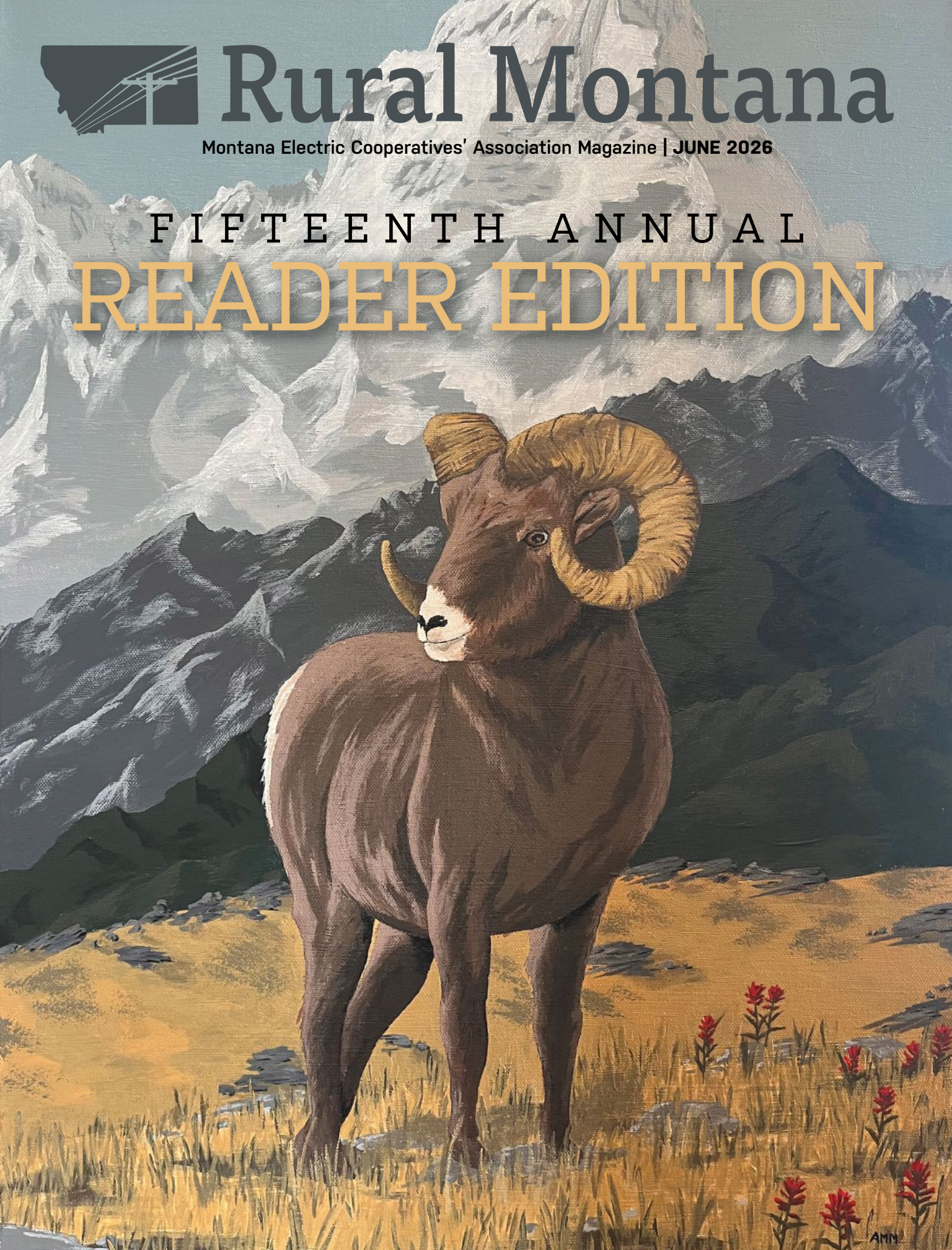




Rural Montana

Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Magazine | JUNE 2026

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL READER EDITION



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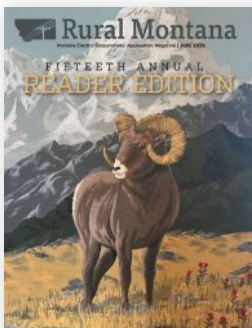
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by Amy McCann
of Dillon.

Rural Montana

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Safety starts before the work begins

Guest column by **JERRY LEMM**, Safety/Loss Control Instructor, MECA



JUNE is National Safety Month. As Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association's (MECA) most tenured safety instructor, I wanted to take this opportunity to tell our readers why safety is the number one priority of their co-op and how that benefits them as members. MECA has three instructors who provide safety training to the line workers and other employees of co-ops across the state, working to minimize injury risks and disruptions to electrical service.

"If you don't have time to do it right the first time, you don't have time to get it wrong." This is one of my favorite lessons I include during my safety training opportunities. It speaks to the premise "safety first."

The effects of a bad choice in the field will create difficult, if not devastating, conditions. They may end up costing you, the member, more time without power or more investment in electric facilities. More importantly, there is always the horrific and unthinkable chance that one of our own — our family, our community — might be injured or worse. The professionals who represent each of our coop-

eratives understand the value of taking time and making time for safety.

Remember when you have observed a few co-op employees gathered around their trucks and equipment in the field? That is them making time to get on the same page, to review their work plan to make sure the next moments or hours are properly spent protecting themselves and their equipment to safely solve a problem in the field. They understand that safety must be built-in, not bolted on. In other words, their abilities, mindset and focus must be in line with the current project and conditions at hand. They not only take on their tasks with pride, but they understand that you are relying on them to be the best selves they can be.

Your cooperative employees understand how important their choices are. Their actions and choices reflect on their crews, their cooperative and themselves. Time spent training, reviewing and planning is truly an investment in their personal safety, the cooperative and membership as a whole for the future of your community. RM

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The Roberts farmhouse soon after the author's family moved from Wyoming to Montana in 1942. (Note the iron wheeled tractor on the far right). | PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TEEGARDEN FAMILY

THE DAY OUR LIVES CHANGED

Rural Electric Administration installed power in 1947

STORY BY THOMAS TEEGARDEN | LAUREL

OUR lives changed in the summer of 1947 – the day that the Rural Electric Administration (REA) came to our farm on Cottonwood Creek about 6 miles north of Roberts, and close to Cooney Dam.

I am 85 now and know there can't be too many people alive who witnessed the REA coming to their Montana home, so I thought I'd remind folks a bit about how wonderful it was when power came.

