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EMPOWERING RURAL YOUTH Hysjulien travels to Washington, D.C., for Youth Tour



PHOTO BY KRISTA RAUSCH

YOUTH TOUR: Hysjulien explores Washington, D.C.

BY SAMANTHA VANGSNESS

Each June, hundreds of high school students gather in Washington, D.C., for an opportunity to learn more about electric cooperatives and cultivate lifelong friendships and memories.

Roughrider Electric Cooperative holds an annual contest for high school sophomores or juniors to be chosen to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. Students enter the contest by writing an essay in response to a question posed by the cooperative.

Mattea Hysjulien from Hazen joined other North Dakota youth sponsored by their local electric cooperatives, along with students from around the nation, in Washington, D.C., for a week of learning and networking.

Once-in-a-lifetime experience

Sixteen North Dakota youth gathered before the trip at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives headquarters in Mandan for some team building before taking off to Washington, D.C. The group was able to review the itinerary and gather T-shirts for the week. The group left on Saturday and returned late Friday night. Each day included new learning experiences and sights to see.

Once the plane landed, the students were off to their first stop: Ford's Theatre. Later in the week, students partook in a Co-op 101 and youth advocacy course. The group was able to see much of Washington, D.C., by touring museums, national monuments, memorials and more. They also attended other activities, such as a riverboat cruise, a Medieval Times tournament and a Washington Nationals baseball game.

The days were packed full of learning about electric cooperatives and sightseeing.

"I really enjoy history and there was a lot planned for us while we were in D.C.," Hysjulien says. Some of her highlights were seeing the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial, getting to tour the Capitol and sitting in the U.S. Senate chambers during floor proceedings. The North Dakota group traveled together most of the trip, but the students were able to interact with other state delegates at the hotel by trading pins, which acted as a steppingstone to spark conversation.

Hysjulien will be a junior this school year and is active in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, golf and softball. She notes her experience with the Youth Tour has urged her to take more of a leadership role in her activities and around the school.

"After just spending a few days with the North Dakota group, I know I have friendships that will last a lifetime," Hysjulien says. She says she would urge others to apply for the all-expense-paid experience.

More information regarding the 2025 Youth Tour will be shared in the coming months. Watch for future issues of *North Dakota Living* and visit our social media. ■



Mattea Hysjulien, right, represented Roughrider Electric Cooperative on the Youth Tour.

PHOTO CREDIT: MATTEA HYSJULIEN

MANAGER'S MESSAGE: **Beyond kilowatts**



Jason Bentz

Today, I want to take a moment to discuss an essential aspect of our cooperative's operations: base rates. A few members expressed concern about these rates in our recent member satisfaction survey, and I wanted to take the time to explain them a little more.

Base rates, which are the foundation of our rate structure, play a pivotal role in ensuring the financial sustainability and operational

integrity of our cooperative. These rates represent the fixed costs associated with maintaining and operating the infrastructure necessary to deliver electricity to your doorstep, regardless of the amount of energy consumed.

It's important to understand base rates encompass more than just the cost of electricity generation. They also cover a myriad of other expenses, including transmission and distribution infrastructure, equipment maintenance, grid modernization initiatives and compliance with regulatory requirements. These investments are essential for maintaining a reliable and resilient electric system that meets the evolving needs of our members.

Roughrider Electric Cooperative takes great care in setting our base rates to balance the needs of our members with the financial obligations of our cooperative. Our goal is to ensure rates remain fair, transparent and reflective of the true cost of service, while also promoting affordability and accessibility for all members, regardless of their energy usage.

However, it's essential to recognize our cooperative is more than just a utility provider of kilowatt-hours.

We are stewards of an essential service that powers the homes, farms and businesses that form the backbone of our communities.

We are a community partner dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for our members and fostering economic prosperity in our service area. From supporting local initiatives and charitable causes to providing energy efficiency programs and educational opportunities, we strive to make a positive impact on the communities we serve.

