

# Donning the blue and gold



COURTESY PHOTO

New England High School FFA member **Stetson Urlacher** steps into a new leadership role this year as the North Dakota FFA state secretary.

Slope Electric Cooperative Inc.

# OUTLOOK

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## *Donning the blue and gold*

# Stetson Urlacher steps into state FFA office

BY LUANN DART

**S**tetson Urlacher found some magic woven into the fabric of that blue corduroy FFA jacket this summer.

The New England High School graduating senior attained state-level success during the FFA State Convention June 7-10 in Fargo, when he was elected as the 2021-22 North Dakota FFA state secretary.

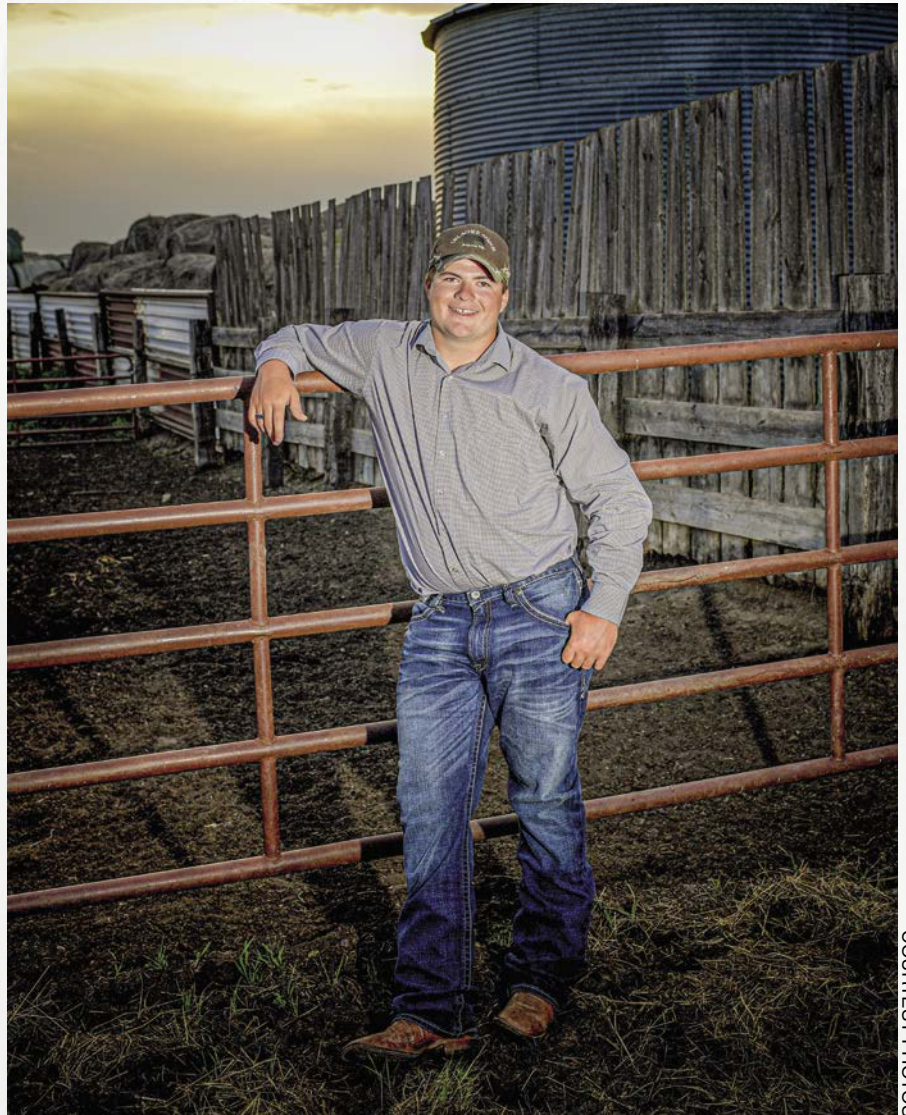
Stetson, the son of Gregg and Mary Urlacher, is a member of the New England High School FFA chapter. The family farm is served by Slope Electric Cooperative.

