



## Helping communities move forward by giving back

On the job for Slope Electric, **Mark Frank** helps build and maintain the electric distribution system that keeps power flowing to our members. In this month's local pages on C4 and C5, learn how he is also powering local communities — by volunteering with the New England Fire Department.

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:

- Powering communities through donations and volunteer efforts
- Slope earns Safety Award, RESAP recertification
- Consider serving Slope Electric as a board member
- Prepare for tax season with SmartHub
- Meeting minutes ... and more

## ‘To move forward, you have to give back’

**T**his quote from Oprah Winfrey reflects the special bond that ties Slope Electric Cooperative to our members and to the communities we serve.

With Giving Hearts Day approaching, we want to share some of our charitable efforts over the past year thanks to support from you, our members. We appreciate the opportunity to give back while providing an essential service, and being a part of area progress.

When we helped bring electric service to rural North Dakota more than 75 years ago, the quality of life improved. In some parts of our service area, the landscape is still quite rural. From our farming and ranching members to area residents and business owners, oil developers and more, Slope’s membership is quite diverse. That diversity, coupled with changes in technology, energy and government regulations, can result in challenges.

While our short- and long-term needs may differ, we share the same desire to see our area communities thrive – because like you, we live here, too.

While our top priority is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electric service to you, equally important is our mission to enrich your quality of life. Concern for community is the seventh electric cooperative principle, and central to the way in which we operate.

As your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, we know that electricity plays a critical role in modern-day life. We also know it takes more than poles and power lines to energize our local communities.

Reflecting on 2020, from the New England office to Bowman and everywhere in between, we hope we made a difference. In addition to conferring several Operation Round Up grants, we donated to Missouri River Quilts of Valor to support area veterans. We also donated to Farm Rescue, to support members who had experienced a hardship and needed assistance seeding or harvesting crops.

We sent Josie Brennan, our Electric Cooperative Youth Tour essay-contest winner, a scholarship when the pandemic forced the cancellation of the weeklong trip to Washington, D.C. We also awarded \$4,000 in student scholarships to help finance the educational journeys of students we hope will one day return to this area and add value.

With safety in mind, we frequently addressed a



*Slope Electric gave a donation to Farm Rescue, which helps farmers and ranchers in dire need. Member **Alton Lien**, of Regent, was one recipient.*

PHOTO BY TAMMY LIEN

variety of electrical dangers and safety precautions on social media. We posted easy word searches and crossword puzzles to keep kids busy during the pandemic. Members, if you haven’t already, please like and follow us on Facebook to learn timely cooperative and community news!

Slope, as a member of the Rural Development Finance Corporation, played a role in awarding four area grants. One went to Adams County 4-H Leaders Council, to help them develop a shooting sports program. When we learned their 4-H members could use eye protection during practices, we purchased and delivered safety glasses to the Extension office in Hettinger.

Many of our employees are also active behind the scenes, volunteering to power our local communities. Also in this month’s local pages, meet Line Technician Mark Frank, who responds to grass fires and car accidents for the New England Fire Department. Over in Bowman, Line Technician Cody Braaten does the same for the Bowman Fire Department. Over the years, we’ve had many employees and directors serve on school boards, help at county fairs and coach youth sports. The list goes on and on, and our small towns keep going because people always step up to the plate and say, “Yes. I’m busy, but I can help.”

Over the last seven decades, our community-focused people and programs have lifted community spirits — and of course — kept the lights on to power your lives

and empower all of our actions. We couldn't do any of this without you, our members.



PHOTO BY HANNAH NORDBY

As a member of the Rural Development Finance Corporation, Slope Electric had a role in conferring a grant to the Adams County 4-H Leaders Council in Hettinger for a new shooting sports program. When Operations Manager Dean Volk learned their 4-H members could use eye protection during practices, he purchased and delivered safety glasses on behalf of the cooperative to the Extension office.

In partnership with you, we will continue moving forward by giving back. We all benefit by working together to improve the quality of life in our local communities.

