



The pest control Army



PHOTO BY SUE B. BALCOM

This flock of turkey like to strut around the home of Mor-Gran-Sou members J.C. and Sue Balcom, who grow and sell produce at area farmers markets. Sue snapped this treasure of a photo just outside their front door. She says, “They keep the bugs down in the garden, and they don’t mind me walking right by them when they’re picking up stones in the driveway. They are my friends.” Thank you, Sue, for sharing this unique photo and your joy.

What’s inside:

- **Domestic violence inspires #WhoPowersYou nomination**
- **Celebrate National Apprenticeship Week**
- **Meeting minutes, and more**



Michelle Erickson says if she and AARC staff win the #WhoPowersYou contest, they will use the money to help victims buy basic items from Seeds of Hope in Bismarck. When they leave home, they may leave with only the clothes on their back. The money might be used to buy basic necessities, or pay for a taxi to take a person to a job interview, or pay for a pool pass so children can be children. A donation is a chance to start over, and be a productive member of society.

‘GIVING VICTIMS A VOICE’ Mor-Gran-Sou receives powerful #WhoPowersYou contest nomination for Michelle Erickson and Abused Adult Resource Center staff

BY CARMEN DEVNEY

Michelle Erickson, executive director at Abused Adult Resource Center (AARC), is a nominee in the fifth-annual, and final, #WhoPowersYou contest. It honors people who inspire and power our local communities.

The mission of AARC is to assist victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, stalking and dating violence by establishing and maintaining a program that will provide temporary shelter, crisis intervention, prevention, education, support and hope as a vision to eliminate violence. AARC serves a seven-county region including the North Dakota portion of Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

Erickson was nominated by Chantelle Charging, a Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative member from Sioux County.

In partnership with the national brand alliance Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, Mor-Gran-Sou supports the #WhoPowersYou contest to highlight some of the folks who are working hard and doing good deeds in our area communities.

Nominations were made from Sept. 8 through Oct. 9 online at www.whopowersyou.com.

Judges reviewed the nominations and chose the winners based on creativity and impact on the community. The winners (\$5,000 grand prize; \$2,000 second prize;



Michelle Erickson

\$1,500 third prize; \$500 honorable mention) were announced at the end of October, after the November issue of *North Dakota Living* was printed.

Across the United States, 112 people were nominated for this year’s contest. Two nominees are doing amazing things right here in North Dakota. Michelle Erickson is the only nominee on behalf of the Mor-Gran-Sou membership.

In nominating Erickson for the honor, Charging shares a very



The playroom at the Adult Abused Resource Shelter, where kids can run and play and make noise, and try to forget about feeling scared.

personal journey of abuse, which started at home as a child, and continued at the hands of a man into adulthood. She decided to share this story because she wants other victims to know they are not alone.

“Abuse touches so many walks of life. It can touch anybody. I want people to know they are not alone,” she says. “There is nothing wrong with you. You didn’t do anything wrong. You are not the bad person your abuser says you are. You are a human being.”

Charging thanks Erickson and the entire team at AARC for saving her. She also credits a special man, her husband Anthony Stretches, for loving her and teaching her that a good man does not hit.

Excited about the #WhoPowersYou contest, Charging says the nomination gives her the

opportunity to put a face and a voice to domestic abuse. For many years, she felt lost and alone, and alienated by family. In Erickson and other AARC staff, she found people who would listen and believe.

“When I read about this contest, I thought, wouldn’t it be awesome to help them out? Michelle and the shelter staff helped me out because of donations people gave them. If I can give back [by nominating them and they win,] if I can do something to thank them for keeping me alive during that time, this is it. This is my chance to give it back.”

Chantelle, thank you for sharing your experiences, setbacks and comebacks. May they inspire others to dig deep, be brave and seek help.

The following is her letter of nomination. ■

‘They literally and daily save lives. They saved mine.’

BY CHANTELLE CHARGING

Wow, where do I begin? Michelle Erickson, Tracie Freadrich and many others at the Abused Adult Resource Center (AARC) literally and daily save lives. They saved mine.

Domestic violence is something that’s kinda pushed under the carpet at times. Not because nobody cares, but because it’s hard to admit as a victim that this is happening, and sometimes by the time you get the guts to run away from or escape your abuser, you’ve been completely alienated from friends and family by your abuser and no one will listen.

To answer the question, “How has my nominee made a positive difference in our community?” She listened; that’s how. Michelle, Tracie and all the staff at AARC listened. From the minute I picked up that phone, dialed their number

and hung up about a 100 different times until one day I didn’t hang up, they listened.

I don’t think people understand how empowering it is to finally feel validated in what you say and share with another person about some of the most horrific events in your life. Your abuser takes that from you. They make you truly believe no one will believe you or be there to help, and Michelle proved my abuser wrong by being there for me. After all these years, she’s still here, along with all the staff at AARC.