"It's awesome. He's still smiling from ear to ear. He has a grin big enough to drive a semi through," FFA Advisor Ben Krebs said following the convention. "It's not only a good reflection on him, but our chapter, our school and the whole community."

"Since I was a sophomore, I knew I wanted to be a part of the state office team. I wanted to help lead North Dakota FFA," Stetson says.

"I'm super thankful for not only the New England FFA chapter, but New England High School for being so supportive of me, not just in the last few weeks, but in my entire high school career. They've really pushed me to not only be my best, but do my best and I couldn't have imagined being anywhere else. It's been an amazing chapter and school to be a part of," says Stetson, who plans to attend North Dakota State University to study agricultural communications and political science in the fall.

State office candidates go through a series of interviews, an impromptu scenario, a team-building activity and a written test. A screening committee then nominates candidates for each office.



COURTESY PHOTOS

**Stetson Urlacher** was elected as the North Dakota FFA state secretary during the FFA State Convention June 7-10 in Fargo.

"Going into the few weeks before state convention, I was nervous and excited, because I had never been part of the process before, so I had no idea what it was going to look like," Stetson says.

As a state officer, Stetson spent the summer in training sessions, at the North Dakota State Fair, traveling to other events, and will attend the National FFA Convention in October in Indianapolis, Ind.

## 'Learning to do'

"Learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, living to serve" is the FFA motto, and those training sessions on leadership, service and FFA have inspired Stetson even more.

"We've been given a big opportunity to learn not only more about ourselves, but more about others and how to help others," he says.

"North Dakota FFA has really given me a home away from home. They've given me a chance to not only show the state who I am, but what I can be and what I hope to accomplish," Stetson says. "North Dakota FFA has given me a lot of opportunities to grow, whether that was through career development events or through my running for state office."

Stetson joined FFA as an eighth-grader, first competing in the career development event of ag sales. He served as the chapter sentinel for the past two years, and as parliamentarian as a sophomore.

"As many of the highs you'll have, whether it's winning a local contest or it's getting a gold pin, there's always an equal low, which is maybe not doing so well at the next contest," he says. "It reflects life and agricultural life. We look at this year with the drought and mixed commodity prices and we look at this as a low, but if you look back a couple years, we've had some good highs as well. It's cool that is an experience I've had in FFA and it's a common experience in the agricultural world. It's just another testament to the things that FFA can teach young individuals."

Stetson has learned other lessons through FFA.

"Understanding the value of a personal connection is the biggest life skill I'll take away from FFA," he says.

"I've learned the best way to get your message across is to make a true connection with people. Sometimes you can establish a connection as quick as a handshake," he says.

Those personal connections extend into the local chapter and communities.

"There are so many more ways to be involved in FFA than people realize," he says. Attending chapter banquets or donating to the chapter or asking the local chapter for representation at an event are all ways to support the local chapter, he says.

## Family ties

Stetson's sister, Bailey Urlacher, who will be a sophomore at New England High School, also found success at the state convention, as the state FFA champion in creed speaking.

"I am so proud of her," Stetson says. "I knew it was very attainable for her and she blew everybody out of the water. She totally exceeded my expectations and I couldn't have asked for a better little sister and a better way to start my FFA state officer year."

Bailey first qualified for the state competition at the district level in September. "I decided to do creed speaking, because I love public speaking skills and I just have a real passion for getting in front of an audience and speaking," she says. "I was fairly nervous before the first round and for the finals round, too, but I was confident in the sense I knew what I was doing. I was just nervous for the whole experience."

With the cancellation of the state convention last year due to COVID-19, this was Bailey's first state convention competition. Creed competitors must recite the FFA creed, then answer questions related to the creed. As the winner, Bailey also recited the creed to the entire convention hall of FFA members.

In August, she will learn if she has qualified to compete in the national convention.

Both Stetson and Bailey encourage others to consider FFA membership.