Slope Electric's annual meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 3, in Bowman. We hope the pandemic will have subsided enough by that time so we can bring neighbors and friends together. Members, your active participation in the cooperative helps guide our efforts as we plan for the future. While the environment in which we operate is constantly changing, one thing remains the same: By working together, we can continue to do good things for our communities. ■



Slope Electric's Operation Round Up program helped fund Quilts of Valor for area veterans this summer. Member **Lucas Greff**, of Regent, was one recipient.

## Giving Hearts Day: Feb. 11



**G**iving Hearts Day is a 24-hour fundraising event for charities in North Dakota and Minnesota. Since the first event in 2008, generous donors have given more than \$90 million. One-hundred percent goes directly to participating charities.

This year Giving Hearts Day will be held Thursday, Feb. 11.

If you feel it's safe, consider volunteering for your favorite organization! Your time, skills and labor make a difference!

If you prefer to give a financial gift, visit [www.givingheartsday.org](http://www.givingheartsday.org) and click "ways to give" to find some of your favorite organizations. Or, contact your favorite local organization and inquire on ways to give.

Much like our Operation Round Up program, small donations add up to make a big difference! ■

## VOLUNTEERING — AN IMPORTANT PART OF COMMUNITY

# Meet Slope Electric employee Mark Frank; one of many volunteers who help power our local communities

BY CARMEN DEVNEY

**A**cross North Dakota, you will find many electric cooperative linemen volunteering for their local fire department. Their service is greatly appreciated because of their qualifications: They are used to responding to trouble calls, they know the back roads in their service area, and in many instances, they know the members who need help. Perhaps their greatest qualification is this — they are willing to serve.

Slope Electric Line Technician Mark Frank is one of those volunteers. He responds to grass and hay bale fires, vehicle accidents and more for the New England Fire Department. A local kid who tagged along with his father, Dave Frank, on some non-emergency calls for the fire department many years ago, Mark was inspired to carry the torch. His father passed away in 2015, and Mark started volunteering in 2016.

Mark says the fire department is an important part of the community, and he likes how people come together

and help when needed. He knew most of the volunteers when he joined, because of his father's role as volunteer and fire chief for a few years.

The New England Fire Department has about 25 volunteers who respond to emergency calls. Mark carries a pager in his free time, and even during work hours for Slope Electric when projects allow. If a call for help comes in and Mark is in the general area, the cooperative is proud to give him the green light to respond and help someone in need.

If he is too far away or simply unable to go, he calls the fire department to let someone know he can't make it. Then other volunteers will be called and asked to respond. Not everyone is needed or can go to every emergency, so the more people who volunteer for the department, the more the "work" is spread.

The Fire Department covers 550 square miles in Hettinger, Slope and Stark Counties, most of which is in Slope Electric's service area. Mark says certain weather conditions can keep both the cooperative and fire department busy. Both organizations benefit because Mark knows the service area well.

"Knowing a lot of the county roads and different people's places comes in handy," he says. "If they say a name [when dispatching him to a site], I usually know where to go. That speeds up the response time."

Mark says a person does not need specialized training to volunteer for the fire department. He receives training through department meetings and hands-on rescues. He also received basic auto extrication training on how to free a trapped victim.

While every call is important, some emergencies stay with the volunteers long after their work is done. It might be the occasional house fire in which the volunteers know the homeowners, or when a person involved in a car accident requires immediate transportation to the nearest hospital.

The consolation for these volunteers is they did



**Mark Frank** has worked as a line technician for Slope Electric since October 2012. He helps build and maintain the cooperative's power system, and says he enjoys doing the work because it's always different and he likes to help people.

what they could to help, and their efforts were needed and appreciated.

Entirely staffed by unpaid help, the New England Fire Department is always looking for volunteers, as is the New England Ambulance. Mark says the biggest requirements are a willingness to serve, and being available and committed to help, when possible. For more information, call 701-300-2375.

## The stars aligned

Growing up in New England and having a family farm served by Slope Electric, Mark was familiar with the cooperative and many of its employees. His older brother chose a career in the electrical field; he now works for Montana-Dakota Utilities. When Mark graduated from New England Public School, he knew he wanted to become a lineman or electrician.