Moreover, cooperatives like ours are uniquely positioned to serve areas for-profit utilities may overlook due to economic considerations, such as the challenges associated with fewer members per mile of line. Unlike investor-owned utilities, which prioritize profitability, cooperatives are driven by a commitment to serving all members of our community, regardless of geographic location or population density.

As we navigate the complexities of setting rates and financial management, it's crucial to remember our cooperative is rooted in the principles of cooperation, democracy and member ownership. Your input and participation are invaluable as we work together to shape the future of our cooperative and ensure it remains a beacon of service and integrity for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued support and trust in Roughrider Electric. Together, we are more than just selling kilowatts. We are providing an essential service that powers the vitality and resilience of our communities. ■



**"WE ARE PROVIDING AN
ESSENTIAL SERVICE THAT
POWERS THE VITALITY
AND RESILIENCE OF OUR
COMMUNITIES."**

CO-GENERAL MANAGER/CEO, JASON BENTZ





OPERATIONS REPORT: **Crews work to ensure reliable energy**

As summer continues, our operations crew is busy trimming trees, working on new construction and updating infrastructure. Members may see crews in your area and the employees at Roughrider Electric Cooperative want to give you a quick breakout of the work taking place.

“We have many projects that we have been working on this summer and will continue into the fall months,” says Operations Manager Shawn Olson. “The line crews continue with routine maintenance, while also working on new projects for our service area.”

Routine maintenance continues

Each year, the line crews prioritize maintenance to ensure infrastructure is running smoothly to continue with the flow of safe, reliable energy to you, our members. This includes poles testing, line patrol and tree trimming. These maintenance practices are being done in various parts of the services area through the summer and into the fall.

Upgrading infrastructure

Roughrider Electric works diligently over the winter months to plan ahead for projects that will

be completed during the summer and fall. One significant project includes rebuilding the Snow Substation west of Manning, with plans for it to be completed and back online by late fall.

“Rebuilding the Snow Substation will provide capacity for additional growth and more reliable service to members in the area,” Olson says.

Crews are also working on replacing overhead line crossings with underground along Highway 200 and Highway 25 in the Hazen area.

“Updating to underground lines on Highways 200 and 25 will help with the oversized loads that are often traveling in that area,” Olson says.

Several other projects are underway in the Roughrider Electric service area. Roughrider Electric encourages members to be on the lookout for our crews and give them room if near your area.

In addition, if members come across electrical equipment that looks unsafe, please call the office.

“Thank you, members, for your patience and understanding while we work through these projects and help ensure safe, reliable energy for your businesses and homes,” Olson says. ■

SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

Safe harvest

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops produced by North Dakota farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous – even deadly – when farming near electrical equipment.

“Every year, farm-related accidents happen when combines and other farming equipment collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages,” says Conner Kuntz, an apprentice lineworker.

Here is what YOU can do

These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery. If you’re preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.
- Use a spotter and deployed flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- If your equipment contacts an energized or downed power line, call 911 immediately. Stay inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. If there is smoke or fire, exit by jumping clear of the cab without touching the equipment and hop away to safety. We also urge you to contact your electric



- cooperative for additional assistance.
 - Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.
- We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but we hope you’ll remember these safety tips. If you see something while out in the field that needs our attention, please call the office as soon as possible. ■

TIPS FOR SAFE HARVEST

- Keep all equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- Never try to raise or move a power line to clear a path
- Power line sagging? Don’t move it. Call us immediately.



WAPA remains committed to securing the grid

BY LLOYD LINKE, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND UPPER GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL MANAGER FOR WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION



Lloyd Linke

Each day, tens of thousands of megawatts flow throughout our nation's transmission lines, to include those maintained by the Western Area Power Administration, especially in the Upper Great Plains. From Minnesota to Montana and the Canadian border into Iowa, this lifeblood of power meets the demands of millions of Americans every day.