"Know exactly what you want to accomplish. By setting yourself clear



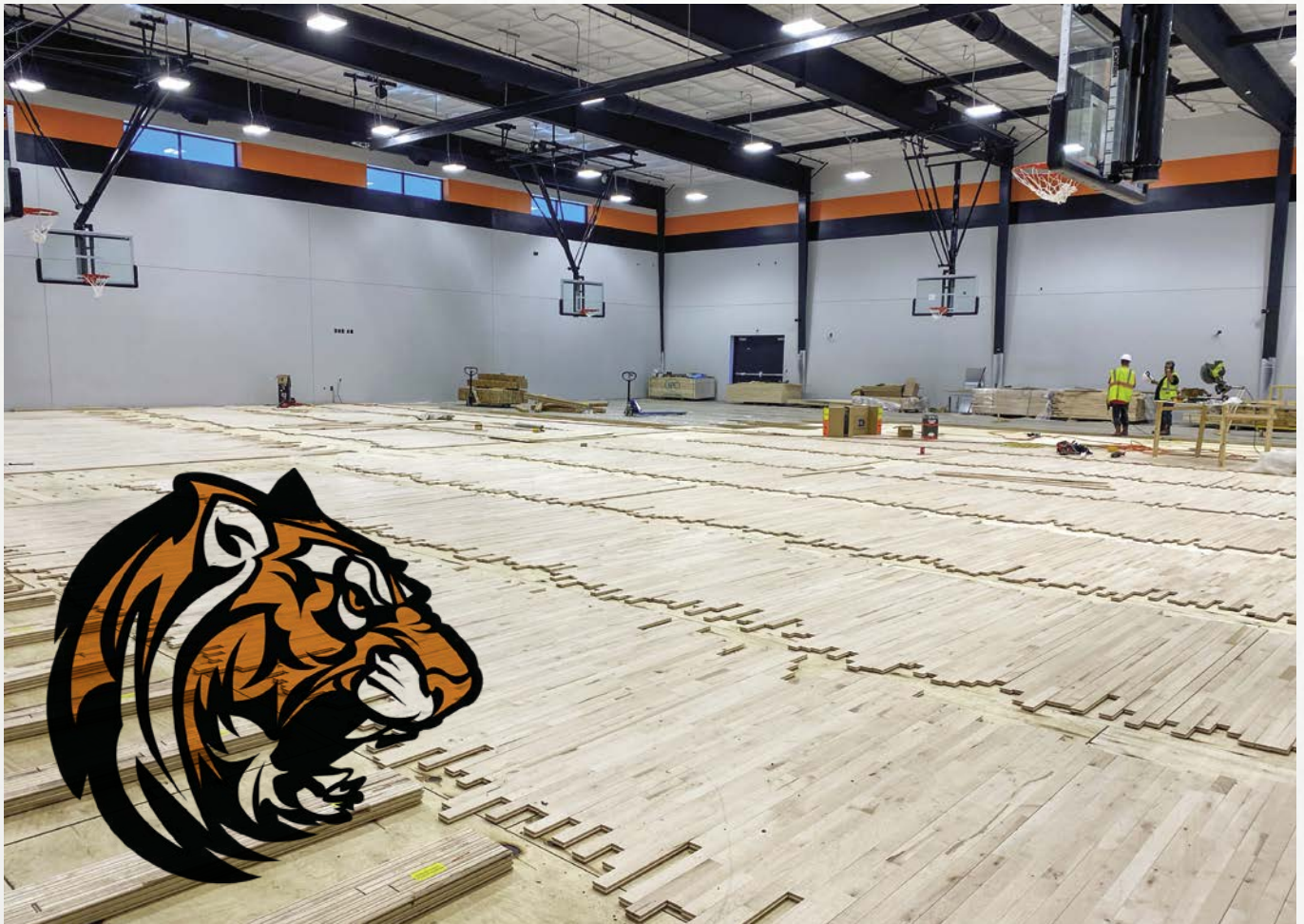
**Bailey Urlacher** is the state champion in FFA creed speaking.

and attainable goals, it can lead you to really great satisfaction," Stetson says.

"I like how it's really focused on agriculture and I have an opportunity to learn more about agriculture and gain leadership skills and build friendships that will last a lifetime," Bailey shares. ■



The Urlacher family, served by Slope Electric Cooperative, includes **Stetson, Mary, Stockton** (front), **Gregg** and **Bailey**.



