners when it comes to safety.

"Help us to protect the well-being and safety of your family during outages, and safeguard those who come to your aid during emergency situations. When we work together for safety and the good of our communities, we all benefit," Fricke says. ■

NURTURING HOPE:

The Giving Tree's compassionate impact and quest for a permanent home



The Giving Tree stands as a compassionate pillar for Bowman and Slope county residents, particularly during times of financial strain and the holiday season. Rooted in love and hope, its focus on the elderly, grieving and the lonely makes it a beacon of support.

A recent partnership between Slope Electric Cooperative and The Giving Tree has amplified those efforts. Through Operation Round Up, Slope Electric has given funds to the cause.

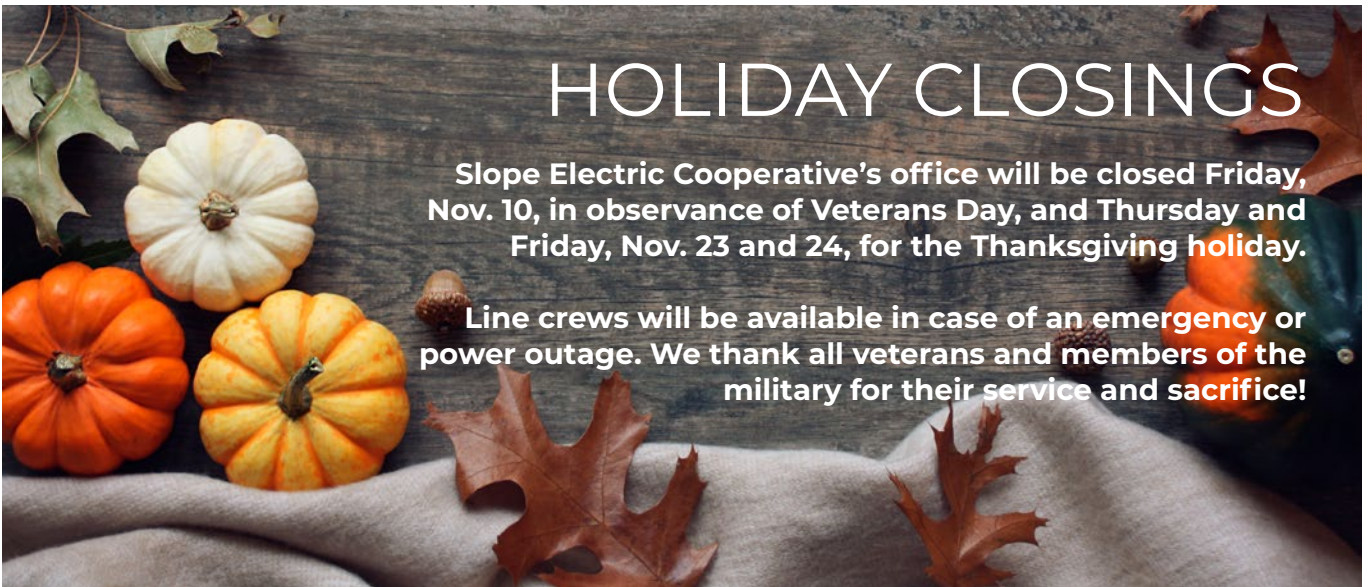
"This collaboration embodies the cooperative spirit and resonates deeply with the community," says Brooke Waltner, manager of member relations for Slope Electric.

The Giving Tree's impactful initiatives include gifting Christmas presents to struggling families, delivering Christmas cacti as symbols of solace for those grieving and providing medical travel baskets, exemplifying a dedication to comprehensive assistance.

From supplying grocery gift cards and winter wear to aiding the elderly and giving fruit baskets and cacti, the impact is far-reaching. However, a permanent space is the next crucial step for its seamless operation. Envisioning a bustling Giving Tree Resource Center, it aims to create a year-round hub of community service.

"The donation from Slope Electric is greatly appreciated and has been put toward our building fund. Receiving the \$1,000 puts us one step closer to our dream of a permanent location," says Edna Paulson, executive director at The Giving Tree.

Despite concluding its annual Christmas concert fundraiser, the organization tenaciously pursues its mission. Community donations sustain The Giving Tree, while it actively seek grants and funding for a permanent location. The Giving Tree's story is one of unwavering commitment, a story that continues to unfold through its dedication to uplifting communities. ■



HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Slope Electric Cooperative's office will be closed Friday, Nov. 10, in observance of Veterans Day, and Thursday and Friday, Nov. 23 and 24, for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Line crews will be available in case of an emergency or power outage. We thank all veterans and members of the military for their service and sacrifice!

APPLY FOR A TRIP OF A LIFETIME

WHAT IS YOUTH TOUR?

- An all-expense-paid trips to Washington, D.C., paid for by Slope Electric Cooperative.
- A week of visiting historic monuments, touring world class museums, learning about electric cooperatives and meeting elected officials.
- Developing lifelong friendships with delegates from across the country!



JUNE 15 TO 21, 2024

TWO ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIPS TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

ESSAY QUESTION

If chosen as a Youth Tour delegate, you will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to experience and learn about America's rich history. What moment in American history do you wish you had been a part of and what would you have contributed?

HOW TO APPLY

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school, and you and your parents or guardian must be served by Slope Electric Cooperative.
- 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.
- Questions? Call Brooke at 701-579-2252 during regular business hours.
- **The deadline is Jan. 19, 2024.**

EMPOWER



LEARN MORE AT NDYOUTHTOUR.COM



LOOK

Slope Electric Board Meeting Minutes Highlights: August 24, 2023

The August meeting of the board of directors of Slope Electric Cooperative was held on Aug. 24 at the cooperative's headquarters in New England. President Steven Wegner called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. Slope Electric's Legal Counsel Jennifer Grosz was designated as the meeting recorder. Board quorum was met. Also present were Slope Electric's Co-general managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Alex Craigmile, Operations Manager Dean Volk, Manager of Member Relations Brooke Waltner and Executive Assistant and Board Liaison Connie Hill. The meeting commenced with a review of the mission statement, followed by an invocation delivered by Slope Electric Secretary Angela Carlson.

Consent agenda: There was an addition to the consent agenda. The agenda was approved as amended. The July 27 meeting minutes were also approved, along with the capital credit estate retirements.

Strategic/action: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers report, which included an Upper Missouri Power Cooperative and North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives manager meeting update. They also reported on SRS, Basin Electric Power Cooperative's annual meeting and the crisis communication guide. The report also included an update from West Dakota Utility Services (WDUS) and Basin Electric.

Action items: Carlson was selected as voting delegate and Chip Fisher was elected as alternate voting delegate for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association meeting. Meier was appointed to serve as the co-op's Operation Round Up delegate starting in 2024. Wegner was appointed as the voting delegate at the RESCO annual meeting.

Department reports: Craigmile reviewed the July financial reports and is working on the 2024 budget with Volk. Volk provided the operations report, with details on substation maintenance, outage reports, new service requests and tree trimming occurring in the service area. Waltner presented the member relations report, including proposed changes to scholarship opportunities, Youth Tour participation and regional meetings. Grosz gave a legal counsel report, which included projects she is working on for the cooperative. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a report, which was also reviewed.

Upcoming meetings and events were shared with the board.

The meeting concluded with the adjournment and Secretary Carlson certified the accuracy of the minutes.

Next meeting date: The next meeting date was set for Sept. 28 at the cooperative's headquarters in New England. ■



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

MANAGEMENT

Jason Bentz
CO-GM/CEO

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