Mark attended the Bismarck State College lineworker program in Mandan for nine months. After he graduated, he had the good fortune of moving back home and working as temporary summer help for Slope Electric.

Operations Manager Dean Volk says hiring Mark was an easy choice.

“Mark was a local guy who had his own lawn care business. He seemed to be a hard worker, and did a good job at what he was doing. It was no surprise to us that he was all of this and more at Slope Electric,” he says.

After the busy construction season ended, Slope was in need of a line technician in New England and Mark fit all the cooperative’s needs. He was hired as a full-time employee in October 2012.

Some people work for years trying to get a job that brings them closer to home. Mark’s work ethic and reputation — and certainly good timing — gave him the opportunity.

“Sometime the stars just line up,” Dean says.

As a line technician, Mark helps build and maintain Slope Electric’s power system, which consists of 90 miles of transmission line and 3,106 miles of distribution line in Adams, Bowman, Hettinger and Slope counties.

Mark says he likes the job because the work changes every day, and he likes to help people.

“It’s nice when you know you’re helping someone by keeping the lights on,” he says.

Mark, we thank you for your concern for community. You are a living example of this seventh electric cooperative principle. ■



Following in his father’s footsteps, **Mark Frank** volunteers for the New England Fire Department. Since 2016, he has responded to grass and hay fires, car accidents and more, and says he is proud to help a vital service of the community.



In his free time, **Mark Frank** likes to fish, and ride his snowmobile and side-by-side in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Here, he is seen checking the snow depth after he helped another rider free a sled from a drift.

## Annual AT&S safety conference cancelled

The 57th annual REC Apprenticeship Training and Safety (AT&S) Conference, scheduled in January, was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Sponsored by the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC), with cooperation from the U.S. Department of Labor,

Office of Apprenticeship, the conference provides an opportunity to reflect on industry changes and challenges, and to recognize the accomplishments the linemen have made in training and safety throughout the year. ■

## Local accomplishments that would have been highlighted at AT&S Conference:

### RESAP certification

Slope Electric Cooperative earned RESAP recertification for another three years in 2020. RESAP, or the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program, encourages electric cooperatives to achieve and maintain high safety standards for the protection of employees and the community.

Founded by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the program is based on two guiding principles that are essential to achieving safety excellence:

1. Safety must be embraced as a core value where the actions and decisions of the cooperative reflect a fundamental and unwavering commitment to safety at all levels.
2. Cooperative leaders and employees take ownership of the systems and processes that create a safe working environment.

Additional components to achieving recognition include:

- A cooperative safety improvement plan;
- The completion of 14 annual self-assessments; and
- Establishing safety goals and benchmarking performance.

Slope Electric's RESAP audit was conducted this summer. Because of the pandemic, the audit was abbreviated, and most of the review was of Slope's outside facilities and crew visits.

Slope Electric Cooperative thanks its employees for taking a team approach to safety and its continuous improvement. ■

### Safety Award

Slope Electric was one of five distribution cooperatives in North Dakota to earn a Safety Award.

To receive a Safety Award, cooperatives must not have had an OSHA-recordable injury for one year, between the dates of Dec. 1, 2019, to Nov. 30, 2020.

3C Construction also earned a Safety Award. ■

### Circle of Honor Award

This award recognizes outstanding performance in preventing vehicle accidents. To achieve this award, a cooperative must not have had a vehicle accident for five-consecutive years.

3C Construction and Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative also earned a Safety Award. ■

## Nominating/Resolutions Committee

Slope Electric Cooperative's 76th Annual Meeting will be held Thursday, June 3, at the Community Center in Reeder.

Because an election was not held in 2020 due to the pandemic, there will be five Board seats up for election at the 2021 annual meeting: one director from Adams County, two directors from Hettinger County, and two directors from Slope County.

Three vacant Board seats will be up for election at the 2023 annual meeting (one from Adams County and two from Hettinger County), and two additional seats will be up for election at the 2024 annual meeting (two from Slope County).