A new multipurpose physical education (PE) facility will allow for more class offerings and more practice space for athletes.

## *Tiger pride*

# New England school construction envisions future

BY LUANN DART

Amid the clamor of clanging metal and the metallic whine of power tools, New England School District Superintendent Kelly Koppinger steps around boxes of materials awaiting installation.

It's mid-summer, and the vision of the \$9.5 million construction project at the New England Public School is taking shape, but Koppinger probably

won't exhale until the projected opening day of school Aug. 25.

"I think our community has got to be pretty proud of what we've accomplished, because the timing was great. And people coming together and making sure we're setting ourselves up for the next 20 or 30 years is of great importance to our community. The pride our community has shown in

putting together a project like this is pretty impressive," he said.

The 30,000-square-foot addition includes a new cafeteria with a full-service kitchen, a music room with practice rooms, new elementary classrooms, a new multipurpose physical education (PE) facility with locker rooms, and a storage area off the gym.

The construction project also entails renovation of 6,800 square feet inside the existing school.

The project became necessary with increasing enrollment and overcrowding in the lower elementary school classrooms, Koppinger said.

“We have had steadily increasing enrollment,” he said. “We’ve more than doubled our enrollment over the last 10 years and much of that is in our lower elementary grades, so we have some overcrowding in those lower elementary grades that I would like to split to offset that.”

Historical enrollment trends show the school at 140 students 10 years ago, compared to 305 students projected for this fall.

“We were in hallways. We had paraprofessionals and teachers working with small groups of students in the hallways,” he said. “Yeah, we were in trouble.”

The need for the project is evident elsewhere, too.

“Safety was a big issue. Space was a big issue. Just offering more courses for our high school was another issue. ... Just separation between our high school and grade school. We now have high school on one end and grade school on the other end of the building,” he said.

“There’s been a lot of excitement. We’ve had kids who want to go through and tour the building,” he said.

## Project details

A main component of the renovation of the current space is incorporating public access to the current gymnasium and weightroom after-hours to play basketball, walk laps or lift weights. The current music room is being converted into the fitness area.

“Our plan is to open this up to the community. Our weightroom and our old gym will be open to the community for after-hours,” Koppinger said.

With the school colors strongly represented in orange, black, white



*The new cafeteria can seat 300 students easily, although high school and elementary students will eat separately.*

and gray throughout the building, construction began last fall, and the schedule and budget have been on target. The only delays have been acquisition of floor tile, projected to be installed mid-August, some back-ordered furniture and fixtures, and the ability of teachers to get into their classrooms to finalize during construction, which means the August rush may push the school’s opening day back a couple days if necessary. A public open house will also be planned in August.

“We have some tile that’s on a boat somewhere, so we’re waiting for that to come in,” Koppinger said.

“Just a couple little glitches that we ran into that were remedied by some local support,” Koppinger said.

Talking over the sounds of power tools and stepping around construction materials, Koppinger led a tour of the school.

Here are some of the major changes within the school:

- The kindergarten room will be

relocated to where bathrooms will be located within the classroom.

- The existing cafeteria and kitchen are being renovated into additional classrooms. The school had to rotate lunch shifts from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. to accommodate everyone in the cramped space.

“One of our main priorities was to make sure we had a kitchen/cafeteria,” Koppinger said.

The new cafeteria can seat 300 students easily, although high school and elementary students will eat separately. The space will also serve as a commons area for the high school students to congregate before classes start.

“This is one of my favorite rooms,” Koppinger said inside the cafeteria, with its soaring ceilings and tall windows.

- The school will have a new front entrance and administrative offices.

“Part of that was to alleviate the problems that we had with traffic,” Koppinger said. “We had our kids



October 2020



January 2021



July 2021

*A timeline of construction at New England High School shows construction last fall through July 1.*

parking with our bus parking in the same area that our parents were dropping kids off and for the last seven years, I went to bed happy that we didn't have any accidents." Student parking will now be in the current parking area, parent drop-off will be at the new front entrance and bus loading will be from a side door on the east side of the building. So, high school and elementary traffic won't mix anymore.

