

## Starting a new chapter

BY JASON BROTHEN



**Brothen**

“This is a special cooperative; you will like it here.” Those were the words of Don Prevost when we first visited in April 2013. Now in April 2015, I

know exactly what Don was saying to me.

My wife, two kids, a dog and I moved to Sidney in 2013. We are from northwestern North Dakota, and even though we were not too far from Sidney, we didn’t expect what we found when we moved to Sidney.

The opportunities for my kids are great and the community has been very warm and welcoming. I have many hobbies to keep myself busy in my spare time. I am an avid sports fan, and I love to play golf. I enjoy spending time with my family at sporting events, movies and also attending events around our region.

I have also taken the opportunity to get involved in the community. I currently serve as a Director for the Richland County Boys and Girls Club, a member of the Kiwanis Club, and I was recently elected to the Richland County Economic Development Board.

Along with these civic duties, I like to take the opportunity to teach our young people about the cooperative and what it means to them now and in

the future. I enjoy volunteering at the schools to educate the students, who are the members of tomorrow, about the cooperative and how electricity works in their lives.

To give everyone a little background on my work life, I have been an electric cooperative employee my whole career, which started as a part-time position in 1995, and turned into a full-time position in 1997. Over the past 18 years, I have worked my way through the ranks. Over those years, I had the unique opportunity to work in many areas of the cooperative. It’s been a wonderful experience to work beside numerous cooperative employees and for thousands of excellent members.

Now, I start another chapter in my cooperative career with Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC), as general manager. Over the past two years, I have been working with a great group of employees. I see a bright future for everyone involved with the cooperative. I have also been fortunate to work with and meet many of our members from one end of our system to the other.

LYREC has a rich, strong history of being a stable business in the communities and counties we serve. I want to continue the history and also expand on it. I feel we can take this a step further by expanding on how we communicate with our members. With the media explosion in the world today, the cooperative has many new and instant ways to get information to

our members about outages, products, programs we offer and cooperative news. I feel this is the next step in connecting to our membership, but we cannot lose sight of maintaining affordable, reliable power.

I feel we have to keep looking at the operational future of the cooperative and understand that we are growing into a cooperative where members no longer remember a world without electricity and we need to keep that in mind when planning our system.

The stable financial situation the cooperative finds itself in today is a direct reflection of good planning and decision-making by Don Prevost, his staff and the board of directors over many years. Even though faces are changing at the cooperative, the path of stability will continue for the cooperative.

I also see cooperatives in the middle of a changing environment. Our cooperative will not be immune to these changes. We will have to stay ahead of the issues, and communicate the best course of action for the cooperative members.

My family and I have enjoyed the opportunities that Sidney has brought to us. I am happy to be part of the cooperative family and look forward to my future with Lower Yellowstone Electric Cooperative. If any member has questions, please feel free to stop in and visit with me. (Meter T20606) ■

# Cooking up safety in the kitchen

The kitchen is the heart of the home. It's where families gather to cook favorite recipes, share warm meals and reconnect with each other, but it's also the location where two-thirds of all home fires start.

Follow these safety tips from Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative:

- Keep your stove and oven clean. Clean the exhaust hood and duct over the stove regularly.
- Keep the cooking area around the stove/oven clear of combustibles, such as towels, napkins and potholders.
- Plug countertop appliances into GFCI-protected outlets.
- Locate all appliances away from the sink.
- Keep appliance cords away from hot surfaces like the range or toaster.
- Unplug the toaster and other countertop appliances when not in use.
- Never leave cooking equipment unattended, and always remember to turn off burners if you have to leave the room.

- Supervise the little ones closely in the kitchen. Make sure children stay at least three feet away from all cooking appliances.
- Make sure there is room behind the refrigerator for air to circulate.
- Vacuum refrigerator coils every three months to eliminate dirt buildup that can reduce efficiency and create a fire hazard.
- Even a slight shock from a major

appliance can indicate an extremely hazardous wiring condition. Turn the power to the appliance off at the circuit breaker. Do not touch the appliance until it has been checked by a licensed, qualified electrician.

- Do not use electrical appliances that have been wet. Water can damage the motors in electrical appliances like freezers and refrigerators. ■



## Operations department goes to summer hours

Beginning Monday, April 6, the Operations Department will be working from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

If you have any projects that you need scheduled, please call the Operations Department Monday through Thursday. The line crew will only be available for outages on Fridays. The office hours will remain the same throughout the summer, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## Heating assistance deadline April 30

If you need help this heating season, funds are available. Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) will not accept applications after April 30, so you must act fast.

If you reside in Montana, you can contact Energy Share at 800-227-0703. If you reside in North Dakota, contact Community Action at 701-572-8191. If you reside in Montana, you may get an application from Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative's headquarters office in Sidney.

If you have an emergency situation after April 30, you may still be able to get assistance through the Energy Share Program. For more information, call the numbers listed above or call your local cooperative at 406-488-1602. ■



# Lineman Appreciation Day

4/13/15

**“Power linemen are special individuals. They have a passion for their jobs and their goal is to keep the lights on no matter the weather condition or time of day. I will always have a place in my heart for linemen”**

*— Doug Hettich, Assistant Operations Manager*



# April is National Safe Digging Month

Planning home improvements? Planting a tree? Installing a fence or deck? Whether you do it yourself or hire a professional, a safe job starts with a call to 811. Know where the underground utility lines are before you dig. Protect yourself and others from injury, and prevent damages to underground utility lines. One call starts the process of getting underground utility lines marked for free, dial 811.

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative responded to a total of 6,200 locates in Montana and North Dakota in 2014. The Montana One Call Center distributed 103,831 locates in 2014. On average, it requires five facility owners to reply to one locate request before digging begins.

The Montana One Call Center recommends that you outline or mark your planned dig site in white marking paint or flags. A good rule of thumb is to call in a locate seven to 10 days before digging begins. Once the area is marked, it is the excavators' responsibility to maintain the markings. Make sure you have heard from every facility owner on your locate request before you start excavating.

A locate must be requested two full business days before digging (not including the day you make the request) in Montana. In North Dakota, a locate request must be made 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) prior to excavation. The locate center

will notify the member utilities, and they will send a locator to mark their utility lines with flags and/or paint markings. The marks on the ground represent the approximate location of the underground lines. It is required to hand dig within 18 inches on either side of those marks in Montana and 24 inches on either side of the marks in North Dakota.

If you accidentally damage or disturb any utility line, call 811 to report the incident immediately. Locate marks in Montana are considered expired after 30 days from the date the excavator provides notice and North Dakota law states that the marks expire after 21 days. If the excavator has not begun excavation, and maintained the locate marks, a new locate request will need to be submitted to excavate after the expiration date. Make sure if you call in an emergency locate, it is an actual emergency. Reporting a false emergency locate request is the same as reporting a false 911 call.

Electricity can shock, burn or kill workers if it is not handled properly on the job site. Homeowners often make risky assumptions about whether or not they should get their utility lines marked, but every digging job requires a call. Digging without calling can disrupt utility service to an entire neighborhood, harm you and those around you, result in high repair cost and potentially result in fines. ■

## HIDDEN NUMBERS

If you find your meter number hidden in this issue, it is worth a \$25 credit on your next statement. The meter number will appear within the four Lower Yellowstone Electric pages. Give us a call during the month your meter is listed, and claim your \$25 bill credit. ■



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Phone: 406-488-1602

Fax: 406-488-6524

Website: [www.lyrec.com](http://www.lyrec.com)

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