

Nominating Committee to meet in March

The Nominating Committee will meet Tuesday, March 5, at Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative's (LYREC) office. The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to select candidates for the board of trustees.

The Nominating Committee will consist of two members each from District 1 and District 2. The committee will nominate one or more candidates for District 1 and District 2. The present trustees holding seats in these districts are Jim Vitt, District 1, and Colin Gartner, District 2.

Nominating Committee members are:

- Representing District 1 - Bob Albin and Mike Kjos
- Representing District 2 - Ben Larson and Scott Greenwood

If you are a member of LYREC, reside in District 1 or 2 and are interested in becoming a candidate for the board of trustees, contact one of the Nominating Committee members and ask to be considered for nomination.



Vitt



Gartner

If you have a joint membership, either member on the account can run for the board of trustees' seat. A joint membership is entitled to one vote at any meeting of the cooperative. ■

EMPOWERING TOMORROW'S LEADERS: Celebrating the Youth Tour winner



Sanders

In the realm of education, there is a profound understanding that empowering our youth helps shape the future. Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) recently held an essay contest, with the prize being an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. We are pleased to announce the winner of the contest, who will be representing LYREC on the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

Hunter Sanders, a junior from Sidney High School, was chosen from the pool of applicants. Hunter is the

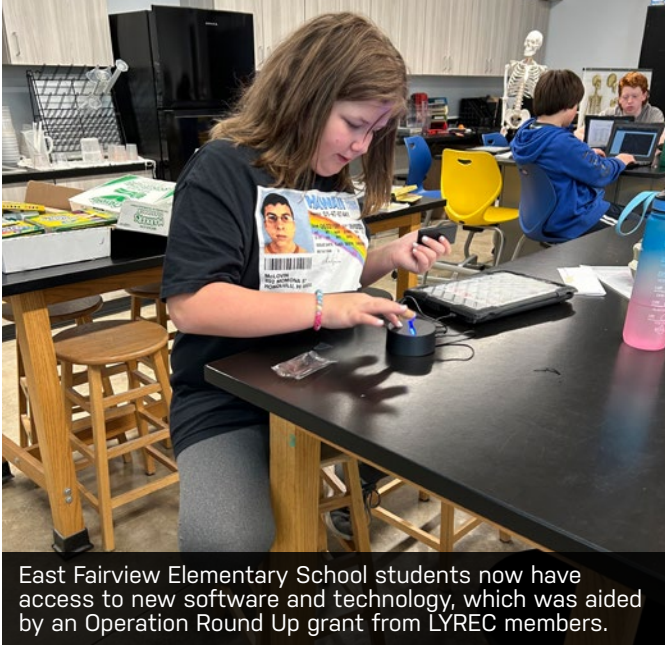
son of Kirk and Melissa of Sidney.

The Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., is not just a journey of geographical exploration. It is a transformative experience designed to inspire the leaders of tomorrow. As the winner of the essay contest, Hunter will have the opportunity to engage with history, witness democracy in action and connect with other like-minded youth from across the country.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Hunter and would like to thank all participants for their essay submissions. LYREC will follow Hunter's journey in June and looks forward to witnessing the impact of this experience on his personal and intellectual growth.

LYREC sees the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., as an investment in our future, a gesture that acknowledges the importance of nurturing young voices that will undoubtedly shape the future of our nation. ■

Operation Round Up plays crucial role



East Fairview Elementary School students now have access to new software and technology, which was aided by an Operation Round Up grant from LYREC members.

Operation Round Up is a program made possible by the generosity and compassion of Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) members. It raises funds for LOCAL nonprofit and community organizations by rounding up members' monthly energy bills to the next dollar. On average, a member donates 50 cents per month, but no more than \$11.88 a year.

In 2023, the Operation Round Up trustees granted a total of \$9,100 to these nonprofit and community organizations in LYREC's service territory:

- **Savage Sunrise Manor** - Microwaves and mini-fridges for residents' rooms
- **Senior Companion Program** - Gas and meals for

the volunteer senior companions

- **Action for Eastern Montana Aging Services** - Emergency bags (radio with batteries, flashlight, first-aid kit and other items)
- **Mondak Seniors** - Computer and accessories
- **The Zone at Zion Lutheran Church** - Provide food in a social/safe place during summer months
- **Fort Union Association** - Bring traditional singers and dancers to Indian Art Festival
- **Sunrise Women's Clinic** - Exam chair
- **Fairview Fire Department** - SEEK FirePro units to help identify hot spots
- **East Fairview Elementary School** - Corps of Discovery Program
- **ABATE** - New toys for families in need
- **Rau Elementary** - Cement for new basketball court
- **Fairview School** - Band trip to Denver, Colo.