My story is like so many others. These AARC staff wake up every morning, put on their “hero capes,” and save so many of us — women, children, and even men from domestic violence. They help our community by providing safety, shelter, and many other services



Chantelle Charging, a Mor-Gran-Sou member from Sioux County, nominated longtime friend and mentor Michelle Erickson to win this year’s #WhoPowersYou award. The two met when Charging fled her home from an abuser and went to the Abused Adult Resource Center in Bismarck. Charging says Erickson, and staff at AARC, helped save her life because they listened to her and believed in her.



Anthony Stretches is a big part of Chantelle Charging's "story." He is her best friend and significant other. She "found" him only after she suffered many years of abuse with another person who claimed to love her. Chantelle wants people to know that it is possible to find happiness with someone who will not hurt them.

to those dealing with domestic violence or sexual assault. They help families and/or individuals rebuild after escaping domestic violence. They give us back our voice. They help children get back to a healthy, normal, violence-free life, and their mother, as well. In doing so, we are integrated back into our community, able to live a safe, productive life again, free of fear and all that comes with domestics. They help us regain who we are and reclaim our lives.

I nominated Michelle Erickson for the #WhoPowersYou award because I thought if she wins, I'd like the money to be donated to her and AARC as a whole. They are special because through this amazing program run by angels, no doubt they also contribute to the community through stores like Seeds of Hope, a local thrift store. I don't know about you, but who doesn't love thrifting?

This store offers good products at an affordable cost, and this cash helps the shelter. When I and many other families leave an abuser, sometimes we leave with only the clothes we have on our backs and we need help.

I, along with children and other girls in my situation, got taken to AARC after-hours to get clothes and things we needed. That meant so much to me that they did that for all of us. It took away some of the stress. We didn't have to worry about that when we already had so much to worry about, like hoping our abuser won't find us, which is a worry that goes through your head nonstop.

They also bring awareness to the community through events like, "Take back the night," which brings light to sexual assault and domestic violence. One thing that has really hit our state sadly is sex trafficking.

Staff at AARC, along with Michelle, educate police, counselors, workers, and the state as a whole on the impact this has had, and also the reality of these things and how to help victims, yet educate everyone on what to watch out for and how to stay safe. They provide an important service through education on the reality of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and sex trafficking.

Michelle deserves to be recognized, and earn the \$5,000, because it would help so many families. I know Michelle and the AARC staff would use this to better help the lives of children and women at the shelter by getting what is needed to help keep them healthy and safe during a transition from a very scary situation to getting back to "normal." I know money helps with clothing, food, school items, transportation,



Michelle Erickson says survivors like **Chantelle Charging** are the best example of AARC's work. "She saved her own life, and all we did was support her. She is courageous, strong, brave, and a testament to what you can do if you try, trust others to help you, and work hard," Erickson says. "It's not easy to escape a life like Chantelle had. But like she said, it's possible. Everyone has a right to live a life without violence. I'm so glad she has found her voice and is speaking out. She might not always see it, but it is SHE who is amazing."



‘If I can do something to thank them for keeping me alive during that time, this is it. This is my chance to give it back.’

**~Mor-Gran-Sou member
Chantelle Charging**

education and activities, which honestly is the best part.

AARC does its best to help children feel as safe and normal as possible. They have a playroom that is beautiful. It gives children the ability to run and feel safe and have fun, and try to forget about feeling scared.

They can use money to purchase things like books and art supplies, so mothers and children can color together or use the cash to buy pool passes, for example. These may seem like silly things, but many children and women are so thankful for this. If you ever got to talk to victims, they may share that they have not gotten to do this with their child or mom in so long because their abuser did not allow it.

It’s beautiful to watch a mom and child, who you saw come in abused and beat up a few days ago, now smiling and drawing together safe; or children running and playing together in the playroom, laughing and giggling while they chase each other, and not worrying about their abuser hurting them for laughing too loud or for just being a kid.

I know when I was there, someone who donated to AARC helped me buy a laptop so I can finish my schooling, because in my situation, my abuser wouldn’t let me leave the residence. I didn’t have a proper education because of that, but by



Chantelle Charging enjoys “wildcrafting” plants with her best friend and partner, Anthony Stretches. She believes in the power of herbal medicines, and makes tinctures for salves and soaps.

getting that laptop and getting help with school, that person who donated believed in me and gave me hope and an education. In return, I could get on my feet and be independent, and take care of my family.

These donations helped my family get clothes that we did not have when we first left the bad situation we had been in. It helped with everything we needed to get back on our feet, and become productive members in society again, free of domestic violence.