- Inside the gym, seating accommodates 750 people. A curtain drops to create two practice courts. That means no more early-morning practices for athletes competing for gym time, Koppinger said.

- The music room, with gray-and-black acoustic tiles on the walls, includes four isolated practice rooms.

"This turned out to be nice, too," he said. "We tried to cram about 80 kids in for choir into our old music room and it just wasn't conducive and no real place to do any isolated practice sessions for individuals or small group settings."

- The new addition will house preK-sixth grade classrooms, with an area for students to work with teachers separately. The playground will be on the north side of the school.

- The school will have central heat and air throughout. The entire safety system is being upgraded as part of the project, such as the paging, clocks, fire alarms and security systems. So, both the surveillance and access controls are all being replaced with new systems and integrated into the



*The music room, with gray-and-black acoustic tiles on the walls, includes four isolated practice rooms.*

new addition.

The project is being funded with a \$5.5 million low-interest school construction loan through the Bank of North Dakota, with the remaining coming from the school's building fund, Koppinger said.

"We've been pretty diligent with oversight of our funds in the past six or seven years to be able to build up our building fund to the point where we felt comfortable with moving forward with

that building project," he said.

On Nov. 6, 2018, community members from New England approved a referendum to build the addition to address enrollment, and educational and program needs for the district.

Photos of the construction progress are being posted at: <https://www.senserasystems.com/public/embed/M78015716B25>. ■

# LOOK UP FOR HAZARDS ON THE FARM

Overhead power lines are necessary to deliver electricity to hardworking farmers and ranchers, but those same power lines can also be deadly if not treated with respect. While you need to focus on the field and your machinery, Slope Electric Cooperative urges you to also watch for electrical hazards around the farm or ranch.

## BE AWARE

- Be aware of overhead power lines and keep equipment and extensions far away from them.
- Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines on all sides. Field cultivators and sprayers can often reach as high as 12 feet in the air.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of a grain truck. It can be difficult to estimate distance, and a power line may be closer than it looks.
- Always lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level before moving or transporting them.

## USE A SPOTTER

- Avoid moving large equipment alone. Have someone watch as you move equipment to ensure you are clear of power lines.
- When raising or lowering equipment, it is difficult to estimate distance, too. Use a spotter to make certain you stay far away from power lines.

WISH YOU A VERY HAPPY



**Holiday closing:  
Monday, Sept. 6**

In observance of the Labor Day holiday in September, Slope Electric Cooperative will be closed on Monday, Sept. 6. Line crews will be available for emergencies and power outages by calling 701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191. Please call either of these numbers to log your specific information with dispatch, and you will receive assistance as quickly and safely as possible.



*Report from*  
**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
*Regular meeting held at New England headquarters*

**JUNE 21, 2021**

- Conducted its annual reorganizational meeting
- Approved the agenda as presented
- Approved minutes of the May 27 board meeting
- Approved two capital credit estate retirements
- Heard co-general managers/CEOs updates
- Reviewed West Dakota Utility Services/3C Construction update
- Heard power supplier updates
- Approved Board Policy 02-15 and 02-16
- Discussed upcoming meetings, director attendance and voting delegates
- Reviewed and accepted May financials as presented
- Heard senior staff report
- Heard legal counsel report
- Heard information technology report
- Held voucher review
- Scheduled the next board meeting for July 29
- Held executive session
- Adjourned

The next meeting will be held Aug. 26.



## Explore it ... Adore it ... and Save!

In partnership with the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation, Slope Electric Cooperative is once again making excursions to Medora more affordable for families. This summer, our members are eligible for a 15% discount off the following reservations:

- Tickets to the Medora Musical
  - Pitchfork Steak Fondue
  - Bully Pulpit Golf Course
  - Lodging at the Badlands Motel, Elkhorn Quarters and Rough Riders Hotel
- Members will receive a 20% discount at the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

To make your reservations and claim your savings, call 1-800-MEDORA-1 and provide the discount code **Touch2021**. When visiting the Cowboy Hall of Fame, provide the discount code **Touch2021** at the door. ■



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