The East Fairview Elementary School received a grant of \$1,000 that helped the school bring the Corps of Discovery Program into the school. The funds have allowed the school to provide the latest hardware, software and technical skills. The modern technology students can now access helps prepare them for their future careers and bridge the digital divide.

"Programs like Operation Round Up often play a crucial role in supporting local communities and educational initiatives. We are thankful to be chosen for the Operation Round Up funds and overall community support, which has made a positive impact on our students' technical education," says Melissa Elletson, the business manager at East Fairview School.

LYREC's Operation Round Up has been fortunate to help numerous nonprofit and community organizations since its inception. Every little bit adds up and makes the community we live in a better place. To find out how you can impact your community through Operation Round Up or for more information, please visit www.lyrec.coop. ■

Statement of nondiscrimination

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative is a recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-702-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call 800-795-3272 (voice) or 202-720-6382 (TDD).

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer. ■

Scholarship offered by co-op

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) will be awarding two Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarships for \$1,000 each to an LYREC's member dependent. The applicant must be a student who is enrolled in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

Scholarship recipients are selected based on academic record; leadership and participation in school and community activities; honors; work experience; and a statement of education and career goals; and an outside appraisal. To apply, complete the required criteria and the scholarship application, which can be obtained at www.lyrec.coop.



The application is due at 5 p.m. on Feb. 14. Please send the application to LYREC, Attn: Jami Propp, P.O. Box 1047, Sidney, MT 59270. ■

Lock your home against cyber criminals

Electric co-ops protect the private information of members and ensure hackers don't tamper with the reliability of the electric grid, but member-owners have a lot at stake, too. Think about losing all the photos on your smartphone or having bank or credit card information stolen from your computer.

Cyber criminals all over the world are on the prowl through the internet.

Just like washing your hands to keep you from getting bacteria, there are simple things you can do to protect yourself online. Let's start with the basics of "cyber hygiene" to protect yourself online.

TURN ON MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION

Implement multifactor authentication on your accounts and make it significantly less likely you'll get hacked. This means opting into an extra step when trusted websites and applications ask you to confirm you're really who you say you are.

UPDATE YOUR SOFTWARE

Keep your security software, internet browser and operating system up to date on your mobile phones, tablets and laptops. Better yet, turn on automatic updates. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that created it.

Updating your software regularly – as soon as possible when a newer version comes out – helps make sure you have critical patches and protections against security threats.

THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

More than 90% of successful cyberattacks start with a phishing email.

Have you ever seen a link that looks a little off? It looks like something you've seen before, but it says you need to change or enter a password. Or maybe it asks you to verify personal information. It could be a text message or even a phone call. They may pretend to be your email service, your boss, your bank or a friend. The message may claim it needs your information, because you've been a victim of cybercrime.

A lot of the computer hacking problems result from people clicking on links or attached files that infect their computers or mobile devices. An email can even be disguised to look like it's coming from your best friend, so simple diligence can be extremely beneficial.

If it's a link you don't recognize, trust your instincts and think before you click.

Rural Development Finance Corporation awards grant

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative is a member of the Rural Development Finance Corporation (RDFC). As a result, communities in our service area are eligible to apply for a grant of up to \$3,000 for community-based projects.

RDFC recently granted \$1,000 to the Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture for the Ag in the Classroom initiative, which is an education event for fourth-grade students and is offered to all students in Richland County and the surrounding areas.

The outcome of Ag in the Classroom includes an increase in the ability to understand and communicate the source and value of agriculture as it affects our quality of life. An example of Ag in the Classroom curriculum includes creating a meal completely sourced from local producers, basic emergency preparedness skills and survival tactics, and bee pollination cycles.

For more information on the RDFC grant or to download an application, go to www.lyrec.coop. ■

Need assistance heating your home this winter?

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 or call Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative.

The application process can take up to two months before receiving assistance. If you fall within the guidelines below and need assistance, please download an application today.

Below are income eligibility criteria for Montana residents:

Number in household	Annual income
1	\$29,796
2	\$38,964
3	\$48,132
4	\$57,300
5	\$66,468

Below are the income eligibility criteria for North Dakota residents:

Number in household	Annual income
1	\$35,724
2	\$46,716
3	\$57,708
4	\$68,701
5	\$79,693

If you do not fall within these guidelines, you may still qualify for Energy Share. Energy Share benefits are a one-time grant to alleviate a temporary heating emergency. Eligibility is not based solely on income, but also on extenuating circumstances the household is facing. ■



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Tom Hall	GIS Specialist
Corey Candee	Chief Information Officer
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