The bylaws of Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc., state in Article IV, Section 4, directors can be nominated one of three ways:

- 1. Through the Nominating Committee.** The committee's first meeting will be held *Feb. 16* to review procedures, responsibilities and qualifications for directorship. The second meeting will be held *March 25* to nominate candidates for the ballot and to approve resolutions.
- 2. Members can also be nominated by filing a petition with 15 signatures.** Filing must be done 30 days prior to the annual meeting on *June 3* and posted at the office of Slope Electric.
- 3. Members can also be nominated from the floor at the annual meeting.** This method means your name will not be preprinted on the ballot, but it can be written in by your supporters. ■

### Report from THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DEC. 17, 2020

- Approved the agenda as presented.
- Approved minutes of the Nov. 19, 2020, Board meeting.
- Approved two capital credit estate retirements.
- Approved special equipment for transformers.
- Co-General Managers/CEOs gave updates on personnel meetings and retirements, fiscal policy and capital credit policy planning, and videoconferencing opportunities.
- Heard updates on WDUS Holdings, LLC, and its subsidiaries.
- Heard updates on power suppliers and Midwest Electric Consumers Association.
- Heard reports from Directors who participated in various meetings.
- Discussed changes to the Flexible Spending Account plan.
- Updated Board policy 02-11.
- Approved the 2021 budget.
- Discussed member interest on Nominating Committee.
- Discussed upcoming meetings and director attendance.
- Reviewed and accepted the November financial report.
- Heard senior staff report.
- Heard legal department report.
- Held voucher review.
- Scheduled the next Board meeting for Jan. 28, 2021, as a video conference.
- Held Executive Session.
- Adjourned.



### Prepare for tax season with SmartHub!

Print copies of your monthly utility bills for your tax records by logging into SmartHub! Visit [www.slopeelectric.coop](http://www.slopeelectric.coop) and click SmartHub, and proceed to your billing history. If you have not signed up for SmartHub, you can set up a new, secure account. Please call 701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191 with questions!

## 2-1-1 HELPLINE

FirstLink's **2-1-1 helpline** is a free phone service available 24/7 to the public. Call specialists offer supportive, non-judgmental listening ears and information about community programs statewide.

**Text your zipcode to 898-211** or **Dial 2-1-1** or **701-235-7335** to get connected to help & hope.

MYFIRSTLINK.ORG



116 E. 12th St. - PO Box 338  
New England, ND 58647-0338

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

Email us:  
comments@slopeelectric.coop  
**UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATES**  
800-795-0555 or 811

### 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

### MANAGEMENT

Donald A. Franklund  
CO-GM/GEO

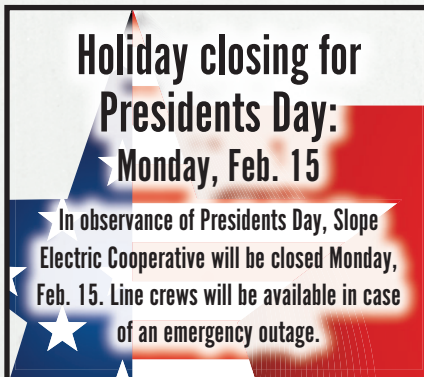
Travis Kupper  
CO-GM/GEO

[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.*



## Director Angela Carlson earns Board Leadership Program certificate

A well-trained and educated director is critical to the decision-making process in the boardroom.

Directors are continually educating themselves on the many issues facing the cooperative — by visiting with members; attending meetings; studying current trends; and keeping abreast of what is happening in the local, regional, statewide and national political arena.

There is much to learn. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) offers formal training programs for cooperative directors, with the North Dakota

Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives serving as host.

At the Oct. 29 regularly scheduled board meeting held virtually, Slope Electric Cooperative Director Angela Carlson was recognized for completing the Board Leadership Program. Offered by NRECA, this program extends the core Credential Cooperative Director curriculum, providing courses with greater depth in industry, governance, risk management, communication, rate making and policy development.

We congratulate Director Carlson for completing this training program and thank her for her work on our membership's behalf. ■