



MOR-GRAN-SOU
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Serving Morton, Grant and Sioux counties

THIS ISSUE:

- We love our communities
- Annual meeting July 21
- Meet your director

FEBRUARY
2023

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

PRAIRIE RECOVERY CENTER: Helping those in need

BY ANNE HANSEN



PHOTO COURTESY GRANT COUNTY NEWS

Amanda McMahon serves as executive director and **Dave Marion** as the business development director at the Prairie Recovery Center in rural Grant County.

The calm scenic background of rural western North Dakota is a dramatic contrast to the internal landscape of fear and anxiety many feel when needing help with addiction and recovery. In the midst of the rolling prairie near Raleigh, a few buildings set on the side of a hill with a history of helping those who need it the most.

Today, it is the site of the Prairie Recovery Center, a comprehensive and compassionate care center for addiction and mental health.

History of helping

In 1990, the late Walt Odegaard, a previous North Dakota State University football hall-of-famer, was seeking an establishment to help fulfill his vision of creating a space for troubled youth. It was after a conversation with Father Joe Deichert, a Catholic priest from Raleigh, that Odegaard looked toward the prairie to make his vision a reality.

The St. Gertrude's Catholic Church's school had closed its doors after nearly 50 years of operations due to declining enrollment. Rather than see the building abandoned, the Catholic Church sold the establishment to Odegaard, who then established the Prairie Learning Center (PLC), which was a safe place to help troubled kids who were on a rough path.

"In 1991, Walt's great vision to have a place that wasn't a lock the door and throw away a key place for children who needed adolescence care came to fruition," said Dave Marion, business development director at the Prairie Recovery Center and previous executive director for PLC. Marion himself was mentored by Odegaard, who had a true passion to help those in need.

The program helped various youth throughout the years, but due to legislative changes and lack of enrollment, the learning center closed its doors in 2020.

"It was during that time that a group gathered together and switched gears to help those in need, while still serving Walt's mission and vision," Marion said, citing N.D. Department of Health and Human Services reports, which noted at the time western North Dakota was severely underserved in addiction and recovery services.

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A team to help

With the great need for addiction services, help for addiction has increased in recent years.

“Our mission at Prairie Recovery Center is to give people the opportunity to heal from addiction and embrace recovery,” Marion said. “We want people to know that we have availability. Although most places have wait lists, we are available here and now to help.”

The program, which started in 2020, offers various services and treatments, with the primary focus on addiction rehab with programs that vary in length and intensity. This includes individual and group therapy sessions to help the person understand addiction and work through any underlying issues contributing to it.

And there is a team ready to help those looking for help. Odegaard and Marion both played football for NDSU, so it is no wonder the mindset of teamwork is prominent throughout the center.

“We know that every single person at the Prairie Recovery Center plays a role in helping others along their journey, whether it be the maintenance staff, the cooks or our admin, we all play a role,” Marion said.

This starts at the moment someone enters the facility.

“When people take those first steps in the doors after parents or family has dropped them off, they are scared, and we want to let them know that everything is going to be OK,” Marion said. “We want to support them from the moment they get here.”

“The Prairie Recovery Center clearly knows that recovery takes teamwork,” Marion noted. “We are genuinely excited about what the future holds for those who come, and since there is no magic wand, each person has an important role.”

Everyone that walks in the door is different, so their care is different, depending on their needs.

“We had a gentleman who was previously in rehab several times, and one night before blacking out, he saw our commercial and drove here to check himself in,” Marion shared. “But for some reason, our program worked for him and he was able to recover from his alcohol addiction and get to the core reason on what was driving his drinking.”

In addition, the PRC offers something that most places can't – wide-open spaces.


“It is because of our unique location that we are able to eliminate a lot of distractions, while offering a place of serenity,” Marion said. “The wide open can help others see us as a nonthreatening location”

Successes along the way

In its short time, the PRC has seen over 400 individuals who have been helped along the way.