Our family had moved from the

plains of Wyoming to this broken-down farm near Roberts in 1942, when I was 2 years old. As a 6- or 7-year-old boy, I can remember seeing the REA trucks up on the gravel road above the house as they set the long poles to carry the electric lines. They were working from south to north, and I seem to remember a few explosions. I know they did use dynamite if they ran into a boulder while digging the holes for the power poles. All I remember for sure is seeing those trucks and their crews working,

with the knowledge that our family was happy electricity was coming. Since I had gone to school in Roberts for a couple of years, I probably had some idea of what electricity was but had no idea what it would do for us.

Before that fall day when power came, mom had to use a hand crank to slosh the water back and forth in the washing machine, and I also remember her hand cranking the clothes wringer that went round and round to squeeze the water from the clothes before hang-

ing them on a clothesline in the yard. With a farm family of six or seven kids, there was a lot of clothes washing.

The first big change for us was we were able to use a refrigerator! Unbelievable how that changed Mom's workload, and thus make a better life for us all.

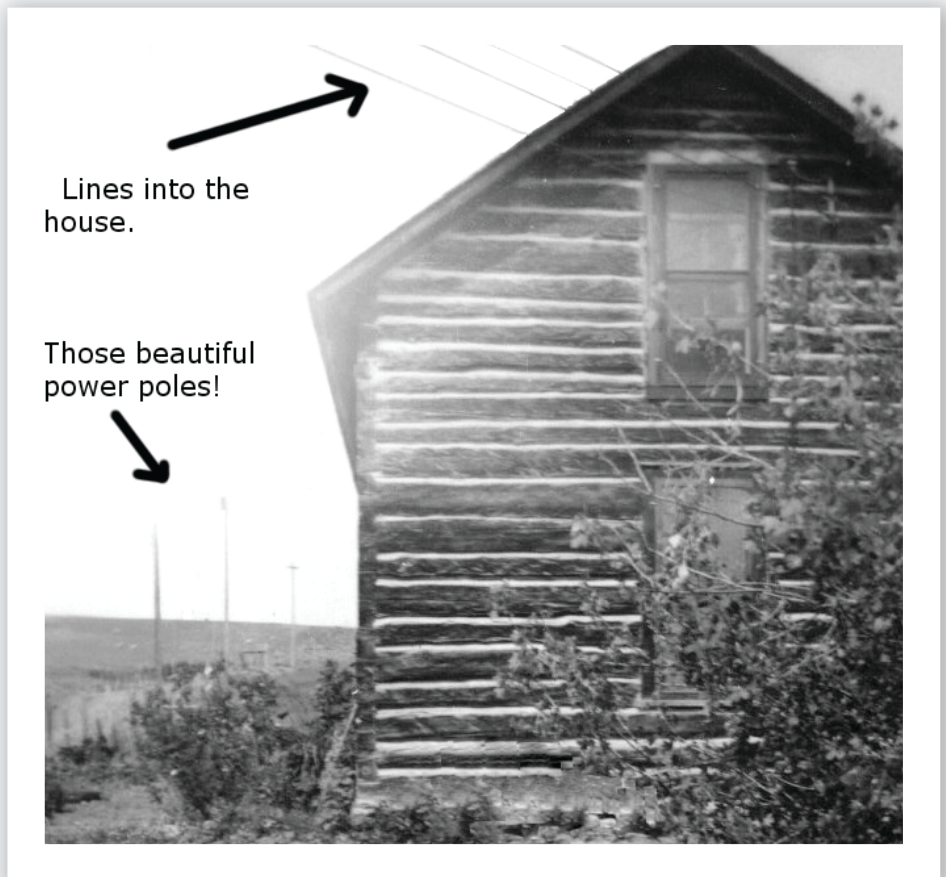
Before that we had no refrigeration at all. I don't know what Mom did to cool anything; some farms had an icebox, but we lived too far from town to keep an ice supply.

My wife Donna grew up near Luther, and they had a spring that ran all year long. They used that spring to help keep things cool, but we had no such luxury. Our water well did have fairly cold water when it was fresh, but since we had no power, I carried at least two buckets of water every day, so our water wasn't cold very often or for very long. Many folks soon piped water into the house after electricity came, but we never did.

The cream separator that was used after every milking had to be washed every day – it was laborious – and was hand operated until electricity came. That was not only work-saving, but time-saving too.

If we had a radio before electricity, it had to be run from a car battery that Dad would bring into the house to listen to the noon grain prices on KGHL. I remember well that after electricity came, the radio did so much more; it was the one thing that a boy like me could enjoy so much. Yes, we listened to the news in the morning and grain prices at noon, but in the evening we were entertained by Red Skelton, Jack Benny, *The Shadow*, *Fibber McGee & Molly*, *The Lone Ranger* and many more programs. The radio was our window into the world and changed everything.

There were other wonderful changes such as having a toaster for the first time. And later, a clothes iron that was so much more efficient for Mom than the flat irons of older days, and before long we even had a light bulb in our barn and listened to the *Grand Ole Opry*



while we milked cows. And with the coming of electricity, we soon had a five-party telephone line that brought us communication with the outside world that we had never known before.

I have only touched on the biggest change of all: simply providing light after dark. Before that, we used a large kerosene lamp that Mom or Dad would first fill with fuel, then pump a little plunger several times to build pressure, I assume, then remove the glass lamp, light the two wicks with a match and replace the glass. As the wicks burned, they became brighter and brighter, and soon gave off a surprising amount of light. If you've used a Coleman lantern camping, this was similar but involved more steps and more work to maintain the lamp.

The lantern was hung by a ceiling hook over the kitchen table. Most of the time it was the only light in the house. There were smaller lanterns but they generally were too much work; it was easier to go to bed in the dark.

After REA came, the kerosene lanterns were retired; at first we had a bare bulb over the table in the middle of our main room, which was the kitchen, dining and living room all in one. That bare bulb was soon enclosed with a cut-glass type of fixture that put out much better light. And there was a hanging bulb in Mom and Dad's bedroom, as well.

And, equally impressive, we had wall plugins so that the radio and other appliances were easy to use; the wall light switches were also easy to use, plus there was a yard light where the wires came from the main line into our property.

These days when the power goes out for an hour or two, we think the world is coming to an end, but then I try to remember us having electricity for the first time when I was 7, and I smile inside and am grateful again for that wonderful time when the REA came to our area and into our home – and changed our lives in so many ways. RM

2026 READER ISSUE

15th annual Reader Issue submissions came pouring in

WE can't believe that 2026 marks the 15th year we have done the annual Reader Issue. And we are equally shocked at how many excellent entries we receive each and every year. We really do have some talented readers.

In this issue, you will find historical stories of times gone by in Montana, a lot of humor writing and more. We have poems from young Montanans and adults, and some amazing photos.

Every submission, even the ones we couldn't squeeze in, was excellent, and many were thought provoking. If your submission doesn't get used, keep an eye on Page 4 in upcoming issues, as we plan to run more reader content there in future months.