To sum up what I’m saying, these donations and these staff save lives. They literally help people out of a hopeless situation. They give us back normalcy. It reunites so many families broken by domestic violence and gives us back our independence.

I want North Dakota to see we have angels among us. They work at the Abused Adult Resource Center. ■

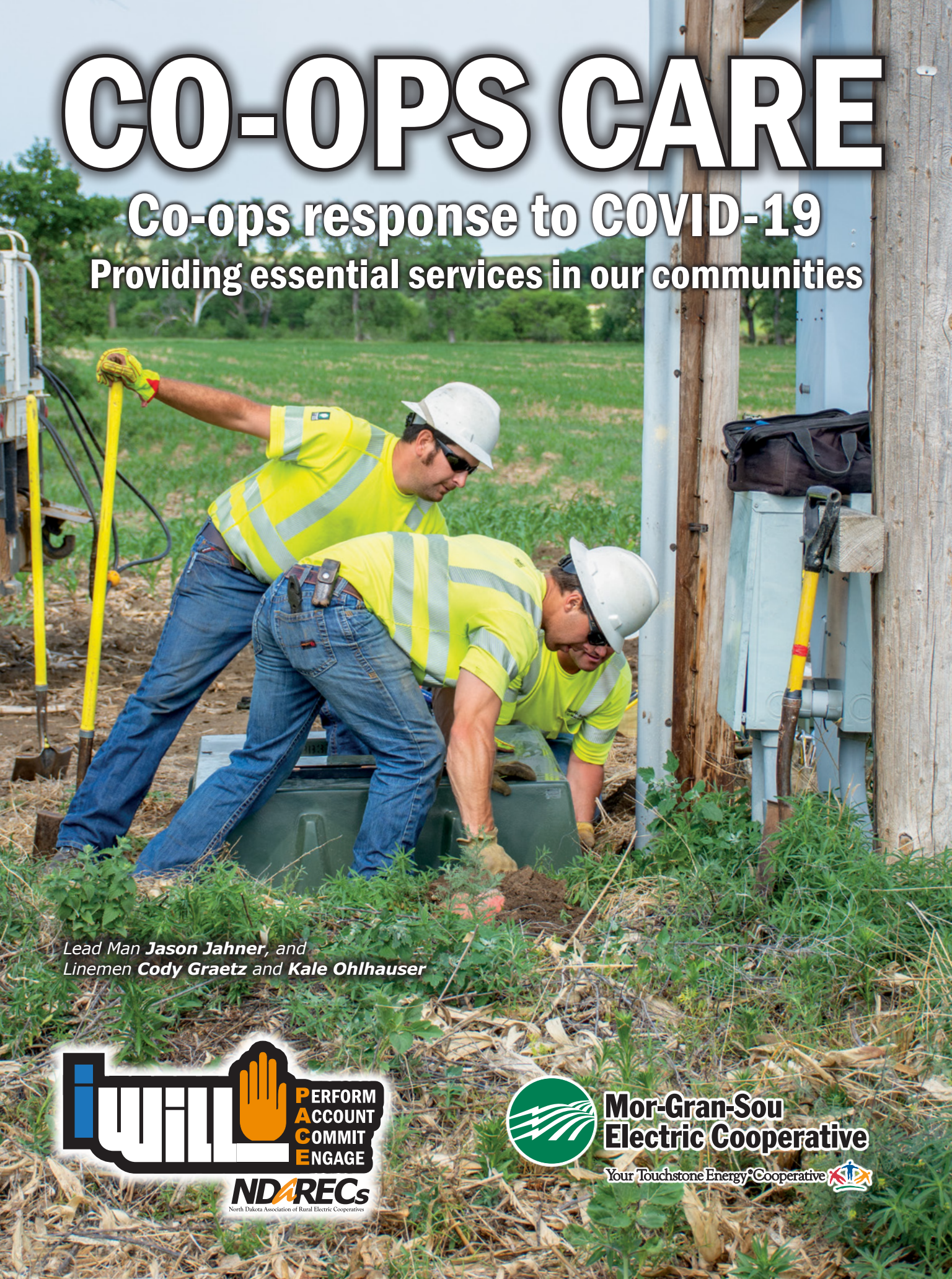


*Through testifying at the Capitol in 2007, **Chantelle Charging** was instrumental in helping legislators understand the seriousness of strangulation, which in turn resulted in the enhancement of the aggravated assault statute that makes strangulation a felony charge instead of a misdemeanor. She shared she was trapped at home for years with a man who abused her. She says she loved him and thought he was going to change, but it only got worse. When a person asks, “Why don’t you just leave him?” she says it is never that easy. For many victims of domestic abuse, leaving can be life-threatening.*

CO-OPS CARE

Co-ops response to COVID-19

Providing essential services in our communities



Lead Man **Jason Jahner**, and
Linemen **Cody Graetz** and **Kale Ohlhauser**



NDARECs
North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives



**Mor-Gran-Sou
Electric Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 



Apprenticeships lead to family sustaining jobs



Charles "C.J." Pesicka

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative is celebrating the sixth-annual National Apprenticeship Week Nov. 8 to 14, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor. Apprenticeships provide demand-driven education, allowing apprentices to earn while they learn – helping to close the gap between the skills job creators seek and jobs seekers need.