“When the individual gets to go home, and the smile on their face shows that they are genuinely prepared for the next step as they are clothed in strength and confidence, they will look at the staff and genuinely say, ‘Thank you for saving my life,’” Marion said.

It is this reaction that makes the time spent worth it.

“We are in the life-saving business, and that is what makes it so easy for us to come in every day and roll up our sleeves and get to work,” Marion said. 



MANAGER'S MESSAGE: We love our communities



Travis Kupper

“To move forward, you have to give back.” This quote from Oprah Winfrey reflects the special bond and obligation that ties Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative to the members we serve. With Valentine’s Day approaching, we can’t think of a better time to express how much we appreciate serving

you, the members of the co-op.


We know when we helped to bring electricity to rural North Dakota many years ago, the quality of life improved for all. Through the years, other issues needed to be tackled, and we have been at the forefront of helping to address some of those issues. We want to help meet the long-term needs of our service area to ensure it continues to thrive.

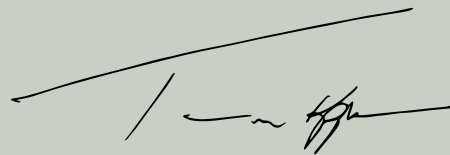
While our top priority is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members (that’s you!) we serve. This focus to benefit the larger community is central to the way we operate as a cooperative. Mor-Gran-Sou Electric knows electricity is a critical need for modern-day life, but it takes more than poles and power lines to make a cooperative.

Over time, our co-op has evolved to meet the changing needs of our area, improving the quality of life for everyone. And that can mean many different things. It can mean programs for North

Dakota’s youth, such as education scholarships or the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, in which we take our community’s brightest young people to Washington, D.C., for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action. It’s contributing more than \$2,800 to Operation Round Up. It means partnering with organizations through the Rural Development Finance Corporation, and much more.

We all benefit from these programs, because of you and your neighbors. You empower the cooperative through your membership and through your participation in and support of these programs.

As a local business, we are proud to power your life and bring good things to our service area. We hope you will continue to guide our efforts by sharing your perspective as we plan for the future. The energy landscape is undergoing dramatic change, fueled by evolving technology and consumer desires for more options. While the larger environment in which we operate is constantly changing, one thing remains the same. By working together, I’m certain we can continue to do good things for our membership. 




Congratulations

Don Franklund, Rebecca Thiem, Cindy Ternes and Jackie Miller on your retirement!

Mor-Gran-Sou thanks you for your many years of service!



Tribute to Henry Benz

As we look forward to 2023, it's fitting to take time to look back on 2022 and pay tribute to those we lost who were part of the Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative family. We were saddened to learn of the passing of Henry Benz on Nov. 12, 2022.



Henry Benz

Henry's life was of service to those in southwestern North Dakota. Henry was born and raised on the family farm west of New England. He attended schools locally and after the eighth grade, helped on the farm. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1953 during the Korean War. With an honorable discharge in 1955, Benz returned to New England, where he met and married his wife, Marge, in 1957. Marge and Henry spent some time in Bowman, and his employment with Mor-Gran-Sou brought his family to Mandan, where they raised their five children.

Henry began his journeyman lineworker career with Mor-Gran-Sou April 15, 1968, and worked his entire career in the Mandan area. Henry retired in 1994. Former Mor-Gran-Sou Electric coworker Bob Scholl worked with Henry on powerlines, and remembers him as a good guy and a hard worker.

"We worked through lots of storms together, and we saw a lot of changes and improvements in the equipment we used. We were always appreciative that the cooperative embraced those changes for the safety and efficiency of the line crews," Bob recalled.

Past employee Connie Rossow reminisced,

"Henry was already employed at the cooperative when I started in the billing department. We shared work information throughout our careers, depending on each other. But it was not only work. He and his wife, Marge, were fun to visit with during our social events, which included Christmas parties."

"We were lucky to have visited with Henry this past summer," added Mor-Gran-Sou Chief of Staff Jackie Miller, as Mor-Gran-Sou interviewed a few past employees for the cooperative's 75th anniversary. "We learned Henry's love for his fellow employees and the co-op members remained strong."