Thank you for all the great contributions. We are already excited for next year!

— *Ryan G. Hall, Editor*

WHEN THE EVENING COMES

POEM BY **DENNIS JENSEN** | WHITEFISH

In the quiet of the evening, when the wind drops down to nil
When there is no further listening; everything at once is still.
Colors once so full and bright have faded gray to black
Day is turning into night; the sun has turned its back.

Distance is no longer seen; afar seems just like near
Senses are extremely keen; whisperings louder in my ear.
Shadows once were well defined and connected to the host
Have melded and one now cannot find; invisible like a ghost

Critters have long since disappeared; they've crawled back to their nest
Hidden they are from those they feared; once again tonight will rest
What was once a scenic sight; an artist's work with paint and brush
Is erased by the coming night and quieted by the hush

I know the scene will soon be gone; but it's imprinted in my mind
and there I can see it drawn as clearly as if I were blind
Although the day's beauty now has passed; I have no remorseful sorrow
Like a movie with the same script and cast; it plays again tomorrow.



House Tales

POEM BY **S.E. TERRY** | CUT BANK

Darkness descends over my house,
now the old wooden beams may speak;
their words subdued as twisted, they moan,
doors and stairways begin to creak.

As if some companion, known only by sounds,
leans ever so slightly against my door;
a scratch and a bump as he makes his rounds,
now a faint step on the brittle floor.

Forward and back he steadily paces,
this much I can tell by listening;
as if some well-worn path he traces,
sheet under chin — hair bristling!

Such curious sounds, now familiar to me,
as I search the house over, in corners and under;
not an intruder nor robber to flee,
but finding my friend — admit to my blunder!

'Tis no ghost or stranger unwelcome,
but the timbers again spinning the tale;
of years and voices now deceased,
and a creaking abode grown frail.

No longer the darkness descending I dread,
when across the ceiling comes a heavy tread;
it is merely the rafters speaking aloud,
and the night covering my home with its shroud.

Why vegetation management matters

by **Jason Brothen**



Brothen

Trees just never go out of style. They keep us grounded, remind us of where we've been and keep reaching for what's next. We are lucky to be surrounded by trees that shade us on hot days and help shelter us on windy days.

Although trees add so much beauty to our homes and properties, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) works conscientiously to balance preserving the

beauty we cherish and delivering the reliable electricity you expect.

One of the most important ways we do that is through regular tree trimming.

Keeping lines clear of overgrown vegetation plays a major role in preventing power outages. We've all seen what can happen when strong winds, heavy ice or severe storms roll in and bring down branches, power lines and poles. Many power outages can be traced back to trees and vegetation coming into contact with electrical infrastructure.

That's why you may notice crews from LYREC working in your communities throughout the year. Our crews follow the latest industry standards to ensure the job is done safely and effectively. Their work might seem routine, but it's a proactive step that helps prevent problems before they start.

It's far better to take care of preventative work when the weather is good than to be cleaning up a mess during a power outage. That's why electric utilities across the country are required to manage vegetation near power lines. Regular trimming helps remove dead or weakened limbs and keeps fast-growing trees from becoming hazards. It's about staying one step ahead, especially as we prepare for severe weather events.

But it's not just about reliability and efficiency. This work is also about keeping people safe. When trees get too close to power lines, it can get dangerous. Branches that touch or even come close to the lines can carry electricity. Kids climbing trees in their own



yards might not realize the risk. And when storms hit, fallen trees can create hazardous conditions for both families and the crews working to restore power.

There's also the financial side. Preventative maintenance, such as tree trimming, is much more affordable than fixing widespread damage after an outage. If left unchecked, overgrown vegetation can cause more frequent outages and increase costs for everyone. A well-planned vegetation management program helps keep those costs down for our members.

You can help, too. When planting trees, consider their mature height and distance from nearby power lines. Trees that grow up to 40 feet should be planted at least 25 feet away from overhead lines, while larger trees should be planted at least 50 feet away. If you're planting near pad-mounted transformers, keep shrubs at least 10 feet from the front and 4 feet from the sides, so crews can safely access the equipment.

With more than 2,000 miles of overhead line, our crew cannot catch everything. If you spot a tree getting too close to a power line, give us a call at 406-488-1602 and let us know.

Don't forget to call 811 at least two business days before digging. It's a free service that can prevent serious accidents.

At the end of the day, we all want a community that's safe, resilient and beautiful. LYREC is proud to be part of that. This is home for us, just like it is for you. ■

Cooperation among cooperatives

On April 22, a winter storm swept through NorVal Electric Cooperative's service area, bringing heavy, wet precipitation, 50- to 70-mph winds and a dramatic temperature drop from the 80s to the 30s overnight. The storm downed more than 50 poles. The Glasgow area recorded 1.54 inches of moisture, the second-wettest April on record and the wettest day in nearly six years.

By noon, five Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) lineworkers had loaded two service trucks, a bucket truck, two skid steers with a pole tipper and an auger, and a side-by-side with tracks and headed to Glasgow to assist with restoration.

Over the next two-and-a-half days, they worked near Park Grove, framing and setting 24 poles, and stringing power line. Despite cold, wind and muddy conditions, the crew logged more than 45 hours.

Lineworkers are true heroes. They show up in tough conditions to keep communities connected. The LYREC crew shared the people of Glasgow were incredibly kind and appreciative throughout the process, a reminder of the strong community spirit that makes this work so meaningful.

"Anytime we can help our cooperative neighbors, we will, because they would do the same for us," CEO Jason Brothen says.



This is what cooperatives do, when neighbors need help. They come together, pooling people, equipment and resources to restore power safely and as quickly as possible. ■

Life flight training completed

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative recently hosted life flight training with Trinity Health First Response of Minot, bringing together emergency personnel and lineworkers. A Bell 407 air ambulance was flown into the community for hands-on instruction.

Attendees learned how to communicate critical information to flight crews, establish safe landing zones day and night, recognize unsafe flying conditions and follow proper safety procedures around the aircraft. The training also provided an up-close look at the helicopter and practical experience setting up a landing area.

While we hope this training is never needed, every minute matters during life-threatening situations. With more than 2,000 miles of line across remote terrain, a quick and informed response can make a critical difference. We're grateful to Trinity Health First Response, local emergency medical services personnel, first responders and neighboring co-ops for helping ensure our communities and crews are better prepared. ■



Grid Power Players

Electricity is available with the flip of a switch, but it travels great distances and is coordinated among multiple entities before it reaches your home or business. Take a look at the grid power players that ensure you receive reliable electricity.