Throughout the numerous communities served by our more than 340 utility customers, most residents will never blink an eye at the incredible feat that takes place daily to ensure their world remains electrified.

These things don't happen by accident. Scattered throughout WAPA's UGP region, my teams defend and protect the grid 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We safeguard our vital power networks from Mother Nature herself, as the geography of our communities lends itself to severe blizzards and ice storms in the winter, as well as severe weather in the summer that spawns deadly tornadoes. Then, there are invisible threats we can't see with our eyes, such as geomagnetic disturbances from our Sun that can disrupt and potentially take our grid offline. With over 7,800 miles of transmission lines crisscrossing the UGP, we remain vigilant to keep power flowing.

As recently as late May, crews dispatched from Hinton, Iowa, made their way to the Greenfield community, located about 45 minutes west of Des Moines. These crews were responding to downed WAPA lines due to a weather system that spawned more than 15 tornadoes, ravaging the local area. These crews did the job expected of them: they responded, assessed, reconstituted our poles and lines, and ensured reliable power flowed back through the area once again. What truly showed WAPA's incredible commitment to their craft was that these crews had just finished being on the road the previous three weeks doing maintenance and upkeep in the field. Believing they would be heading home for the Memorial Day weekend to be with family and friends, they each diverted, ensuring their expertise and commitment made their way to the damaged communities of southwestern Iowa.

The same goes for the dead of winter. Many may recall the strong winter storm that pummeled North Dakota's I-94 corridor on Christmas Day last year. From Bismarck to Grand Forks, 20,000 residents and

businesses lost power from severe ice that befell the region. This resulted several large, 230-kV lines being brought down. Crews from three states responded to get the system back into service swiftly, reconstructing steel lattice towers, broken wood structures and downed static lines. Later, WAPA's helicopter crews performed aerial surveys, ensuring all damage to the grid had been adequately and properly repaired.

While storms on Planet Earth can be tracked and plotted, storms from outer space are more of a challenge. However, WAPA's advanced tools and technology are in place to give us as much of a heads-up as possible, providing a sense of security and reassurance to stave off potentially catastrophic outcomes.

In November 2022, our employees at the White Substation in South Dakota achieved a significant milestone by energizing WAPA's first-ever neutral blocking device. This device, known as an NBD, was installed in a large power transformer that aims to block geomagnetically induced currents, generated during a solar storm. This NBD is the first of its kind to be commercially developed and installed anywhere in the U.S. and only the second device of its type to become operational.

As we've witnessed this year across the northern states, severe geomagnetic disturbances from solar storms provide us brilliant views of the Northern Lights but also cause GICs that can saturate power transformers. This saturation can cause negative impacts such as reactive power absorption and voltage drops, either decreasing power flow to homes and businesses or stopping it altogether.

The NBD program is our version of an "early warning system" that, on average, gives us 45 minutes to an hour alert before we receive updates from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This provides our dispatchers and maintenance personnel crucial time to prepare to protect the grid and respond more precisely to GIC incidents, ensuring our system is safe from overloads.

As you can see, WAPA is keenly aware of the threats to our grid in many situations. Fortunately, those concerned about the power grid and hydroelectric power alike can rest easy as our experts and dedicated staff throughout the Upper Great Plains remain at the ready.

Whether it's storms here or from the expanse of space or any other crisis that arises, WAPA stands ready. We are committed to fulfilling our core mission of keeping the lights on, no matter the circumstances. ■



Redesigned – with YOU in mind

Roughrider Electric Cooperative’s billing statements will soon be receiving a fresh new look. This change is being implemented to meet a requirement from one of our valued vendors, and we believe it will enhance your overall experience with our services.

We understand change can sometimes be a little unfamiliar, but we want to assure you this change is a positive step forward. The new billing statements will be designed with simplicity and clarity in mind, making it even easier for you to understand and manage your payments. The layout will be more intuitive, allowing you to quickly locate and review the details of your transactions.

