

# Big Skylights



An internal newsletter of the STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

June 8, 2006

## Montana youths head for capital

Twenty six youths from Montana will depart our state this week for the annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. The Montana group will travel with a contingent of 14 youths from North Dakota and one student from Idaho. Montana chaperones are MECA's **Sharon McDonald**, **Mike Radel** of Flathead Electric Cooperative and **Dianne Makinson** of Beartooth Electric Cooperative. About 3,000 young people from across the nation are expected to attend this year's Youth Tour. In connection with these activities, NRECA announced last week that it had launched a new Youth Tour Web site. The new Youth Tour link is <http://www.youthtour.coop>.

## LYREA draws crowd of 600

I appreciated the opportunity to make a few remarks at Lower Yellowstone REA's annual meeting in Sidney on June 1. The annual meeting was attended by more than 600 people. **Tom Barnett**, manager of Upper Missouri Generation and Transmission Cooperative, was the guest speaker. In trustee elections, **Colin Gartner** and **Marvin Kilen** were re-elected.

## Co-op offers prime rib

I was pleased to join more than 400 people in Ekalaka on June 2 for a prime rib dinner as part of Southeast Electric Cooperative's annual meeting. In trustee elections, **Karen Kreitel** was elected to replace Aretha Penn who retired from the board. Re-elected were **Herb Schell** and **Erlend Laird**. In officer elections after the annual meeting, Mr. Schell was elected president of the board, **Charles Guyer** was re-elected vice president and Ms. Kreitel was elected secretary/treasurer.

## McCone trustees re-elected

McCone Electric Cooperative re-elected three trustees the afternoon of June 2. Re-elected were **Patti Murphy**, **Rod Weeding** and **Henry Green**. **Tom Graves**, executive director of Mid-West Electric Consumers Association, was the guest speaker. I was pleased to have attended.

## Hill County Electric stresses grassroots help

In separate remarks, Hill County Electric Cooperative Manager **Rick Stevens** and MECA's **Gary Wiens** urged the membership to join the Grassroots E-mail MECA Action Team for the 2007 legislative session. Both stressed the importance of member involvement in order to ensure rates are not harmed by any legislation dealt with during the session, which begins in January. **Kevann Elletson-Campbell**, Hill County Electric's public relations specialist, helped promote grassroots action team sign-ups at the annual meeting by giving away 30-minute phone cards to members filling out a sign-up sheet. The co-op also gave away phone cards to members who joined ACRE.

During the co-op's financial report, members learned that the co-op's 2005 margins had increased by more than 3 percent, aided by a 15.7 percent increase in electricity sales and a reduction in plant operations and maintenance costs. The co-op's commercial and industrial electricity sales accounted for 49.3 percent of its revenue in 2005. In trustee elections, **Clarence Keller** and **Gerald Rutledge** were re-elected. The guest speaker was **Cassidy Han** of Inverness, the 2006 Miss Rodeo Montana.

**Job Market****General manager**

The Board of Directors of Northern Electric Cooperative headquartered in Opheim is seeking qualified candidates to replace the general manager who will be retiring in December 2006. The board prefers candidates to have at least 5 year's experience in electric utility management, preferably within the rural electric program. A bachelor's degree in an appropriate field is highly desirable. The board seeks a candidate with broad utility experience including such areas as strategic planning, finance, operations, member communications and board relations. The successful candidate will be a proven community leader with excellent communications skills. The cooperative has 10 fulltime employees serving 1,200 customers over 1,200 miles of distribution and transmission lines. Annual revenue is over \$2 million with total assets of \$16 million. The cooperative is a member of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association. Northern Electric's wholesale power supplier is Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative, which holds contracts with the Western Area Power Administration, the Bonneville Power Administration and Basin Electric Power Cooperative. The cooperative headquarters town of Opheim, Montana has a population of about 300 and is located on Montana Highway 24, 50 miles north of Glasgow, Montana and 50 miles west of Scobey, Montana and 12 south of the Canadian border. The area offers the benefits of rural living, solitude, excellent hunting and fishing and low cost of living. It is located near the Missouri river and a recreational lake that provides excellent opportunities.

The cooperative offers an excellent NRECA retirement and benefits package and competitive salary commensurate with qualifications. Please send a resume, three professional references and salary history by Sept 1, 2006 to: Board of Directors, **Robert J. Fouhy**, President, Northern Electric Cooperative, Inc., Box 287, Opheim, Montana 59250.

**Journeyman and/or apprentice lineman**

Lower Yellowstone REA, Inc., located in Sidney, has one position open for a journeyman and/or apprentice lineman. Applicants must possess the ability to perform skilled work in construction, operation and maintenance of an REA electrical system including transmission, substation and distribution for both overhead and underground line. Candidates must have a high school diploma or GED equivalent, possess a current driver's license, plus possession of or ability to immediately obtain a Montana commercial driver's license. A drug test will also be required. To apply for this position, mail a resume and cover letter to **Donald Prevost**, General Manager, Lower Yellowstone REA Inc., PO Box 1047, Sidney, MT 59270, or you may call 406-488-1602 to speak to Mr. Prevost or **Chris Hillesland**, Manager of Operations. A complete job description and job application is available at Lower Yellowstone's office. The position will be open until filled.

**CALENDAR****June 2006**

10	Ravalli County Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Corvallis, MT
10 -16	NRECA Youth Tour	Washington, DC
17	Fall River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Ashton, ID
21	Northern Electric Annual Meeting	Lustre, MT
26-28	MECA Managers Group Summer Meeting	Lewistown, MT

**July 2006**

11-12	MECA Committees and Board Meetings	Miles City, MT
11	MECA Barbecue at the Helm Ranch	Miles City, MT
12	MECA Dinner at Ranger Rider Museum	Miles City, MT
15	Tongue River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Ashland, MT

**August 2006**

7-9	MECA Office Managers/Accountants Conference	Kalispell, MT
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