1. Generation Owners & Operators

Power plants can be owned and operated by electric utilities, government entities or other private companies. Power plants produce electricity by converting energy from various sources—like natural gas, coal, nuclear, or renewables—into electricity.

2. Transmission System Owners & Operators

The transmission grid moves large amounts of electricity over long distances using high-voltage transmission lines attached to large towers. Like power plants, these lines can be owned by a variety of public and private companies.

3. Organized Wholesale Markets

In many parts of the country, Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs) & Independent System Operators (ISOs) coordinate the flow of electricity across regions by balancing supply and demand in real time and managing the dispatch of electric generation and transmission across large areas with the participation of generation and transmission owners.

4. Electric Utilities (That's Us!)

Electric distribution utilities take electricity from the transmission system and deliver it to homes and businesses through lower-voltage distribution lines. They also maintain local power lines, poles and other essential equipment.

5. End Users (That's You!)

End users consist of the homes, businesses and industries that consume electricity. Their demand drives how much electricity is generated and how the grid is managed in real time.

Other Key Players:

NERC: The regulatory authority that develops and enforces mandatory, reliability standards for the North American bulk electric grid. (Standards are developed through a stakeholder process.)

FERC: Independent federal agency that oversees interstate transmission and wholesale electricity sales, ensuring fair access to the grid.



Operation Round Up Trustee **Heidi Moran**, right, presents a \$500 check to **Stephanie Ridl**, the Sidney city park superintendent, to help purchase "Twinkle Toes" for the Elevate Fitness Course in Johnson Park, providing a unique source of exercise for teens and adults.



Operation Round Up Trustee **Wendy Johnson**, right, presents a \$500 check to **Megan Halvorson**, executive director of the Fort Union Association, to help cover the cost of hiring demonstrators who teach visitors about historic arts and lifeways during the annual Fort Union Rendezvous.



Discounts offered for Medora vacation

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative is able to offer its members discounts in Medora by being a Touchstone Energy® member. Simply call 800-MEDORA-1 and give the discount code of "TOUCH2026" for a 15% discount on all of the following during any night of the season.

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- Hotel 1883

The code is good for reservations over the phone, website or in person. A greens fee discount will be applied at check-in at the golf course.

3200 W. Holly - Sidney, MT 59270

Phone: 406-488-1602

Website: lyrec.coop

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MONTANA U.S. REPRESENTATIVES

In order to allow ample space for responses, Rural Montana alternates asking Montana's senators and representatives the Dateline D.C. question each month. This month features the representatives. Next month, we will ask a question of the state's two senators.

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

Many Montana communities are counting on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help them recover from recent floods and windstorms. Should they expect the federal government to continue its disaster relief role in the long term?

THE SAME QUESTION WAS ASKED TO MONTANA'S TWO U.S. SENATORS IN RM'S LAST MONTH'S EDITION



Rep. Zinke

512 Cannon House
Office Building,
Washington, D.C. 20515
<https://zinke.house.gov>
Ph: (202) 225-5628

Representative Ryan Zinke

LAST December, a severe rain and wind storm caused major flooding and damage across western Montana. Bridges were submerged, and the Lower Flower Creek Dam failed. That dam, which supplies water to Libby, required emergency action to prevent further structural collapse. In rural communities with a limited tax base, recovering from a disaster like this simply is not possible without support from the state and federal government.

I worked alongside Senators Daines and Sheehy to secure a presidential disaster declaration and unlock FEMA's full resources for our communities. President Trump approved that request quickly, recognizing the urgency on the ground. But despite that approval, a partial government shutdown delayed federal disaster assistance, with county leaders still left in limbo as to how much funding

they are getting and when.

That delay stands in stark contrast to how disasters are handled elsewhere. When a bridge collapses in Baltimore or wildfires hit Los Angeles, Congress moves quickly and funding follows within days. Montana taxpayers pay into FEMA just like every other state, but too often we do not see timely support when we need it most. A bridge in Libby should be treated no differently than a bridge in Baltimore.

I am pushing to reopen the Department of Homeland Security so these funds can be released for Libby and Sanders County, and to ensure that going forward Montana communities can count on timely and reliable federal support when disaster strikes. RM

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Department of Homeland Security shutdown ended April 30 (after the question was asked)*



Rep. Downing

1037 Longworth, House
Office Building,
Washington, D.C. 20515
<https://downing.house.gov>
Ph: (202) 225-3211?

Representative Troy Downing

MONTANA communities should expect the federal government to continue playing an important role in disaster relief. When floods, wildfires, severe storms or other disasters strike, FEMA is a critical partner in helping communities respond, recover and rebuild. Especially in rural states like Montana, local governments often do not have the resources to handle these disasters alone.

That said, we also need to make sure the system is working efficiently and effectively. Too often, communities are forced to deal with unnecessary delays, burdensome paperwork and slow response times when they need help the most. Families, ranchers, small businesses and local officials deserve a process that is timely, transparent and focused on getting resources where they are needed quickly.

This Congress, I have introduced multiple pieces of legislation aimed at enhancing FEMA's ability to carry out its essential duties. This includes the bipartisan Improvement of Mapping, Addresses, Geography, Elevations and Structures (IMAGES) Act, which modernizes and improves FEMA's

flood-mapping standards and technology under the National Flood Insurance Program.

I also introduced the Floodplain Enhancement and Recovery Act, which exempts ecological restoration projects in FEMA-designated floodplains from having to demonstrate no net impact on base flood elevation. This bill ensures FEMA floodplain regulations, including the No Rise Rule, are tailored to projects that would significantly alter flood elevations and are not disadvantaging conservation projects.

We should also continue investing in disaster preparedness and resilience, so communities are better equipped before disasters happen. Whether it's strengthening infrastructure, improving forest management, or supporting emergency response capabilities, proactive measures can help reduce long-term damage and costs.

I'll keep working to ensure Montana communities have the federal support they need while also pushing for accountability, faster response times and commonsense reforms that improve how disaster relief is delivered. RM

I'll Bee Darned!

STORY BY **JANE LAMBERT** | STEVENSVILLE

THERE I was in the heat of August, with a hoe, searching for errant noxious weeds, when a strange-looking hole in the ground caught my attention. It was about the size of a large walnut, with very smooth edges and what looked like dirt crumbs all around it. Soon, bees began to emerge — yellowjackets, a few at first, then in increasing numbers. I rapidly returned to the house and reported the invasion to my husband Eric.

Very early the next morning, when the bees were asleep, I approached the hole with a can of bee spray. I was dressed for action — blue jeans with legs taped tight around my ankles, polar fleece pullover, Gortex rain-coat with the hood snugged down and leather gloves. Your normal August attire.

