

## Reliable power for today and tomorrow

BY JASON BROTHEN



Jason Brothen

**R**inging in a new year sparks a sense of renewed hope and optimism about the future. As the CEO of Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC), it's a time to reflect on where we are and where we're going. At the heart of this reflection, I think about ways we can better serve you, the members of the cooperative.

Our team at LYREC is always looking ahead, exploring ways to innovate and utilize new technologies to improve our services. As our nation increasingly relies on electricity to power the economy, keeping the lights on has never been more important. We're committed to powering - and empowering - our community at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

So, how are we working to ensure reliable and affordable power, while adapting to a changing energy landscape and our community's evolving needs?

One critical component of reliable power is the mix of energy resources used to generate the electricity that keeps the lights on across LYREC. You may not realize it, but LYREC doesn't generate electricity. Instead, we purchase it from Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC) and the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA). From there, we distribute it to homes and businesses throughout our community. We purchase approximately 90% of our power from BEPC, which has a current energy mix of 24.4% wind, 20.6% natural gas, 39.4% coal, 4.4% hydro, 3.1% oil/diesel/jet fuel, 0.6% recovered energy and 13% market purchase. The other 10% of the power comes from WAPA in the form of hydropower.

We're increasingly using more electricity generated from renewable energy sources, but we still depend on a diverse energy mix to ensure reliable power is available to our members whenever they need it.

In addition to managing a reliable energy mix, LYREC is using technology to enhance our local

grid, limit service disruptions and improve outage response times.

Advanced metering technology, also known as AMI, enables two-way communication between the co-op and consumers. In the event of a power outage, AMI helps pinpoint the exact location of the outage and can even analyze damaged or tampered meters. AMI helps LYREC save money with real-time data, and ultimately improves power reliability for our entire community.

Proactive tree trimming is another way we limit service disruptions. Scheduled trimming keeps power lines clear from overgrown limbs that are likely to fall. Drone inspections of lines and vegetation have allowed us to reduce labor and equipment costs, while bolstering reliability. Through the use of small drones, we can monitor our system and locate potential problems. As technology advancements become more accessible, we anticipate using advanced mapping software to better maintain the environment while providing more reliable service.

One of the best methods for improving our services to you is monitoring trends and leading practices from other electric cooperatives in Montana, North Dakota and across the country. Learning from other co-ops is one of the many benefits of the cooperative business model, because it's about cooperation, not competition.

As we turn our focus to 2024, LYREC will continue working to provide the reliable, affordable electricity you expect and deserve - for today and tomorrow. ■



## McPherson wins Redman scholarship



**T**aylor McPherson, a freshman at the University of Montana, has been selected for the John Redman Memorial Scholarship for her unwavering commitment to community service. Taylor shared her most recent community service project, Trick or Treat so Missoula Eats. Taylor, along with some of her classmates, canvassed the community, handing out pamphlets about Trick or Treat so Missoula Eats and how donations can be made. At the end of the month, they “trick-or-

treated” for healthy, nonperishable food donations and received 3,700 pounds of food for the Missoula Food Bank.

Taylor was the second recipient of the John Redman Memorial Scholarship. John was a huge advocate for public speaking and for community involvement. To be eligible for the \$1,000 scholarship, the applicants had to send a short video explaining a volunteer experience and how the experience impacted the community. Congratulations to Taylor! ■

### HOLIDAY GIFT TO MEMBERS:

## Capital credits returned before Christmas

**A**s the holiday season approaches, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) is delighted to share some heartwarming news with its valued members. This Christmas, LYREC is spreading joy and gratitude by returning capital credits to its loyal members.

This December, LYREC has allocated capital credits from the margins generated during part or all of 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2022. The total amount of capital credits returned this month is \$1,039,409, which will be shared among our members in accordance with their patronage.

But what makes this distribution extra special is the timing. In the true spirit of Christmas, we are determined to put a smile on your faces and a little extra jingle in your pockets during this festive season.

Capital credits will be returned to members in the form of a bill credit or through a check the first half of the month.

At LYREC, we take immense pride in being a member-driven cooperative. Your support and patronage have allowed us to thrive and provide you with the best possible service. Returning capital credits before Christmas is our way of showing our deep appreciation for your continued trust in us.

As we enter the holiday season, we'd like to extend our warmest wishes to all our members. May your Christmas be filled with joy, love and the company of your loved ones. And may the capital credits you receive be a source of delight and extra comfort during these festive times. ■

## Attending college in the fall? MECA memorial scholarship available

**T**he Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) is offering a \$500 scholarship to one eligible student from the northeast district of Montana. The applicant's parent/guardian must be a Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) member and the applicant must be attending college in the fall of 2024. Applications are judged on academic strength, school and community activities, employment, volunteerism, community service and a

personal statement.

A committee comprised of LYREC staff will choose one application to send to MECA for a chance to win the \$500 scholarship.

To apply, complete the application form, along with all required materials. You may get an application at [www.lyrec.coop](http://www.lyrec.coop). MECA memorial scholarships are due Jan. 26, 2024. ■





The Lower Yellowstone chapter of ABATE received a \$500 check from the Operation Round Up Trust to go toward its annual toy drive. ABATE uses the funds it receives to buy toys and gifts to be handed out at the Gifts from the Heart program. Last year, it helped 164 families with 496 kids.



Operation Round Up Trustee **Wendy Johnson** presents Principal **Derek Gackle** of East Fairview School District with a check for \$1,000 to help supplement the cost of the Corps of Discovery Science program for the 2023-24 school year. The program teaches modern technical skills using the latest hardware and software.