This change will be made in the coming months.

Rest assured, the modification will not affect the accuracy or reliability of your billing information in any way. If you have any questions or concerns, our dedicated member services team will be available to assist you every step of the way.

We are confident you will appreciate the improved billing statements once you receive them. We value your membership and strive to continuously enhance our services to better serve you. We truly believe this change will positively contribute to your overall satisfaction and convenience.

To learn more and gain deeper insights into the latest electric bill updates, stay tuned to the upcoming issues of *North Dakota Living*, where additional information will be shared. ■

Roughrider Electric board meeting highlights: May 31

The meeting of the board of directors of Roughrider Electric Cooperative was held on May 31 at Roughrider Electric's Dickinson office. The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. MT. A quorum was present. Also attending were co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Director of Key Accounts Leonard Hibl, Line Superintendent Shawn Olson, Legal Counsel Jennifer Grosz and Manager of Member Support Anne Hansen.

Consent agenda: There were a few proposed additions to the agenda. The agenda was approved as amended.

Strategic agenda: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, Western Area Power Administrator and Basin Electric Power Cooperative. Reports for West Dakota Utility Services, 3C Construction and Basin Electric's CEO were reviewed.

Action items: Action items were resolved.

Department reports: Craigmile provided the CFO report. Olson provided the operations report, which included project updates and other operations information. Hibl provided a report on the annual meeting preparations and June local pages. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report for the board. Grosz provided the board with an update on the status of projects addressed in her written legal report.

Discussion/general information: Hansen presented the 2024 member survey results to the board. Jeremy Mahowald from Upper Missouri gave an update to the board.

Executive session: The board entered into an executive session.

The meeting concluded with the adjournment. Secretary Troy Sailer certified the accuracy of the minutes.

Next meeting date: The next meeting is at 10 a.m. CT (9 a.m. MT) Aug. 30 in Hazen. ■



www.roughriderelectric.com

HAZEN OFFICE
701-748-2293 or 800-748-5533
800 Highway Dr., Hazen, ND 58545
7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. CT Monday-Friday

Payments may be deposited in the deposit box by Roughrider Electric's main office entrance or in the drop boxes located at Krause's Super Valu in Hazen or Bronson's Super Valu in Beulah.

DICKINSON OFFICE
701-483-5111 or 800-748-5533
P.O. Box 1038, 2156 4th Ave. E.
Dickinson, ND 58602
7 a.m. - 4 p.m. MT Monday-Friday

Payments may be deposited in the deposit box west of Roughrider Electric's main office entrance or the west and south locations of Family Fare supermarkets.

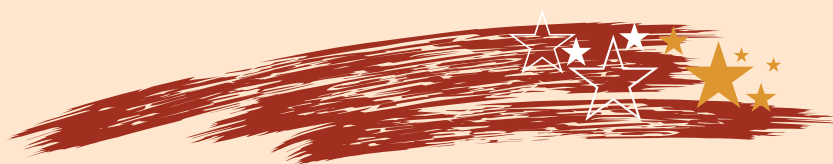
OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Greg Steckler, President; Dunn Center..... 548-8122
Roger Kudrna, Vice President; Dickinson..... 483-8377
Troy Sailer, Secretary; Golden Valley 948-2427
Bruce Darcy, Treasurer; Golden Valley 983-4222
Jesse Flath; Hazen..... 880-0386
Darell Herman; Beulah 873-4371
Arnold Kainz; Dickinson..... 483-8207
Dan Price; Hensler 794-3779
Callen Schoch; New England..... 290-3836

MANAGEMENT

Travis Kupper..... Co-GM/CEO
Jason Bentz..... Co-GM/CEO

**ROUGH RIDER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
WILL BE CLOSED SEPT. 2 FOR LABOR DAY.**



Happy **LABOR DAY**



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