When Henry was not working, you would find him camping with his family, fishing or twirling his wife on the dance floor. Those who knew him best described him as a devoted husband, father and grandfather, as well as a loyal friend and man of great faith. Henry was someone who could fix anything, especially a frowning face, as he could bring a smile into every conversation with his humor. Born on the family farm, Henry had a standing joke when asked where he was born, he would answer in the "U.S." – upstairs.

To his family and friends, please know how much Mor-Gran-Sou Electric appreciates Henry's shared time and talents as he served the members. On behalf of our cooperative staff and board of directors, we wish to express our heartfelt condolences, as he will be deeply missed. 


Mor-Gran-Sou crews begin line patrol

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative line crews are in our service territory patrolling power lines and poles. This year's focus is on the Flasher, DeVaul, Cannon, Sioux, Casino, Northwest Mandan, Custer Trail and Roughrider substations.

"Our lineworkers are looking for possible line maintenance issues, safety hazards and other problems that may affect the distribution lines that bring power to your home or business," said Gary Fitterer, operations manager at Mor-Gran-Sou. Depending on weather and road conditions, members may see lineworkers patrolling line in a cooperative-marked truck, all-terrain vehicles or snowmobiles.

Completing maintenance, such as replacing insulators and tightening bolts on a sunny day, rather than fixing an outage in the middle of the night, benefits you and your cooperative, Fitterer said.

"Line patrol helps us find these issues and reduce unplanned outages," he said.

Mor-Gran-Sou ensures items are in working order to prevent unplanned outages and is committed to providing safe, affordable and reliable electric service. Preventative maintenance, including line patrol, is one of many proactive ways we are strengthening our power system. 

Safety Starts with ME: Kale Ohlhauser

You might be aware of the green metal box in your yard, but do you know what it is for? These boxes are known as pad-mount transformers and are crucial in converting electricity to a voltage that is safe for use in homes and businesses.

“Although crucial, pad-mount transformers can be potentially dangerous and should not be messed with,” said Kale Ohlhauser, a Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative journeyman lineworker.

“Pad-mount transformers are connected to primary high-voltage lines, and secondary lines can extend in several directions to distribute power to homes and businesses,” Ohlhauser said. “Be mindful of underground cabinets and transformers before removing snow, planting shrubs or trees, setting fence posts, installing sprinkler systems and digging, as this may damage underground lines.”

During the winter months, snow removal can be very important around these important pieces to our grid.


“The North Dakota winter can sometimes camouflage these pieces of equipment, making snow removal that much more dangerous,” Ohlhauser said. “Be sure to know the location, if near one, to make snow removal safe and easy.”

Use these tips to keep you and your family safe around pad-mount transformers:

- Remove snow around a pad-mount transformer. Snow piled on electrical equipment can impact your safety and electric service to your home. In the event of an outage, having the pad-mount transformers cleared of any snow will make it easier for lineworkers to restore power.
- Never touch, climb or play near or on a pad-mount transformer. Inform your children of the




- dangers of this piece of equipment.
- Keep the area around a pad-mount transformer clear of any obstructions. A 10-foot radius is recommended. This includes trees, shrubs or other obstructions.
- Do not dig around a pad-mount transformer. Below are underground lines that can cause damage to you and the electrical system, if hit. Always call 811 before you dig.
- Report any damaged or unlocked transformer to your local cooperative. If you notice anything odd about the equipment, call us at 701-597-3301 or 701-663-0297 or 800-750-8212.

“At Mor-Gran-Sou electric, we want to provide you with electricity as well as protect your livelihood,” Ohlhauser said. “Please take this information into consideration to keep you and others around you safe.” 

Safety at Mor-Gran-Sou

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative is an advocate of working safely. In fact, it is our way of life; the culture of your cooperative. We look out for the safety of ourselves and others – before, during and after work. Did you know members also play a key role in keeping our system safe? At times, you are our eyes in the sky and on the ground.