I stepped lightly up to the hole, which alerted the first guard bee, and he came crawling up and took off before I could pull the trigger on the bee spray. I took action and put quite a lot of spray down the hole, then stepped back and foamed the opening until it was piled on like whipped cream. I didn't see the guard bee anymore, so I went in to the house.

I walked into the kitchen and saw out of the corner of my eye something fly off toward the window. I jumped. I told Eric I must be getting flinchy since a fly just spooked me. Hah!

On the window was the guard bee. He must have landed on me and bit my jacket all the way back to the house. Darn! In short time he was residing in a hand-held vacuum.

In double-checking the bee hole, we soon discovered that I had not killed all of them, as they were still emerging from the insecticide-soaked hole. We had a gallon of Bug Defense, which we got for a dollar at a yard sale, so we poured the whole thing down the hole. Still some bees were coming out.

We read the label on the jug to see if bees were on the bug kill list, and all of the writing was in French. Darn! What do you expect for a buck?

The next plan of attack was to vacuum them! It worked on the window, so why not over the hole?

We have a big leaf blower, which also sucks and chops leaves as they enter the bag. We positioned it so the mouth was over the bee hole. Some bees must have escaped after the first two onslaughts, because they were coming from the surrounding area back to guard the nest. Quite a few were circling around, but they soon disappeared into the vacuum, and in a couple of hours, no bees remained and we turned off the

blower.

The next morning, there was one lone, circling bee. Turning the suction back on got him. We gave them a chaser of five gallons of water poured down the bee hole, then filled the hole with rocks and capped it with dirt.

The bees be darned!!!! 





ATV Ice Capades

STORY BY GREG BULL | ASHLAND

I was a sixth-grader when Dad purchased two ATVs for the ranch.

One winter day, my pal Chad and I were driving around the hills and discovered a frozen pond. We slid the four-wheelers along the edge of the pond, spinning sideways on the ice and laughing hysterically. We were scared to go out too far, as the ice was thin and we didn't know how deep the pond might be.

Chad parked on an embankment to stretch his legs, and his ATV started to roll. I couldn't muster any sound. All I could do was point. We watched in horror as it rolled off the hill and onto the ice, coming to rest dead-center in the middle of the pond.

Chad shuffled onto the ice as I stared wide-eyed, waiting for both him and the ATV to plunge into the frigid depths. I concocted ways to cover up the scene. I could claim Chad was abducted by aliens that beamed him onto their ship. Or maybe I would just

hop on my four-wheeler and drive to Costa Rica, never to be seen again.

"Help me get this thing to shore!" Chad hollered.

I weighed my options. Was it worth the risk of drowning to avoid the WRATH OF DAD?

Yes, it was!

I inched onto the ice, contemplating how long I could hold my breath under water. For some reason, rather than driving the ATV to shore, we attempted to drag it. Chad at the front, me at the back. Him pushing, me pulling. Our feet were slipping and sliding, but we found traction and it started to move.

We were making progress!

Then things took a turn for the worse.

Zig-zags of cracks appeared under our feet. In a panic, we kicked our 12-year-old legs into overdrive. We could hear the ice cracking, a terrifying sound in the winter silence.

Only 10 feet to go! 5

feet...4...3...2...1. My boots reached the shore.

"We're going to make it!" I yelled. Then...SPLASH!!

The ATV plunged into the pond. Chad, executing a marvelous impersonation of Jesus walking on water, skittered to shore without so much as getting his pantlegs wet. We tugged and yanked and grunted, but the machine wouldn't budge.

There was no choice. We had to tell Dad.

He frowned as we explained the situation, shaking his head and making grumbling noises. With his pickup and tow rope, he retrieved the ATV and discovered water had gotten into places water isn't supposed to go, requiring a trip to the repair shop.

Much to our surprise, Dad didn't kill us. Looking back, I'm sure he was thankful we weren't hurt.

Well...nothing other than our pride.

RM

STORIES FROM A MILITARY NURSE

BY COLLEEN PURCELL | FLORENCE

In nursing there are many stories that touch your heart and leave indelible memories. I hope you will enjoy some of these stories from my career.

Language Barrier

Working in the Intensive Care Unit at the Veterans Affairs hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico, many of our patients would revert to their primary language of Spanish when very ill.

One morning as I went into draw blood on one of my patients, I thought I would use my very best Spanish to tell him “I have come to draw your blood.” He turned very pale, shrunk back down in the bed and got very stiff.

As I left the room I ran into Eloy, one of my Spanish-speaking LPNs. I told him what I had said to my patient in my very best Spanish. Eloy just laughed and told me that I had NOT told the patient that I was going to DRAW his blood, instead I said I was going to DRINK his blood. Oops!

From then on out I was more careful with my very best Spanish.

Clear Instructions Needed

In volunteering at my son’s school for hearing and vision, I had a first-grade girl come sit beside me. I told her to cover one eye and read the letters. Then I told her to cover her other eye.

She immediately told me she could not see anything! Being the ICU nurse, I thought the worst — she must be blind in that eye. Then I turned and looked at her — she had covered BOTH eyes.

I needed to be more careful in my instructions and less quick in rushing to judgement of catastrophic illnesses. She passed her test and I became better at instructions.

Naval Officer Candidate

When I graduated from college with a BS in nursing, I immediately went to Naval Officer Candidate




Colleen Purcell in the Coronary Care unit at Barnes Jewish Christian hospital in St. Louis, Mo.

school in New Port, Rhode Island. It is where all Navy nurses went to learn how to wear the Navy uniform, who to salute, how to salute and all about the Navy in general. They paid for my last year of college, and I owed them two years of service.

I was very nervous about getting the ranks right. One day while taking a walk I came up behind an admiral who was walking between buildings. I was so nervous.

I was trying to think about exactly what to say. As I passed him I whipped out my very best salute and belted out, so I was sure he would hear “By your rear sir,” which was followed immediately by his returned salute and a lot of laughter.

I then realized what I *should* have said was “By your **leave**, sir” NOT **rear**! I was mortified! It gave the admiral a good laugh and I didn’t get court-martialed so God was with me that day for sure. 

WHEN FEATHERS FLEW

POEM BY **KAREN W. BACH** | LEWISTOWN

It was late in October, the weather was fair
Old Buck, a rancher, had new cattle to snare.
Snare for the brand that established domain
So the cattle could eagerly explore their terrain

Old Buck, described as a large strapping man,
Thought for a moment fore the branding began
What he exclaimed while patting his chest
"I think I need to put on my warm down vest"
"Nothing is warmer and better to wear
To cover you up from the cold fresh air"

With the down vest on, cowboy boots and hat
Old Buck the rancher was ready for combat.
In his hand he carried a large stick
Just in case there were any conflicts.