National Apprenticeship Week provides an opportunity to spotlight how apprenticeships can help employees grow in knowledge and skill to succeed in today's workplace. In exchange, these employees have the opportunity to learn from

veteran employees and mentors, and earn wages and benefits that sustain families.

Those family members work, go to school, purchase goods from area businesses, volunteer in our communities — and ultimately sustain our smaller towns and improve our quality of life.

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric is proud to highlight apprentice lineman Charles "C.J." Pesicka, who works out of Mandan.

We thank all the apprentices out there who are helping electric cooperatives provide safe, reliable and affordable electric service. ■



Youth Tour update

Due to circumstances surrounding the pandemic, the Electric Cooperative Youth tour essay-writing contest and trip has been sidelined for 2021. Safety is the culture of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, and while we are disappointed at this turn of events, we know better years are ahead for our students and our chaperones. Members, thank you for your understanding as we navigate these ever-changing times.

Need Help with Heating Costs? LIHEAP can help.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps eligible low-income households with home heating costs.

- Heating assistance
- Weatherization services (insulation, weather stripping, etc.)
- Furnace and chimney cleaning
- Furnace repair and replacement
- Emergency assistance

Applications are accepted from October 1 through May 31 for each heating season.

For help filling out and submitting the LIHEAP application, call 1-800-823-2417 ext. 140.



www.communityoptionsnd.com

MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

board meeting highlights



Meeting date: Sept. 23, 2020

- Approved the Aug. 26, 2020, Board meeting minutes
- Approved a special equipment and a work order inventory
- Approved capital credit refunds to estates and those age 80 and over
- Reviewed the monthly director's financial report
- Confirmed Board review of the financial report for August
- Reviewed delinquent summary report
- Reviewed senior staff department reports
- Heard legal counsel report
- Reviewed and accepted the director expense report
- Heard update on Southwest Power Pool
- Reviewed update on WDUS Holdings, LLC
- Reviewed senior staff department reports
- Reviewed the Co-General Managers/CEOs update, and heard reports on meetings they attended
- Heard reports from various meetings and events the directors had attended
- Confirmed director attendance at upcoming meetings
- Appointed voting delegates and alternates for upcoming meetings
- Appointed directors to various committees, and assigned a safety director from the Board
- Approved additional funding for 2020 capital credit retirements to estates and those age 80 and over
- Approved Basin Electric 2021 Update of 2020 Load Forecast
- Held annual review of governance policy for director compensation
- Held annual review of director meeting attendance guide
- Reviewed the preliminary 2021 operations budget

Upcoming regular board meeting date:

Nov. 18; conference call or location to be determined

Members may be welcome to attend board meetings. Due to COVID-19, plans can change quickly. Please call the office at 1-800-750-8212 or 597-3301 to confirm the meeting status you wish to attend.

To place an item on the agenda, please contact Board Chair Casey Wells or Co-General Manager/Chief Executive Officer Donald Franklund at 701-597-3301 at least one week in advance.

Members may obtain a copy of approved board minutes by completing and returning the "Request for Information or Data" form. You can find this form at www.morgransou.com, or contact the Flasher office to request a copy.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative will be closed Wednesday, Nov. 11, in observance of Veterans Day, and Thursday and Friday, Nov. 26 and 27, for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Line crews will be available in the case of an emergency or power outage.

Veterans and service men and women ... we thank you for your service and sacrifice!

THE HOLIDAYS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Gift certificates are available at Mor-Gran-Sou. Light up someone's holiday season!

How long is your Christmas list? If a certain someone on your list is a member of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative and you need a bright idea on what to buy for Christmas ... why not wrap up a gift certificate he or she can use toward an electric bill?

Call Mor-Gran-Sou at 701-597-3301, 701-663-0297 or 800-750-8212 and ask for Julie or Jackie.

We can help you "lighten" up the holidays.



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OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Chair..... Casey Wells
Vice Chair..... Chad Harrison
Secretary-Treasurer..... Pam Geiger
Directors Mark Doll, Vernard Frederick,
Rodney Froelich, Jay Larson,
Bob J. Leingang, Kathy Tokach

MANAGEMENT

Co-GM/CEO..... Donald A. Franklund
Co-GM/CEO..... Travis Kupper

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