Should you see a power line issue that may need Mor-Gran-Sou Electric’s attention, please call the office or send us an email at safety@morgransou.com with your concern. This correspondence should include the description of the location, your name and complete contact information, and a photo if possible. Working together helps ensure the safety of all! 



MEET YOUR NEW DIRECTOR:

Ryan Petrick



Ryan Petrick

In 2022, the membership elected two new directors. Get to know your new director, Ryan Petrick.

Q: Where do you currently live?

A: North of Elgin on my family's fourth-generation farm and ranch.

Q: Tell us about yourself and your family?

A: I grew up in Elgin and graduated from Elgin/New Leipzig High School. I received my associate degree in microcomputers from North Dakota State College of Science. I spent 18 years in the oilfield doing various jobs. I met my wife during that time. We have been married 13 years and have four children. In 2017, I took over my family's farm when my dad retired. We currently have a cow/calf operation and raise small grains.

Q: What is your current occupation?

A: I exclusively farm and ranch.

Q: How long have you been a member of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative?

A: My wife and I have been members since 2014.

Q: Why did you want to join the Mor-Gran-Sou's board of directors?

A: In rural areas, it is difficult to find people willing to volunteer and give the time commitment. My dad

was a member for many years and I remember how things changed while he was a board director. When I was asked, I felt I would be able to continue to bring good change to our area.

Q: What do you enjoy most about the experience so far?

A: I enjoy learning about Mor-Gran-Sou's operations. Mostly, I have learned that I have a lot to learn. I also enjoy working with the different board directors and meeting new people.

Q: What do you wish members knew about the process of running for election/being on the board of directors?

A: Most importantly, anyone can run for election and be on the board. Every person has a unique background and knowledge base that can be beneficial. Also, that there is a lot more to our electric cooperative than just flipping on your light switch and paying your monthly bill.

Q: What are you looking forward to in your role on the board?

A: There is a definite learning curve to being on the board of directors and I hope to conquer the curve and be a productive member. I do not want to just fill a seat at the table, but be a voice for our members.

Mor-Gran-Sou's annual meeting scheduled for July 21

Are you looking for a way to serve the people of central southwestern North Dakota? Look no further, as Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative can help you fulfill that desire. Why not serve as a board director for the cooperative?

The initial commitment is a three-year term, with provisions in the bylaws limiting a director to serving six consecutive three-year terms, after which time the director is not eligible for another six consecutive three-year terms until one year has elapsed.

At the annual meeting, the following three board positions will be elected:

- The Grant County position presently held by Casey Wells (currently serving his fifth three-year term)
- The Mandan area position presently held by Bob Leingang (currently serving his fifth three-year term)
- The Sioux County position presently held by Rodney Froelich (currently serving his first three-year term)

Under the bylaws and due to the use of a mail-in ballot, no nominations are accepted from the floor at the annual meeting. Instead, the bylaws require the board of directors to appoint a Nominating Committee of five to nine members who geographically represent the cooperative. These members will provide a list of qualified and willing candidates to the board for approval and inclusion on the ballot at the board of directors' meeting scheduled for March 29. This date has been set so there is adequate time for each candidate's biographical information to be included with the notice of meeting sent to the members in June, along with the mail-in ballot for those who are unable to attend the annual


meeting in person.

The Nominating Committee has been appointed by the board and met for the first time on Jan. 10. The members of the Nominating Committee include Jennifer Bonogofsky, St. Anthony; Jackie Buckley, Mandan; Rosie Erhardt, Mandan; Glenda Gross, Selfridge; Garek Murphy, Fort Yates; Jim Neubauer, Mandan; Toby Olin, New Salem; Donald D. Roth, New Leipzig; and Yvonne Seidler, New Leipzig.

For a person to be nominated, the member vying for a board seat must submit the completed declaration of candidacy form to Mor-Gran-Sou by 4 p.m. CT (3 p.m. MT) on Thursday, March 16. The completed form must be mailed to Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, Attn: Julie Armijo, P.O. Box 1090, Mandan, ND 58554-7090.