The cattle that came late in the fall
Seemed to be a bit off the wall
Ornery, stubborn and strong willed were they
Better to keep them all at bay.
Time and again they tried to escape
But Buck with his stick kept them in shape.

The branding, injections and tests had to be done
Buck making sure his commands were won
One by one the cattle were tagged
Seemed Buck had this pretty well in the bag

Till one cow who thought enough is enough
"I'll show you," she thought, who really is tough
Now Buck takes no bull or guff from these cows
So WHAP went the stick on the head of this cow.

Well that's all it took for the heifer to blow
Down went her head aiming at her foe
With a charge like you see from an army brigade
Old Buck the target couldn't be saved.

She charged with her strength and was half full of rage
Old Buck the rancher was gored in his rib-cage
Airborne was Buck with his legs in the air
His hat flying over in the mud slop somewhere
Boom on his butt did he land on the ground
Old Buck the rancher really got crowned.



Rural Montana file photo

Amazing enough about this case
Is that feathers were flying all over the place.
Now where in the world could these feathers occurred
Old Buck the rancher was not a big bird.

Twas when he stood up the answer was plain
His down feather vest looked like it had a migraine
Torn up to pieces, and ripped side to side
That down feather vest had really been fried.

Feathers still flying, Old Buck shot up
Look out there cow you better back up!
With stick in his hand and a glare in his eye
WHAP! WHAP! On the head
Was Old Buck's reply

Floating in the trough was his great cowboy hat
You could see in Buck's eyes, that was that!
He loaded the cow in his trailer that day
That was all Buck could do to make any headway.

That day in October we will never forget
When feathers flew and a hat got wet
Who had the upper hand in that match anyhow?
Could have been Buck, could have been the cow
But more important is someone's belief
That Buck smiles a lot when he serves his roast beef.



SEND IN YOUR RECIPES

Recipes for *RM* magazine are submitted by cooperative members across the state. First, second and third place monthly winners are awarded \$30, \$20 and \$10 prizes, respectively. Send your recipes to *RM* Recipes, Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403, or email rural@mtco-ops.com. **Please include your name, hometown and an address. If you do not include this information, your submission will not be accepted.** For July send your favorite recipes that uses any kind of citrus by June 15. Please send in August recipes anytime: Your favorite dishes that use garden vegetables (you don't have to have grown them). Try to limit the ingredients and length of directions for space. Please include a photo, if possible.

1st
PLACE

Vegetarian Meatballs

VEGETARIAN

Melanie Hayes | LIBBY

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bag (12 oz.) riced cauliflower, "steamed"
- 1-1/2 cup cooked brown rice
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 tsp. fresh garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- Olive oil to brush on top

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
Combine all ingredients together. Make small balls, about 1 T each.
Brush with olive oil and bake for about 20 minutes.



2nd
PLACE

Lemon Zucchini Cake

DAIRY-FREE, GLUTEN-FREE

Amy Mettes | BRIDGER

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 1/4 cups sugar | 1/2 tsp. salt |
| 6 T extra virgin olive oil | 1-1/2 cup shredded zucchini, drained and squeezed dry |
| 2 eggs | 2 tsp. lemon zest |
| 1/3 cup vanilla almond milk | GLAZE: |
| 2 T lemon juice | 1 cup powdered sugar |
| 1 tsp. vanilla or almond extract | 1-2 tsp. lemon juice |
| 2 cups all-purpose gluten-free flour | |
| 1-1/4 tsp. baking powder | |

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
Spray loaf pan with baking spray or line with parchment paper.
Combine flour, baking powder and salt in a medium-sized bowl and whisk. In a large bowl combine the sugar, olive oil, eggs, almond milk, lemon juice, extract, zucchini and lemon zest.
Combine wet with dry ingredients.
Pour into prepared pan and bake for 45-55 min. Cool 15 minutes.
Glaze: In a small bowl, combine powdered sugar and lemon juice. Drizzle over cake.



3rd
PLACE

No-Boil Pasta Bake

GLUTEN-FREE

Lindsey Buxbaum | BAINVILLE

INGREDIENTS

- 12 ounces gluten-free brown rice pasta, uncooked
- 24 ounces pasta sauce
- 1-1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 T Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 12 ounces pre-cooked protein of choice (sliced chicken, ground beef, frozen meatballs, sausage)
- 1-1/2 cups shredded Italian cheese

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
Add the pasta, sauce, broth, cream, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, salt, pepper, and meat to a 9-by-13 inch pan, and stir the ingredients until well-combined.
Cover the dish as tightly as you can with foil. The foil must be tight in order to steam the pasta. Bake for 40 minutes.
After 40 minutes, remove the foil and sprinkle the cheese over the top, and bake an additional 10-15 minutes, until cheese is melted and browned.
OPTIONS: For dairy-free, omit cheese and replace heavy cream with chicken broth. For vegetarian, omit meat.



SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS

To list an event, send it to: RM Events, PO Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403 or email us at: rural@mtco-ops.com — Submit items by June 15 for July events. Include date, time, site, city and contact number with your event. **Events without such info will not be used.**

NORTHWEST

June-September

Bigfork Summer Playhouse celebrates 67th season — *Newsies, Young Frankenstein, The Music Man, Mean Girls, 8 p.m., and 2 p.m., for info go to bigforksummerplayhouse.com, 837-4886* | **BIGFORK**

June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Downtown Kalispell Walking Tours — *NW Montana History Museum, 10 a.m., 756-8381* | **KALISPELL**

June 2
History Book Club — *NW Montana History Museum, 2 p.m., 756-8381* | **KALISPELL**

June 6
48th Season Celebration — *Live exhibits, music, food, vendors and more, Heritage Museum, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 293-7521* | **LIBBY**

June 8
An Evening of Classical Favorites Featuring Michell Zeidwig — *Benefit, North Valley Music School, 7:30 p.m., 730-1504* | **WHITEFISH**

June 12-13
19th Annual Rags to Riches Rummage Sale — *Saint John Paul II Catholic Church, Fri: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat: 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., 805-210-1094* | **BIGFORK**

June 13
Shelby Kiwanis Annual Kite Festival — *30 City Shop Road, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 424-2358* | **SHELBY**

June 13
Community Garage Sale — *Bigfork Senior Center, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.* | **BIGFORK**

June 14
Sunburst Arts and Education Presents: Archertown — *Free outdoor concert, Indian Springs Ranch, 5 p.m., 297-0197* | **EUREKA**

June 15
Westerners Int'l presents Land of Beginnings: Montana's First Peoples — *NW Montana History Museum, 6:30 to 8 p.m., 309-0958* | **KALISPELL**

June 16
Kalispell Women's Connection "Rooted Families" Luncheon — *Guest speaker is Connie Barker, 1830 Hwy. 35, 11:30 a.m., call 261-9894 for reservations or information* | **KALISPELL**