# Operation Round Up gives back to our community

**A**t the heart of every vibrant and thriving community is a sense of unity and shared purpose. In Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative's (LYREC) commitment to making a positive impact, we're proud of the Operation Round Up program, which exemplifies the true spirit of community support and giving back.

## What is Operation Round Up?

Operation Round Up is not just a program; it's a movement. It's about coming together as a community to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors, friends and families. It's a unique initiative that combines the small contributions of many to create a big impact. Through this program, we empower our community to give back by rounding up their monthly bills to the nearest dollar, with the change donated to local causes and organizations.

## How does it work?

It's simple. If your monthly bill is \$56.75, we round it up to \$57, with the extra 25 cents going into the Operation Round Up fund. These seemingly small contributions add up quickly when we all participate. The funds collected are then distributed to local nonprofit organizations and community projects, providing vital support where it's needed most.

## Where do the funds go?

The beauty of Operation Round Up is the community decides. A separate board, made up of members like you, carefully reviews grant applications from local organizations seeking assistance. The recipients could be local schools, health care facilities, food banks and so much more. This puts the power of giving back right into the hands of those who know the community best - you.

## Join the movement

You can be a part of this incredible initiative, too. By simply allowing your bills to be rounded up to the nearest dollar, you're making a direct and tangible impact on your community. It's the collective effort of individuals like you that truly makes Operation Round Up special.

In the end, Operation Round Up is not just about giving back to the community. It's about fostering a sense of togetherness and strengthening the bonds that tie our community together. It's about turning spare change into meaningful change.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible movement. Together, we can continue to uplift our community and ensure a brighter future for all.

If you would like more information about Operation Round Up or would like to join the movement, call 406-488-1602. ■

## NEED ASSISTANCE?

### Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program may help

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) of Montana and North Dakota are accepting applications. These programs assist residents with their heating bills through the winter months.

Eligibility is based on your household income and resources. If you live in Montana and need help paying your heating bill, you can contact Energy Share at 800-227-0703. If you live in North Dakota, you can contact Community Action at 701-572-8191. You may also download an application at [www.lyrec.coop](http://www.lyrec.coop) or call Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative. ■

## CYBER SECURITY

### PROTECT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY FROM CYBER CRIME

Don't assume it won't happen to you. Understanding cyber threats and how to protect yourself will help keep you and your family safe online.



**60% OF BREACHES INVOLVED VULNERABILITIES FOR WHICH A PATCH/UPDATE WAS AVAILABLE BUT NOT APPLIED.**  
(Security Intelligence)

**\$17.700 IS LOST EVERY MINUTE DUE TO PHISHING ATTACKS.**  
(Source: CSO Online)



#### BE AWARE OF PHISHING SCAMS

Be cautious of clicking links or downloading email attachments. These phishing emails could include links directing you to infected websites or the attachment could execute malicious software. When in doubt, delete.



#### USE EFFECTIVE PASSWORD MANAGEMENT

Creating and remembering complex passwords can be daunting. Instead, think of a passphrase rather than a password. I.Love@C3am would be a good passphrase/ password but very hard for an attacker to guess. And avoid using the same password for all online accounts.



#### COMPLETE COMPUTER UPDATES

Always turn on automatic updates on your device operating systems or any other software you have installed on your device, especially your internet browsers. Updates address found vulnerabilities, so it is imperative to keep everything up to date.

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### TRUSTEES

- Allen Thiessen ..... President
- Greg Rauschendorfer ..... Vice President
- Dennis Schmierer ..... Secretary/Treasurer
- Colin Gartner ..... Trustee
- Tim Franzen ..... Trustee
- Dennis Nelson ..... Trustee
- Jim Vitt ..... Trustee

### EMPLOYEES

- Jason Brothen ..... General Manager
- Jami Propp ..... Member Service Manager
- Pam Wilcoxon ..... Chief Financial Officer
- Melissa Buckley ..... Plant Accountant
- Kyle Kavanagh ..... IT Coordinator
- Margo Zadow ..... Billing Coordinator
- Tiffani Hentges ..... Customer Service Representative
- Chris Hillesland ..... Chief Operations Officer
- Rich Gorde ..... Journeyman Lineman
- Eric McPherson ..... System Controller
- Kevin Goff ..... Operations Assistant
- Kelly Keyser ..... Operations Manager
- Aaron Eide ..... Journeyman Lineman
- Bryan Franck ..... Journeyman Lineman
- Jesse Obergfell ..... Journeyman Lineman
- Tanner Roth ..... Journeyman Lineman
- Ryder Peterson ..... Journeyman Lineman
- Cole Jankovsky ..... Journeyman Lineman
- Lee Delp ..... Apprentice Lineman
- Preston Long ..... Apprentice Lineman
- Trey Schepens ..... Apprentice Lineman
- Jory Bell ..... Apprentice Lineman
- Brandon Mueller ..... Master Electrician
- Mike Eberling ..... Mechanic
- Dan Gieser ..... EMS
- Lee Alvstad ..... Mechanic/EMS
- Richard Tremblay ..... EMS
- Bo Kindopp ..... GIS/Easement Technician
- Tom Hall ..... GIS Specialist
- Corey Candee ..... Chief Information Officer
- Jeremy Reese ..... Information Technology Technician
- Braden Kindopp ..... Information Technology Technician
- Edwin Gatzke ..... Line Locator/Groundsman
- Justin King ..... Warehouse Supervisor
- Dennis Fine ..... Summer Help

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## Operating report

Year to date:	September 2022	September 2023
Total miles energized	2,140	2,149
Total number of meters	6,237	6,301
Kilowatt-hours sold	234,196,596	285,509,541
Revenue	\$25,064,648	\$29,965,544
Total expenses	\$23,605,323	\$27,919,857
Operating margins	\$2,274,645	\$4,688,453