If you or someone you know is interested in being nominated, please contact one of the Nominating Committee members or Julie at Mor-Gran-Sou by calling 800-750-8212, 701-663-0297 or 701-597-3301. You can also email Julie at jarmijo@morgransou.com.

The Nominating Committee members can provide you or the potential candidate with the declaration of candidacy form. It is also located on Mor-Gran-Sou's website, www.morgransou.com/forms-and-applications. If you have questions about the process, give Julie a call.


All qualified and willing candidates who have completed and forwarded the written declaration of candidacy form to the Mor-Gran-Sou office by the March 16 deadline will be included in the list the Nominating Committee will provide to the board. 

Bylaws and resolutions for the annual meeting

Under the bylaws, any bylaw amendments or resolutions must be presented to the members in writing in advance of the annual meeting scheduled for July 21. The board of directors has charged the Nominating Committee with reviewing and advising the board of any proposed bylaw amendments and resolutions. Therefore, any proposed bylaw amendments and resolutions should be submitted in writing no later than March 20, and/or they can be

presented in person at the following in-person meeting of the Nominating Committee:

- March 20, in the Mor-Gran-Sou office board room in Flasher at 7 p.m. CT or virtually

If you do wish to submit a bylaw amendment or resolution in writing, please forward it to Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, Attn: Nominating Committee, P.O. Box 297, Flasher, ND, 58535-0297, before March 20. Thank you. 



MOR-GRAN-SOU
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

HOLIDAY CLOSING: PRESIDENTS DAY

In observance of Presidents Day, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative will be closed Feb. 20. Line crews will be available in case of an emergency outage.

BOARD REPORT

- Approved the Nov. 16 board meeting minutes
- Approved a special equipment capitalization
- Approved Rural Utilities Service loan
- Approved recognition of 2022 revenue deferral
- Approved construction work plan amendment
- Reviewed co-general managers/CEOs update
- Heard directors' recap on meetings attended
- Reviewed senior staff and general counsel reports

Upcoming regular board meeting dates:

- March 1, 10 a.m. CT/9 a.m. MT

Members are welcome to attend board meetings. As plans may change, please call the office at 800-750-8212 or 597-3301 to confirm the meeting status if you wish to attend. To place an item on the agenda, please contact Board Chair Steve Tomac or Co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper or Jason Bentz 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.

Planning to build or upgrade?

Whether you are looking to build a new structure or make changes to an existing structure, it is important to contact Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative in the early planning stages.

"Each year, we help our members with their construction upgrades and new builds," said Gary Fitterer, operations manager at Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.

"Projects can range from pasture wells to grain storage, new outbuildings, houses and businesses," Fitterer said. "For projects of all sizes, it is important to contact your local cooperative."

By doing so, you will be able to confirm the viability of your project.

"Our engineering department can verify whether we can serve additional load in your area and the availability and cost of equipment and materials," Fitterer said.

Information you will need to share with the cooperative includes the type of upgrade or new build, location, timeline and power requirements.

"If you are unsure of this information, work with an electrician who can contact us," Fitterer said.

This year, it is especially important due to the global supply chain disruptions Fitterer noted.

"We want to ensure your building project or upgrade goes as smoothly as possible, and that is why it is important to call us in the early stages," he said.



MOR-GRAN-SOU
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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Flasher, ND 58535-0297

Phone: 701- 597-3301 Flasher
701- 663-0297 Mandan

Toll-free: 800-750-8212 Fax: 701-597-3915

Email us: info@morgransou.com

UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATES
800-795-0555 OR 811

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Chair Steve Tomac
Vice Chair Chad Harrison
Secretary-Treasurer Pam Geiger
Directors Mark Doll, Rodney Froelich,
Bob J. Leingang, Ryan Petrick,
Kathy Tokach, Casey Wells

MANAGEMENT

Co-GM/CEO Travis Kupper
Co-GM/CEO Jason Bentz

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