June 18
"250 Years Ago: This Revolution Came at a Gallop" — *Talk by equine historian Brenda Wahler, NW Montana History Museum, 6 p.m., 756-8381* | **KALISPELL**

June 19-20
Sanders Saleing — *Sanders County's annual county-wide yard sale along highways 28, 135, 200 and 56, see sanderscochamber.org. 827-3421* | **THOMPSON FALLS**

June 19-20
Amazing Seniors Art Show — *190 Meadow Vista Loop Clubhouse, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 720-244-5147* | **KALISPELL**

June 20-21
Women of Rollins Annual Yard and Bake Sale — *Rollins Schoolhouse Community Center, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.* | **ROLLINS**

June 23
Movie Night at the Museum — *NW Montana History Museum, 7 p.m., 756-8381* | **KALISPELL**

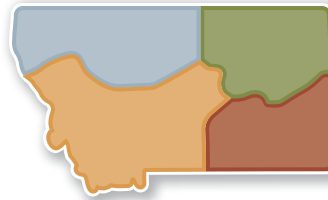
June 26-27
David Thompson: Celebrating Thompson Falls History — *Main Street, 827-3421* | **THOMPSON FALLS**

June 26-27
Yard Sales — *Hillcrest Estates, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 425-785-1057* | **KALISPELL**

June 26-28
All Moto Tire Founders Campout — *Three days of riding and camping, All Moto Tire* | **KALISPELL**

June 27
Trego 10 Mile Yard Sale — *From Hwy. 93 up Fortine Creek Rd., 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., 882-4581* | **TREGO**

July 4
Flathead Valley Community Band — *Depot Park, 10:30 a.m., 270-1696* | **KALISPELL**



SOUTHWEST

June 5, 6
Square & Round Dance at Yellowrock Square and Round Dance Center — *Formerly Camp & Dance, for schedule go to yellowrockcampground.com/dance, 541-226-6363* | **LOLO**

June 5-7
Artists Along the Bitterroot Studio Tour and Sales — *24 artists from Lolo to Darby, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., see ArtistsAlongtheBitterroot.com, 605-212-3979* | **STEVENSVILLE**

June 14
Cattail Basketry workshop — *CCMT at Homestead Organics Farm, 1 to 6 p.m., CultivatingConnectionsMT.org* | **HAMILTON**

June 19-20
38th Annual Lewis and Clark Festival — *Fri: BBQ Under the Big Sky benefit dinner, call to buy tickets, Sat: Interactive activities, theater talks, food trucks, Native cultural performances, art and more, free, 9:30 a.m., Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, starts at 9:30 a.m.* | **GREAT FALLS**

June 21
Farmstead Open House — *CCMT at Homestead Organics Farm, 1 to 6 p.m., CultivatingConnectionsMT.org* | **HAMILTON**

June 21
74th Annual Roy Rodeo — *1 p.m., 464-2135* | **ROY**

July 4-5
Wrangler Team Roping Championship — *Three Forks Rodeo Arena, 95691 MT Hwy 2, 272-3716* | **THREE FORKS**

NORTHEAST

June 6
Patriotic Quilt Show — *Malta Business Center, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 390-3720* | **MALTA**

June 11-14
Wild West Days — *Downtown, 633-1079* | **POPLAR**

June 20
Richland Centennial Celebration — *Parade, live music, children's games, food and more, noon to midnight, 321-0294* | **RICHLAND**

June 26-27
Milk River Gospel Jamboree — *Malta High School Auditorium, Fri: 5 to 9 p.m., Sat: 2:30 to 8 p.m., Sun: 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 301-2887, see mrgjamboree.org* | **MALTA**

June 28
Opheim Rodeo and Parade — *Parade at noon on Main Street, Rodeo at 1 p.m., Opheim Rodeo Grounds, 724-7142* | **OPHEIM**

SOUTHEAST

June 6
Heritage Fest 2026 — *O'Fallon Historical Museum, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 778-3265* | **BAKER**

June 6
Community Garage Sale — *The Huntley Project Museum, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 348-2533* | **HUNTLEY**

June 6
5th Annual Hotrods for Freedom Car Show — *S. Washington St, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., 672-5690* | **LAUREL**

June 12-14
The 3rd Annual Billings Fun Con — *Comics, cosplay, gaming, pop culture, art and vendors, MetraPark Montana Pavilion, 702-1241, see www.billingsfuncon.com/* | **BILLINGS**

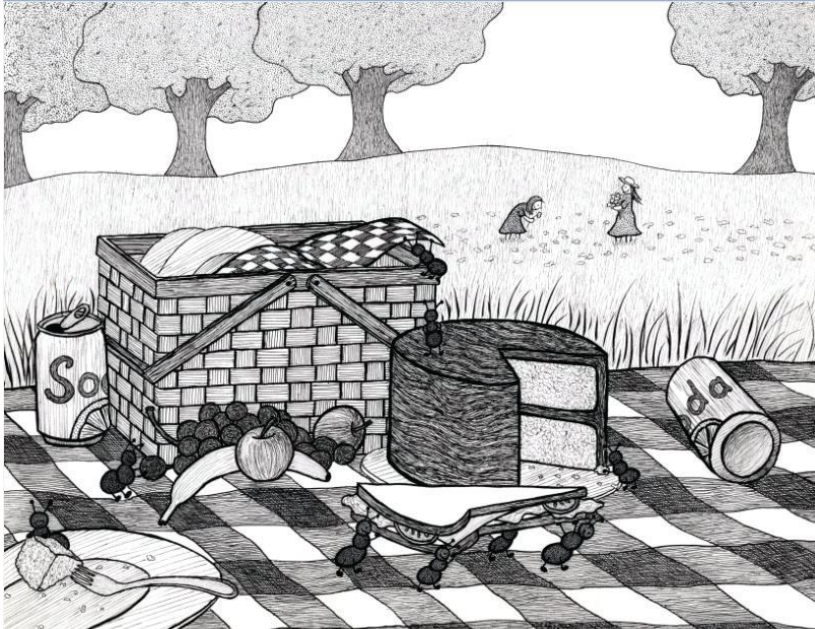
July 2
Montana Shakespeare in the Parks — *Roger Schmidt Amphitheater, 5:30 to 8 p.m., 778-3265* | **BAKER**

YOUNG MONTANANS

RM invites youngsters to send in original art and poems. If we use it, we'll pay you \$10. **Mail to:** Young Montanans, P.O. Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403.

Email: rural@mtco-ops.com. **Include:** Your name, age, address and your cooperative. *If you do not include this information, your submission will not be accepted.*

SEND US YOUR SUMMER
DRAWINGS AND POEMS



Emily Weiss, Stevensville | RAVALLI ELECTRIC

Jemah Soss, 12, Somers | FLATHEAD ELECTRIC



Autumn Kaski, 11, Kalispell | FLATHEAD ELECTRIC



Jacob Waldner, 10, Fairhaven Colony | SUN RIVER ELECTRIC



READER PHOTOS

SEND US YOUR FAVORITE PHOTOS/ARTWORK

Please include: the photographer's/artist's name, address and hometown in the entry. *If you do not include this information, your submission will not be accepted.* If we use your entry we'll pay you \$25-\$100 (depending on size and location).

Send entries to: rural@mtco-ops.com. No more than 20 MB at a time. No prints please.



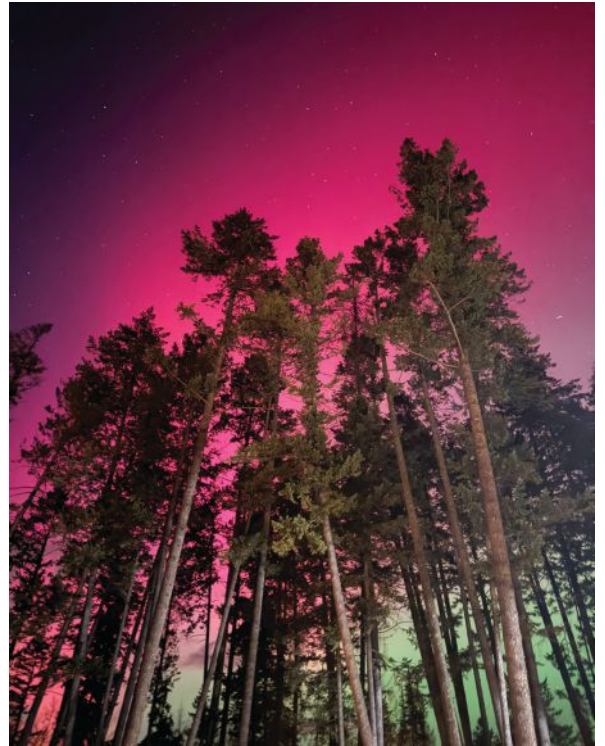
Under the Stars

A long exposure shows a beautiful night sky on a camping trip.

Photo by Carol Lynne Fowler of Seeley Lake.

Head to Head

Two cows battle at sunset. **Photo by Annie Birky of Fort Shaw.**



Borealis Backdrop

The Northern Lights and stars set a beautiful backdrop for a group of trees. **Photo by Patrick Landon of Bigfork.**

A Regal Perch

A bald eagle perches on a branch. **Photo by Anita Jones Bozich of Stevensville.**

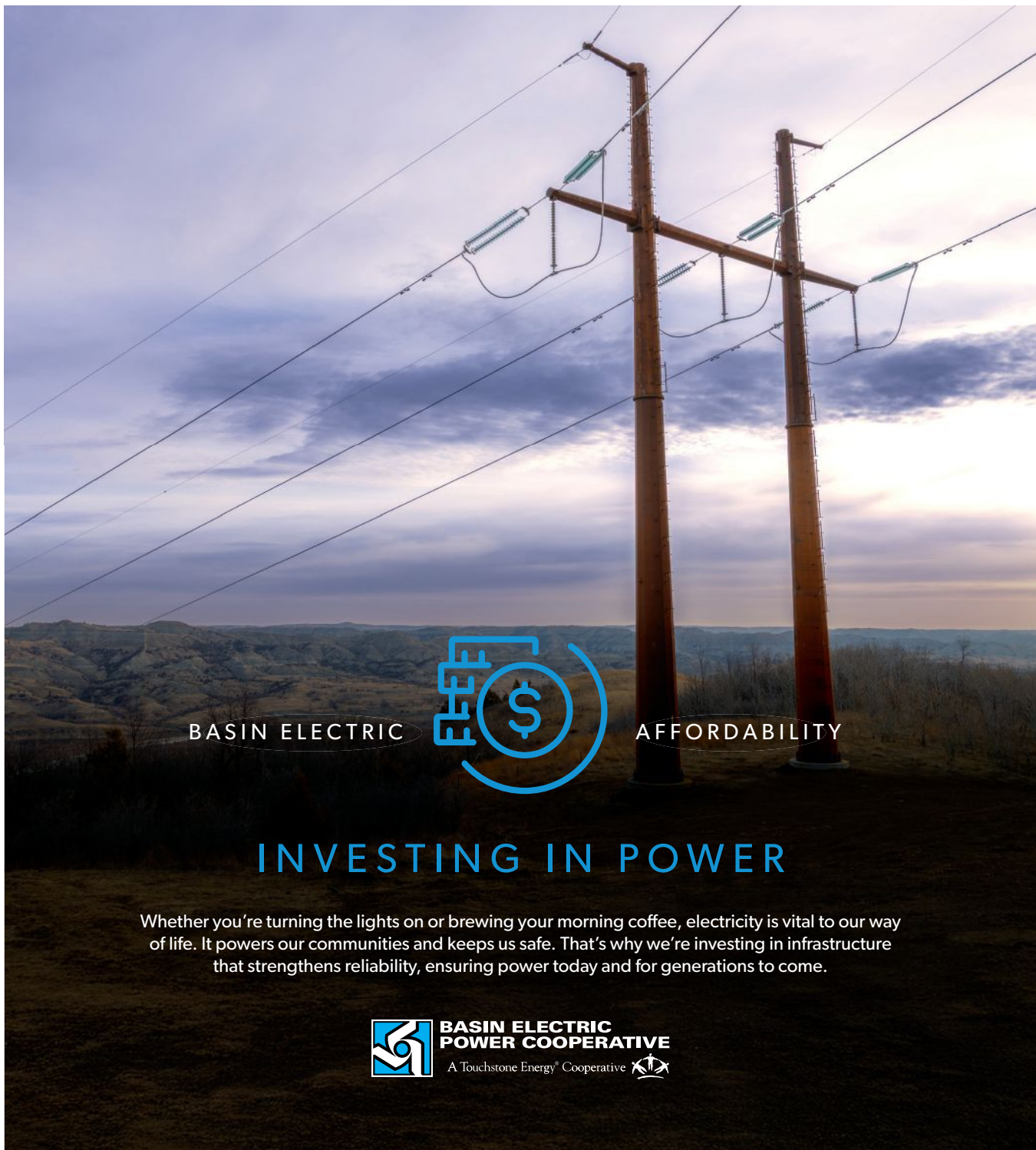




The Magazine of the
Montana Electric Cooperatives'
Association

Visit us online: www.mtco-ops.com

Email: rural@mtco-ops.com



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